

Identification and Delineation of the Dynamic Causes  
of Repetition Compulsion Activity in Romantic  
Relationships: An Object Relations Formulation

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*“...insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results”*

(Anonymous pamphlet from AA Twelve Steps, later attributed to Jensen, 1981)

*“I would like to explore something of the enormous power, depth and scope of this phenomenon. It operates far more deeply, broadly, and pervasively than anyone can have any way of knowing.”*

(Russell speaking of the repetition compulsion, 2006)

*“Anything can be said to be a 'repetition' of anything, if only we adopt the appropriate point of view”*

(Popper, 1959)

## ABSTRACT

Broadly speaking the dissertation is concerned with the repetition compulsion (RC) and the question of why we repeat; the motivation and form of agency behind repetition. A review of existing literature indicates that there is little consensus concerning these points and that interpretations of the concept vary widely, resulting in a loss of construct validity and utility.

In the aim of remedying this state of affairs, I return to Freud's *Beyond the pleasure principle*; his most comprehensive attempt to answer the question of why we repeat undeniably painful and damaging experience. In the paper Freud delineates an observed phenomenon, that of RC, and follows this descriptive account with a theoretical explanation based on the proposal for the first time of a dual instinct theory. My feeling is that the paper stands at a theoretical crossroads; a point where Freud was strongly nudged in a new theoretical direction suggested by mounting clinical evidence – that of prioritising object relating – but chose to turn back in support of drive theory instead.

I argue that with the eventual movement towards prioritising the object, observed in object relations theory, the question of the relationship between RC and its negation of the pleasure principle was forgotten; discarded along with Freud's dual instinct theory. Freud's basic statement on the mechanics of RC can be read as, 'we repeat instead of remember and in these instances what we do not remember is due to repression'. I would say this differently after taking Fairbairn's thought into account as 'we internalize instead of remember and we repeat because of what we have internalized'.

For Fairbairn the primary target of repression is neither memories nor impulses, but rather internal(ized) objects and parts of the ego bonded to them, that is object relationships. Following these developments and concerning my own research question, a predominantly Fairbairnian object relations account provides key theoretical entities/processes, that are consolidated in the form of an initial explanatory hypothesis, which is put forward for

investigation across multiple cases. The hypothesis, which according to the methodology employed, is necessarily a tentative one (open to reformulation), states broadly that ‘dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship’.

Using published case studies as data, I identify the dynamic (as opposed to etiological) causes of RC activity according to whether they qualify as necessary conditions. Analytic Induction is employed as a method of identifying relevant causal conditions, defined in dispositional terms, and my broader aim has been to develop a systematic research approach that employs a conception of causality in terms of tendency or disposition

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Background to the Topic and Rational for Conducting the Study**

Freud introduces the concept of the repetition compulsion (RC) in an attempt to account for behaviour which is repetitive, unconscious, and intrinsically painful and damaging. His preliminary observation, relating to the reason for such behaviour, is the suggestion that we repeat instead of remember; that we relive experiences, because we have repressed them. My theoretical interest in RC, and the central aim of this research, has to do with a further exploration of just this question; the cause behind repetition.

One answer to the question of why we repeat, that seems to come up in conversation among therapists, is the assumption of an inherent aim towards some form of restitution. I.e. that repetition aims at 'healing' or mastering. I have always found myself sceptical of this proposal, I think because of where the emphasis is lain – on the possibility of a hopeful outcome. Drawing on my own personal experience, and on my work as a psychotherapist, my feeling has been that repetition, of the kind under consideration, is generally a far more doomed enterprise. In short, that it is often *repetition*. I also feel that there is a qualitative character to it, which speaks to the immediate and automated, running contrary to a teleological aim towards something like restitution. Of course, this is the element captured by the term compulsion, and my feeling is that whatever drives this character, does so in a manner that mostly leads to disappointment, pain, destruction. If hope, healing or reason have a place, it is often as misguided or transitory epiphenomena.

When I read through existing literature on RC, I found that there was little consensus concerning the cause of RC, and in fact widespread disagreement about most aspects of the phenomenon. Kubie (1939) for instance, writes that innumerable authors have signalled the untenable nature of the construct “*by giving to the concept such widely diverse interpretations*

*as to render it almost meaningless*” (p.390). He wrote this statement in 1939, and after a review of the literature it becomes clear that eighty years later the situation is more dire. Multiple, often contradictory, conceptions of it abound, many of which nevertheless seem valid in part. There are also strong arguments concerning construct utility and validity. Taken as a whole, there is an absence of precision and integration. I feel that RC is an extremely important descriptive insight, and yet as a construct it lacks specificity. There is no existing systematic attempt to organise and make sense of the various contributions, and if the construct is to have utility then some kind of synthesis of the diverse conceptions needs to occur. This then became a secondary goal of the current work; to establish a framework that can accommodate, both the complexity observed in RC activity – that is, can account for the multiplicity of elements which seem present in its functioning – and some of the central theoretical conceptualizations and insights about it. The conceptual framework that I have proposed is an object relations one, based primarily on the work of Fairbairn.

To return to the central aim of this research, the question of causality, I would like to include brief indications of some of the key accounts existing in the literature, since my sense is that the object relations account I propose, will by the close of this work, be able to accommodate many of them. In these works, causality may be said to centre on the following issues: biased assessments of the environment (Morehead, 2002), expression of aggression (Inderbitzin & Levy; 1998), role change in terms of identification with the aggressor (Zulueta, 1993; Shabad, 1993), reparative aims (Lipin, 1963; Cohen, 1980), a restitutive tendency (Bibring, 1943), object seeking behaviour (Kubie, 1941; Russel, 2006; Orlandini, 2004), analgesia attainment (Orlandini 2004), attempts at arousal modulation (van der Kolk, 1989), affect as a prime motivator (Russel, 2006), pre-symbolic experience (Wilson & Malatesta), compromise formation (Kubie, 1941).

On the experiential level RC activity is characterised by a lack of conscious awareness

or conscious deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either unconscious, dissociated or ego dystonic. Broadly speaking, this dissertation is an attempt to take seriously, the paradox of an alien or foreign, 'compulsive' agency, that acts outside of awareness. My proposal is that an object relations framework is best suited to account for the unconscious nature of RC experience, specifically one which grants active agency to aspects of an internal object relationship. Internal objects are here distinguished from mental representations on the grounds of evincing dynamism or agency, a capacity derived from their lineage; their nature as split off subdivisions of the ego which retain the attributes of that structure.

### **Outline of the Process**

The core procedure of the research is a verification and test of a hypothesis. The object relations conceptualization of RC, provides the ingredients for this hypothesis, outlining proposed dynamic psychological causes of RC activity. The hypothesis is then applied, in turn, to an analysis of three published psychoanalytic case studies, and in line with the research method is open to modification, based on the findings of each successive case analysis.

### **Summary of Chapters**

Chapter one begins with a discussion of Freud's formulation of the repetition compulsion, which culminates in a working definition of the repetition compulsion. The core component of the chapter outlines a predominantly Fairbairnian object relations conceptualization of RC, and is followed by a presentation of the central defence mechanisms which are proposed to bring about RC experience, within this framework. The chapter culminates in the generation of the

hypothesis mentioned above.

Chapter two is fundamentally a presentation of the research method, Analytic Induction (AI). The chapter begins by outlining the research logic and procedure, continuing with some core critiques of the method and my rebuttals of these. Other key areas which are covered, centre on the philosophical underpinnings of the research approach, steps involved in the research process, issues relating to data, limitations of the method, generalizability, consideration of alternative research methods and quality control.

Chapter three is a presentation and analysis of the first case, Freud's (1909) *Notes on a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*. The first portion is concerned with an identification and description of RC activity in the life of the patient, in accordance with the working definition generated from chapter one. This is followed by an analysis of the dynamic psychological conditions which are identified as bringing about that activity. The chapter culminates with a consideration of the hypothesis, again, generated from chapter one, which is confirmed or altered in line with the findings.

Chapter four is a presentation and analysis of the second case, Karpman's (1951) *A Psychoanalytic Study of a Case of Murder*, and proceeds in the same fashion as the previous chapter. One point to emphasise is that it employs the altered hypothesis, following case one.

Chapter four is a presentation and analysis of the third case, Stoller's (1973) *Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity*, and proceeds in the same fashion as the previous two chapters. As with case two, the altered hypothesis from the previous case analysis is employed.

Chapter five is essentially a discussion chapter of the research findings.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter.

# AN OBJECT RELATIONS ACCOUNT OF THE REPETITION COMPULSION

This chapter aims to produce a working definition of the repetition compulsion (RC), based on Freud's presentation of the construct, as well as an object relations hypothesis about the causes underlying repetition.

Most of what Freud has to say about the repetition compulsion (RC), is detailed in two papers, which have the construct as their central focus. The first, is *Remembering, Repeating and Working-through*, and the second, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. I will deal with each in turn.

## **The First Work**

In Freud's (1914) first comprehensive consideration of RC, *Remembering...*, he includes the following as examples of that which may be repeated, as RC activity, from childhood: forgotten attitudes and modes of relating, disappointments, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and experiences of shame (p.150). He further widens the scope to include all that is no longer repressed and has become part of the manifest personality – inhibitions, unserviceable attitudes, pathological character-traits, and neurotic symptoms (p.151).

If we consider these examples, it is difficult to see how they can come to form any meaningful and specific category of pathology. They are instances of general human psychological functioning; a broad and diverse range of phenomena that cannot justifiably or productively be grouped together as *the* significant psychological content of a compulsive need to repeat. I will return to this point below, when considering further examples of RC activity in

other of Freud's works. For now, I would like to explore one area which is given prominence in *Remembering...*; the relation of RC to transference. As Freud states, “*what interests us most of all is naturally the relation of the compulsion to repeat to the transference and to resistance*” (p.151).

In the paper Freud seems for the most part to be viewing RC as an equivalent of transference, stating that “*...the transference is itself only a piece of repetition, and...the repetition is a transference of the forgotten past...*” (p.151). Although the paper evidences a clear overlap or fluidity between the two constructs, Freud simultaneously often 'treats' the terms as though different. The grounds for distinction are however never made explicit. Adding to confusion there are passages in the paper where it is unclear which construct he refers to. What he seems to be suggesting though is that transference may replace RC in the analytic setting through a process of transformation; that repetition as RC is different from repetition as transference. It should be noted that the distinction is not one of place, between the analytic setting and the outside world, as Freud considered that transference occurs in both (1910, 1925), as may RC (1914, 1920). Concerning the notion of 'replacement' as 'transformation', Freud says the following:

*“The main instrument, however, for curbing the patient's compulsion to repeat and for turning it into a motive for remembering lies in handling the transference. We render the compulsion harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field. We admit it into the transference as a playground in which it is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom...”* (p.154).

He adds that

*“the transference thus creates an intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is made”* (p.154).

In other words, the analyst encourages the growth and establishment of the transference, and in doing so shepherds RC activity. This 'shepherding' activity involves a process of containment and also implies alteration; RC activity is made harmless because of inhabiting an intermediate region. I would note that this intermediate region, which is the transference, is defined by a high degree of 'non-action'. As Freud puts it, the analyst attempts to *“...keep in the psychological sphere all the impulses which the patient would like to direct into the motor sphere...”* (p.153). I would suggest that the primary grounds for distinguishing transference and RC here concerns action and non-action, or the recreation of events in reality as opposed to merely in the mind as an intrapsychic event. What remains at question is whether a differentiation along these grounds, between the psychological and behavioural, is sufficient to fundamentally distinguish between RC and transference. My feeling is that it is not, since the behaviour in question can simply be seen as a response to the transference experience, an additional outcome, but not something that exists in its own right independently of the transference. It would in fact be odd to expect that people would not in some way respond (even if just by blinking for instance) to what they are 'seeing' and feeling and so transference must surely include such an outcome as expected, and therefore as a characteristic feature. What I take from a reading of *Remembering...* is that Freud was unable to adequately distinguish between RC and transference. This tallies with a proposal that is made in the latter parts of this chapter, where transference is understood as a component of RC activity.

## The Second Work

Turning now to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, I begin with my overarching thought about the paper, which is that it stands at a theoretical crossroads – a point where Freud (1920) was strongly nudged to step off a precipice, so to speak, in a new theoretical direction suggested by mounting clinical evidence – but chose to turn back in support of drive theory instead. Areas of evidence include trauma and the aetiological role played by external experience, as well as the repetition of experience as observed in RC, which directly challenges the notion that impulse is directed towards pleasure (a tendency directed by the pleasure principle, a supposedly foundational overriding principle). What results is a desperate, perhaps even heroic attempt to save elements of his previous work by weaving a theoretical tangle of speculation.

I feel that we will profit from splitting the paper into three sections. The first (Freud's sections I,II) introduce the notion of the pleasure principle and offer illustrations of behaviour which *may* exist at odds with it or 'beyond it', but after consideration are shown *not* to, largely due to the presence of secondary 'pleasurable' gains. In the second (section III in the paper) Freud delineates an observed phenomenon, RC. To do this he draws as he says on "*...observations...based upon the transference and upon the life-histories of men and women...*" (p.22). For the most part the section is a reiteration of the subject matter dealt with in *Remembering...* A noteworthy exception being his explicit statement that where RC is concerned, we observe the repetition of "*...experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction*" (p.20). It is important to note that he is here concerned with the repetition of *experiences*. The obvious question being why do we repeat them, when doing so would seem inherently undesirable. The third section (comprising IV, V, VI, VII) is opened with the statement that "*what follows is speculation, often far-fetched...*" (p.24). This is the more theoretical side of the paper and offers an account for

the phenomenon observed as RC in section two. It attempts a final answer to the question of why we repeat in the fashion described. It deals with the subject of instincts and the proposal for the first time of a dual instinct theory consisting of the life and death instincts.

### *Section One*

Section one begins with an outline of the pleasure principle. Freud writes that,

*“...the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure”* (p.7).

He clarifies that *“...unpleasure corresponds to an increase in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a diminution”* (p.8). Therefore, if RC over-rides or negates the pleasure principle, which Freud claims it does, it would lead to an increase in excitation or tension. As a general observation I would suggest that this accords with clinical experience where we often find that what troubles certain individuals, bringing them to therapy, is the emotional pain and stress of repetitive experience; RC here creates tension and does not reduce it.

### *Section Two*

It is in the 2nd section, that Freud for the first time makes explicit the painful and damaging nature of the behaviour he is trying to identify, singling out instances of behaviour which seem not to function in accordance with the pleasure principle. As Wilson and Malatesta (1989) note, by this stage in his writing RC *“...is intended to account for more primitive phenomena, such*

*as masochism and separation distress* (272). Freud argues that when we exclude unpleasurable behaviour where secondary gain or delayed gratification is evident, we observe occurrences that are unconscious and repetitive. He emphasises the point that RC “...recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction...” (p.20). Making the unpleasurable aspect of RC explicit allows us to exclude examples which fail to meet that criteria and we can then fit all remaining instances under the rubric of repetitions of unwanted situations and painful emotions.

Freud here offers anecdotal illustrations of RC as part of a descriptive presentation of the phenomenon. He writes that individuals under the compulsion to repeat often “...produce a plan or a promise of some grand present – which turns out as a rule to be no less unreal” (p.21). He continues with the suggestion that we have all encountered people “...whose human relationships have the same outcome: such as the benefactor who is abandoned in anger after a time by each of his protégés, however much they may otherwise differ from one another, and who thus seems doomed to taste all the bitterness of ingratitude; or the man whose friendships all end in betrayal by his friend; or the man who time after time in the course of his life raises someone else into a position of great private or public authority and replaces him by a new one; or, again, the lover each of whose love affairs with women passes through the same phases and reaches the same conclusion” (p.22). Incidentally, I would not be surprised if Freud is speaking of himself as benefactor. For the sake of illustration, I will assume that he is, and ask what he felt when he encountered for instance Jung and Adler – protégés both, the former whom he speaks of 'adopting as an eldest son, and of anointing as successor and crown prince' (McGuire, 1974:218). Was there the 'promise of some grand present'?

### *Section Three*

What links section 2 and 3 is the observation that RC seems to possess instinct-like qualities.

As Freud puts it “*the manifestations of a compulsion to repeat...exhibit to a high degree an instinctual character and, when they act in opposition to the pleasure principle, give the appearance of some 'daemonic' force at work*” (p.35). A similarity that is glossed over here might be that they both exhibit an inflexible persistence; the capacity to 'override' other mental processes in a compulsive or 'daemonic' fashion. Freud does not elaborate further on this point, and instead asks in what further, more precise manner is “*...the predicate of being instinctual related to the compulsion to repeat?*” (p.36). He reaches the following conclusion: “*...an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things...*” (p.36).

Freud puts forward various arguments in support of the notion of an 'organic compulsion to repeat', along with the contention that this quality defines instinct. I will not enter into an expansive consideration of the merits of these, although will note briefly that they have for the most part been discredited (Brenner, 2008). I also will not here follow Freud into his metaphysical musings about a proposed death instinct. What I would like to suggest, is that Freud's description of RC as instinctual in quality has merit, and is a point I will return to shortly. Where I want to end with *Beyond...* however, is with a final statement about the pleasure principle. Freud eventually amends his initial statement about tension reduction as follows.

*“Pleasure and unpleasure...cannot be referred to an increase or decrease of a quantity (which we describe as 'tension due to stimulus')...It appears that they depend, not on this quantitative factor, but on some characteristic of it which we can only describe as a qualitative one”* (p.160).

What the pleasure principle aims at, therefore concerns an alteration in the “*...qualitative characteristic of the stimulus...*” (p.161). Freud notes that the nature of this qualitative

characteristic remains largely unknown. RC therefore is amended, by implication, to not concern a quantitative alteration in tension but rather a qualitative change, but of what sort, we do not fully know. Freud suggests that it may be “...*the rhythm, the temporal sequence of changes, rises and falls in the quantity of stimulus*” (p.160). I will return to this point below, following a line of thought which leads me to believe that re-characterizing the pleasure principle along qualitative lines points to a conception of RC which grants a central role to the object rather than the drive. This is in conformity with the development and establishment of object relations theory, specifically as put forward by Fairbairn.

In closing, I would like to suggest that it is the phenomenological observations of RC which are most valuable in Freud's presentation of the entity. These may be retained without accepting Freud's explanatory and theoretical explanations, based on 'speculation, often far-fetched'. This point applies to the illustrations of RC offered in section two, and also to his characterization of RC as instinctual in quality. One way of approaching the relationship of RC to instinct, is as a descriptive analogy concerning the magnitude of forces observed. In this sense, RC mirrors qualitative features of instinct. As the term compulsion suggests, it is as *though* people in the throes of RC, are impelled by primal forces which exist on the level of instinct. As Freud (1920) states of such individuals, “*the impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power...*” (p.21). In short, something powerful and alien acts to propel behaviour which brings to mind the uncompromising nature of instinct. As Freud does, we may then wonder about this instinct-like quality. In what does it originate? The remainder of this chapter is an attempt to answer just this question.

## A Working Definition of RC

The above provides us with a working definition of RC. I would suggest that Freud's concept of RC is introduced as an attempt to account for behaviour which is repetitive, unconscious, and fundamentally painful and damaging. He writes that the individual does “*not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it*” (1914:150). It is not however until *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he singles out instances of behaviour which seem not to function in accordance with the pleasure principle, that he highlights and makes explicit the painful and damaging nature of the behaviour under consideration. He then emphasises the point that RC “*...recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction...*” (p.20).

### *The Repetition Compulsion Defined<sup>1</sup>*

- it is *unconscious*; characterized on an experiential level by a lack of conscious awareness or conscious rational deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either broadly unconscious, or specifically, repressed, dissociated or ego dystonic.
- it is a *repetition* of a past unpleasurable experience
- it is *unpleasurable* because it is painful and damaging
- RC should be thought of as the unconscious repetition of a ‘*lived interpersonal situation*’.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition is reproduced as appendix a

In relation to the last point, RC concerns the repetition of an experience, rather than of cognition, and therefore does not include the kind of repetition viewed in obsessional neurosis. Cognitive repetition is furthermore excluded under the above RC definition, since it proceeds alongside an awareness of the fact of repetition. I.e. the patient suffering from obsessional thinking is keenly aware of the repetitive nature of his/her thought.

## **RC and Object Relations**

Although RC is mentioned in object relations writings – due to the brevity of focus, and because it is often misrepresented – there is nothing approaching a specifically object relations conceptualization of the construct. Fairbairn (1955a) for instance in reaching the conclusion that RC should be dismissed as a concept, misrepresents Freud's statement on it by defining it as the persistence of traumatic scenes in mental life, otherwise known as intrusive symptomatology in contemporary trauma theory. Freud however clearly dismisses such intrusive symptomatology – considered as it is manifested in dreams – as an instance of RC, claiming instead that it is an attempt to “*master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis*” (1920:32). Whether Freud's conclusion is correct need not concern us here, but rather at issue is Fairbairn's omission of the repetition of experience manifested in behaviour, in favour of an exclusive focus on recurring mental imagery.

Klein offers various accounts of RC, always in passing, and without an attempt to either integrate them or to question their compatibility with each other. She equates RC to repetitive fantasy driven play, a form of 'acting out' (1926:135-137), again a conceptualization which Freud after consideration explicitly rejects (1920). She also sees it as a manifestation of superego functioning; a compromise expression of both desire and the need for punishment

(1927:179-180). Although such an account may have validity, echoing elements of Kubie's (1941) fuller statement on RC, it is 'mainstream' psychoanalytical rather than specifically object relational, and so will not assist us in a presentation of an object relations account. She also equates RC to obsessional behaviour (1940:350), which potentially misrepresents the construct. As Bibring (1943) notes the term compulsion is not meant in the sense of compulsive neurosis, but rather has a similar meaning to automatic, instinctual or impulsive repetition. One mention of RC by Klein (1932:170) could be said to be principally object relational, but being a single paragraph, it falls far short of a comprehensive statement. RC is here described as an ongoing compulsion to transform an unreal internal danger situation to a real external one<sup>2</sup>. Externalization is preferred since it decreases anxiety; the threat becomes less immediate (not already inside one), and greater opportunity is afforded for dealing with it (fight or flight responses).

I should note that I have chosen to focus on object relations authors who highlight the vicissitudes of lived experience; the actual and specific qualities of a given object or object relationship, where processes of internalization are concerned. This is in line with the emphasis on the repetition of *experience* put forward in Freud's phenomenological description of RC, described above, and ultimately in line with the basic meaning of the term repetition compulsion which I feel must imply, at minimum, a degree of the repetition of a past lived experience. As such I will not include accounts which, like portions of Klein's work, conceive of internal objects as inherent phenomena or as originating from the drives (Mitchell, 1981). Nor will accounts which speak of the generalized nature of internalization be the focus<sup>3</sup>. Since the notion of RC suggests a direct aetiological link to painful and damaging experience, I

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<sup>2</sup> It could be argued that aspects of this account are included in my understanding of projective identification, which is seen as an important mechanism in the production of RC activity.

<sup>3</sup> Examples are, Klein's observation that all of the external world encountered is continually absorbed and internalized by the ego (1935:286), Kernberg's (1984) notion of internalization as a broad fundamental maturational process, and Behrends & Blatt's (1985) conception of internalization as a primary condition of psychological growth.

assume that the processes by which 'good' objects are internalized do not specifically concern us. The focus will therefore be upon the vicissitudes of 'bad' experiences/'bad' objects. I am proposing that the internalization of 'bad' objects be seen as the basic building block of RC, or as the ground upon which RC is generated.

Following these stipulations, I draw firstly on the work of Fairbairn, and will continue to employ his theoretical paradigm as the core of my statement. Other authors considered are those that adapt and develop his framework in the areas that have most relevance to RC. In this sense the object relations take on RC which I present can be said to be fundamentally Fairbainian. My position concerning an object relations understanding of RC can be stated quite simply initially. RC involves the repetition of experience, the central aspect of which is the object relationship. In other words, the externalization of internal object relationships equates to, or manifests as, RC activity.

### **From Freud to Fairbairn**

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud defines the pleasure principle as a tendency towards tension reduction, and RC as contradicting, antedating or overriding this tendency. He later (1914) amends this definition, proposing that the pleasure principle would be better conceived of as concerning a qualitative rather than quantitative alteration in tension<sup>4</sup>. He notes further that the nature of this qualitative factor remains largely unknown, but suggests that it may concern “...*the rhythm, the temporal sequence of changes, rises and falls in the quantity of stimulus*” (p.160). RC therefore is amended, by implication, to not concern a quantitative alteration in tension but rather a qualitative change, but of what sort, we do not fully know.

Freud's initial definition of the pleasure principle states that *all* stimulation causes

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<sup>4</sup> See previous discussion.

tension experienced as unpleasure and necessitates reduction in line with pleasure principle functioning. The moment the move is made to a qualitative account, consideration not just of the *amounts* of stimuli but also of the *kinds* of stimuli becomes a factor, and therefore the qualities of specific interactions and by extension qualities of objects. This emphasis on the object is a fundamental tenant of Fairbairn's work which is discussed below. It can also be seen in contemporary infant observational studies where for instance Stern (2002) stresses the role of ongoing conditions and context in determining the direction of affect (pleasure or unpleasure) during stimuli reception. With the movement towards prioritising the object, the question of the relationship of RC – its negation of the pleasure principle – is forgotten. I believe it was so to speak thrown out with the bathwater, which took the form of Freud's dual instinct theory; a conceptualisation that has often been poorly received (Caropreso & Simanke, 2008). This review can partly be seen as an attempt to reinsert the question of RC's relationship to the pleasure principle while taking into account developments in the conceptualization of the latter.

Fairbairn's (1952) re-formulation of the libido theory begins with the proposal that libido be seen as predominantly object-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking. The assertion champions the need for object relating, that is relationships with real others in the external world, as a primary motivator of behaviour. The pleasure principle is re-classed as a subsidiary principle regulating behaviour involving impoverished modes of object relating. What then becomes of Freud's statement that RC overrides the pleasure principle? To my mind the issue centres on the nature of libido and we therefore *follow Fairbairn's reformulation to arrive at the statement that RC is best delineated as that which overrides the basic libidinal tendency, now described as object-seeking*. It's the libidinal attitude defined as pleasure seeking which is the issue, and I argued above that Freud seemed aware in part of the limitations of such a stance, himself proposing a formulation that would result in greater prominence for the object.

Attempts to define RC seem to hinge in part on the ability to designate a form of pathology which contradicts or negates a fundamental motivational tendency towards 'the good' (however that may be defined). Freud therefore attempts to clarify what fundamental orientation is overridden in the instance of RC, and thereby, through the logic of 'negative space' so to speak, better understand that which does the overriding. Fairbairn offers a different understanding of 'the good' and by extension I believe of RC.

If libido is re-cast as object-seeking, then the question becomes one of how to conceive the negation of this tendency, in the form of RC. My suggestion is that it is perfectly explained within the general framework of internalization offered by Fairbairn. For Fairbairn internalization is always seen as a compensation for, and alternative to object relating. It is a mode of protecting existing object relationships, but one that is also seen as fundamentally pathological in nature. He equates internalization, seen for instance in his presentation of schizoid phenomena, with an inevitable negation, to varying degrees, of present and future object-seeking behaviour and object relating behaviour. It is worth noting that authors not working within an object relations frame have highlighted the characteristic of RC activity to foreclose on relating (Russell, 2006; Herman, 1992; van der Kolk, 1989). The absence of relating and the fact of repetition suggest that 'relating', under RC functioning, may be largely an intrapsychic affair which prompts the question of the nature of the intrapsychic affair in question, with one observation (Fairbairn's) being that it concerns internal objects. For Fairbairn psychopathology (of which RC is an instance) broadly concerns “...*the relationships of the ego to its internalized objects*” (p.60).

### **RC: Reformulation of the Basic Mechanics**

Freud's (1914) basic statement on the mechanics of RC can be read as, 'we repeat instead of

remember and in these instances what we do not remember is due to repression'. I would say this differently after taking Fairbairn's thought into account as 'we internalize instead of remember and we repeat because of what we have internalized'. For Fairbairn the primary target of repression is neither memories nor impulses, but rather internal(ized) objects and parts of the ego bonded to them. He offers two accounts of the formation in early childhood of endopsychic structure, the second a proposed reformulation of the first, but in both the relevant factor for our consideration is that objects are internalized to maintain a certain 'view' of the external object which allows for continued relating. The mechanisms of splitting, internalization and repression amount to a form of *forgetting* where the frustrating, unsatisfying or depriving aspects of the external object are split-off from the 'good' aspects. The 'bad' aspects are internalized<sup>5</sup> in the form of the 'bad' internal object consisting of both a frustrating or rejecting aspect and an exciting, tempting or alluring aspect. The tensions defining the relationship ultimately remain unresolved by the process of internalization, being simply transferred to the internal as a relationship between the ego and its now internal objects. Repression is the method employed to cope with the internal situation and aggression directed at internal objects by the central ego is the primary method (of repression). As internal objects undergo repression, ego fragments bonded to them get 'pulled down' along with them, and the object-cathexis between ego fragments and internal objects is thereby maintained, all be it in repressed form. Of importance, is the observation that internal objects define the mode of the relationship and by extension the nature of the ego fragment attached to them. For instance, the rejecting aspect or object, otherwise known as the antilibidinal object, evokes aggression in its accompanying ego fragment, the antilibidinal ego; the quality of aggression is characteristic of, and defines the nature of the repressed ego fragment. The same can be said of the libidinal

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<sup>5</sup> In the revised formulation of structure formation splitting occurs after internalization of the preambivalent object, but the final outcome is similar with the focus centring on the vicissitudes of the bad object.

ego, characterized by overwhelming need for its object, the libidinal object. Mitchell (1981) writes that,

*“for Fairbairn, the content of internal objects derives completely from real, external objects, fragmented and recombined, to be sure, but always deriving from the child's experiences of his actual parents... [These are] the personal features of the parents: the particular kind of promise and hope which the mother seemed to offer, the specific form of rejection displayed by the father, the parent's idiosyncratic ideals, values, etc”* (p.83).

In Fairbairn's (1955b) own words, internal objects are

*“internal structural representatives of emotionally significant aspects of persons upon whom the subject depended...[Furthermore they] may be defined as an endopsychic structure other than an ego structure, with which an ego-structure has a relationship comparable to a relationship with a person in external reality”* (p.148).

To return to the question of the basic mechanics of RC, and the proposal that internalization is at the heart of the process, we have now established the sense in which it can be stated that internalization replaces memory and have an idea of the nature and form of that which is internalized. Although most of Fairbairn's commentary on the establishment of internal objects is restricted to early childhood, he recognises that internalization is resorted to again in later situations characterized by frustration, dependence and ambivalence. The same processes of internalization, splitting and repression result in newly encountered exciting or rejecting objects being partly superimposed upon, and partly fused with, the existing libidinal or antilibidinal object respectively. Internal objects thus exist as 'complex composite structures'.

We can therefore conclude that experiences may contribute to endopsychic structure formation throughout the lifespan. If RC is said to result from the process of structuralization, which is the claim being made here, then the possibility is left open that experiences throughout the lifespan may contribute to its generation.

### **On the Nature of Ego Fragments**

It will be useful to consider the nature of ego fragments in greater detail, as I assume that the complexity of behaviour observed in RC activity primarily originates with them, rather than from internal objects<sup>6</sup>. Fairbairn says relatively little concerning the character of the bonded ego fragments, restricting himself to their defining features of libido and aggression, or in more precise terms the “*two respectively represent 'a libidinal factor' and 'an antilibidinal factor' (1955b:145)*. If internal objects are characterized as idiosyncratic in the sense that they mirror the affective features of a specific external object, then are ego fragments equally individualized? In other words, does the libidinal ego simply yearn for its bonded object in some uniform sense of the term or does it yearn in a specific way that reflects the nature of its object and the relationship between the two? Although Fairbairn is largely silent on this point, it seems reasonable to assume that the obvious 'clue' is in the term ego. As he outlines, the libidinal ego differs from the central ego in a few illustrative ways; it is more infantile, less organized, less adapted to reality, and more devoted to internal objects (p.106). Other than this,

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<sup>6</sup> Fairbairn concedes that the logical conclusion of his theory entails that internal objects would also evince a degree of dynamism and therefore be capable of motivating behaviour. He warns however that in practice it would be extremely difficult to specify when activity originates from internal objects rather than from ego fragments. I therefore follow his warning that it would be wise to avoid “*any appearance of demonology* (the idea that the psyche is populated with homunculi)... [and so] *err, if anything, on the side of overweighting the activity of the ego structures rather than otherwise*” (p.132). More recently Ogden (1983) has argued persuasively for the proposition that “*internal objects be thought of as dynamically unconscious suborganizations of the ego capable of generating meaning and experience, i.e. capable of thought, feeling and perception*” (p.86). Although I feel that there is much to be said for this proposal I will nevertheless as Fairbairn suggests err on the side of caution at present, and focus on the generative properties of ego fragments.

we can assume for the most part that it is an ego in the full sense of the term, and capable of fairly varied modes of response. The same applies to the antilibidinal ego. In both instances the range of response would presumably be restricted by the encompassing and defining libidinal or antilibidinal factor. Considering ongoing internalization throughout the lifespan, Fairbairn again says little about the nature of ego fragments. Do they alter in relation to the changes undergone by the internal objects, as presumably the newly introduced objects alter the nature of the relationship? Do new fragments of the central ego get added to them? The latter option would be consistent with Fairbairn's outline of repression involving not only 'bad' objects but also fragments of the ego bonded to them.

### **On the Moment of Repetition/Externalisation**

Thus far I have stated that RC activity occurs as a consequence of internalization and that the process involves a moment of 'externalization' of internal object relationships, which is seen as repetitive behaviour. I will turn now to the question of what in Fairbairn's account explains or supports the proposed instance of 'externalization'? He writes that, *“the whole course of libidinal development depends upon the extent to which objects are incorporated and the nature of the techniques which are employed to deal with incorporated objects”* (p.54). One fundamental solution he proposes, a method for dealing with incorporated objects, involves expelling them via the mechanism of projection in conjunction with the four transitional techniques (phobic, obsessional, hysterical and paranoid). The procedure would account for a form of RC activity based on perceptual distortion. Fairbairn speaks of the process as an 'active externalization of internalized bad objects'. He offers further commentary on the notion of externalization in speaking of the 'release of bad objects' which were previously unconscious, a proposed outcome of traumatic experience. He writes that, *“an unconscious situation*

*involving internalized bad objects is liable to be activated by any situation in outer reality conforming to a pattern which renders it emotionally significant in the light of the unconscious situation*” (p.76). The term activation concerns the re-emergence of unconscious bad objects, an accompanying state of terror, and a resultant distortion of reality. *“External situations then acquire...the significance of repressed situations involving relationships with bad objects. This phenomenon is accordingly not a phenomenon of projection, but one of 'transference'”* (p.76). For Fairbairn, cued activation of internal objects effects the way we see external reality, and so if a form of RC is implicated it would again involve perceptual distortion.

We find then that certain mechanisms are involved in the externalization of internal object relations. Fairbairn implicates projection and transference. I will discuss these further, and will also include two further mechanisms – projective identification and object choice.

### **A Note on the Issue of Intersubjectivity**

Following Hinshelwood’s (2012) terminology and distinction between an intrapsychic and co-construction approach, I should note that I will present an account which is in line with the former<sup>7</sup> and by extension in line with a realist ontology and epistemology. Of the intrapsychic approach, Hinshelwood states, *“the analytic system is two subjective intrapsychic worlds of experience, not just the patient’s; two minds interact as two subsystems, although both are open systems, open to each other”* (p.2). Ontologically, minds are conceived of as separate objects that exist in reality, and are therefore, at least in theory, open to observation. This is in distinction to the co-constructionist approach which holds that objectivity is not possible

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<sup>7</sup> Aron (1990) uses the term one-person psychology, to refer to a monadic theory of mind, with classical psychoanalytic theory as emblematic, and two-person psychology to refer to a more relational approach. I understand Hinshelwood’s (2012) designation of an intrapsychic approach as occupying a middle ground between the two, and by extension between classical psychoanalytic theory and a relational model.

because minds are understood to consist of shared, and therefore ever shifting contents; are fundamentally intersubjective. This is not to suggest that the intrapsychic approach does not allow for intersubjectivity, because as Hinshelwood adds, the primitive processes of the ego – for instance introjection, identification, projection and projective identification – by their very nature have an interpersonal dimension. We can conceive of them as the bridge between two separate minds.

### **Transference**

I begin with transference, the first of four mechanisms which are identified as bringing about externalization. Sandler et al (1969) provide an outline of Freud's thought on transference which will stand as a starting point. They state that "*...Freud saw transference as being predominantly a transfer of feelings about important objects from the past, to the person of the analyst in the present, and that they are experienced as real in the present...They may include the transfer of images from the past as well as feelings, so that they influence the perception or apperception of the analyst...*" (p.634). It should be noted for clarification that Freud (1925) saw transference as a universal phenomenon and therefore as in no way confined to the analytic setting.

Fairbairn's (1952) statement on transference serves as a useful in-road into outlining an object relational understanding of the mechanism. In summary, transference concerns the activation of an unconscious situation involving internalized objects and a resulting distortion of external reality, the latter acquiring the 'significance' of the former (p.76). Like Fairbairn, Kernberg (1984) holds that internalized object relations are activated in the transference. In accordance with his own metatheoretical developments and refinement of terminology such transference manifestations consist of three components, reflecting the nature of internal object

relationships; an object image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component<sup>8</sup>. What is externalized in the transference is one half of the internal object relationship. Kernberg states that in treatment the therapist may come to represent both the self and object image. Both halves of the internal object relationship may therefore be externalized. In summary, what is externalized is the object or self-representation in a particular role or guise determined by the valence of the defining affective state. The other half of the object relationship, is simultaneously activated as the predominant ego state; in other words, the affective valence whether it be of a positive or negative nature, is ego syntonic at the time of activation.

I would argue here however, that where transference is concerned, the emphasis has always been on the object component. This is true for both Freud and Fairbairn, above, where it is the experience of past objects that distort what is encountered in the present. Greenson's (1965) oft referenced definition again speaks of "*...a displacement of reactions originating in regard to significant persons of early childhood*" (p.156). I would also suggest that in practice it would be extremely difficult to distinguish between instances of projection and transference if this distinction is not made.

In simpler terms, Kernberg's account of internalized split-off ego segments implies a self that is in a sense frozen in time. One that is confined to a specific moment, defined by a relationship with another individual, and an affective response to that engagement. The split-off ego segment if not dissociated would be capable of generating the range of psychological and behavioural functioning which was present before splitting occurred. Activation here

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<sup>8</sup> When compared to Fairbairn, Kernberg's terminology places a greater emphasis on the apprehension of existing internal object relationships, the terms 'image' and 'representation' denoting a perceiver or observer and underscoring the point of response to what is apprehended; the management and by implication defence against that which is experienced. In distinction, Fairbairn's terms, ego fragments and internal objects, emphasise a capacity for agency. I will keep this distinction in mind for the remainder of the thesis, preferring Fairbairn's terms when the focus is on agency and, Kernberg's ones when self-perception and defence are foremost at issue.

implies a continuation of dissociated experience, but in a different time and in different surroundings. The external world or whatever is found there is then felt to be responsible for the psychological state one inhabits. It is *as though* something is being repeated since the subjective experience is the same.

### **Projection and Projective Identification**

Projective identification (PI) has been described as a central mechanism in the externalization or activation of object relations (Sandler, 1990; Kernberg, 1987; Ogden, 1979). For our purposes it is also opportune to note Feldman's (1994) observation that there is a quality to the type of reenactment seen in projective identification, which seems "*not to be merely defensive, wish-fulfilling, or communicative, but driven in the deadly way that Freud drew attention to in his study of the repetition compulsion*" (p.439).

The construct of PI has a complex history, and in order to circumvent the historical discussion, specifically as this relates to competing views over the intersubjective nature of the process, I begin with Sandler's (1993) observation that the notion of PI *has* been extended to an interpersonal frame of reference since Klein's initial formulation, and am in agreement with his statement that, in the analytic setting "*...its relation to aspects of the analyst's countertransference is now firmly established*" (p.1105). What Sandler is referring to is a 'second step', beyond projection and beyond the intrapersonal; an instance of "*...externalization [that] takes the form of actualization, a process in which the object is pushed...into playing a particular role for the patient*" (p.1105). Various authors have described the nature of the impact upon the object, what Sandler terms actualization. Bion (1961) highlights a feeling – the analyst's or projectee's experience – of being manipulated into playing a part; "*a sense of being a particular kind of person in a particular emotional*

*situation*” (p.149). Joseph (1989) speaks of “*being pushed and pulled to feel and to react*” (p.176) and of the patient’s intention of causing her to ‘act out’ in accordance with what is projected. What most accounts of PI recognise, is the seeming (that is, experientially felt) inducement of (again, experientially felt) alien affect, cognition and behaviour in the object – a motivated countertransference inducement accompanied by possible enactment.

To consolidate the above, and to lay the ground for our discussion, we can state that there are three distinct stages or aspects to PI; an intrapersonal event involving projection (or a mechanism akin to projection), a psychological effect on the object, and an interpersonal ‘happening’ which brings about that effect. I will address each aspect in turn, and begin with the question of what motivates PI. The Kleinian *derived* response (that is, a Kleinian derived *interpersonal* conceptualization of PI) to the question of what precipitates/motivates PI, posits the existence of underlying phantasy. Feldman (1997) for instance describes “*the phantasy [in PI] of forceful entry into the object by parts of the self in order to possess or control the object...*” (p.227). likewise, Ogden (1979) identifies the presence in PI of “*the fantasy of projecting a part of oneself into another person and of that part taking over the person from within*” (p.358). The supposition of phantasy is appealing because if we infer the presence of phantasies of entering and invading the object, putting parts ‘into’ the object, and of omnipotent control of the object, then what remains to account for the manifestation of PI phenomenology, is simply the actualization of such ‘pre-existing’ phantasies. It is furthermore noteworthy that it is partly in the nature of phantasy, because wishful, to push for actualization. This is a point Sandler makes (1987), writing that phantasy, “*has behind it a pressure towards gratification or fulfilment. The patient [therefore] attempts...to make them real, to experience them...as part of reality*” (p.42). Others, such as Joseph (1989) and Feldman (1997), emphasising the defensive nature of PI, maintain that actualization is often a response to the interpersonal situation; an attempt to avoid a *new* relationship that may feel threatening or intolerable, by

substituting for the *known* archaic phantasy. These theoretical statements identify a motivation or incentive for the moment of actualization, predicated on the place of phantasy. However, A strong critique can be brought to bear on the ontological status of underlying phantasy in PI in the first place, which leaves these accounts of actualization somewhat rootless<sup>9</sup>.

I would like next to briefly consider the relationship between projection and PI, specifically in relation to the following question. Does PI amount to a mechanism which includes, perhaps begins with projection, but involves further mechanics beyond it, or are the two better understood as distinct phenomena with PI being somewhat of a misnomer and not involving projection? Hinshelwood (1991) notes that *“the truth is that historically both terms have been used in overlapping ways to cover phenomena that are not fully distinguished”* (p.180). Ogden (1979) and Kernberg (1987) are two well-known attempts to distinguish the constructs, both making the separation a central feature of their respective thesis’s. To my mind, neither are convincing. Both rely on what amounts to a ‘-projection’ amendment; neither being able to avoid the inclusion of projection, they attempt to partially disavow it by an additional modification; a case of ‘having your cake and eating it’. Kernberg for instance agrees that the projection of ‘intolerable intrapsychic experiences onto the object’ (p.796) is a central

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<sup>9</sup> Meissner’s (1980) critique of the Kleinian conception of PI, suggests that the type of phantasy experience under consideration is fundamentally psychotic in nature, and therefore has little place in the economy of non-psychotic psychology, where reality testing remains relatively intact. This judgement is echoed by Gotstein (1983), who laments the outcome of overlooking the normal or neurotic aspects of PI, when it is conceptualized as a decidedly psychotic mechanism. To consolidate Meissner’s fuller statement, he argues that the processes of phantasy implicated, *“...imply, at least partially, loss of ego boundaries, loss of self-cohesion, dedifferentiation of self- and object representations, and loss of self-object differentiation”* (p.65). Pathology of this kind is simply not clinically evident in many cases when we would nevertheless wish to speak of PI. On a related matter, Hinshelwood (1991) makes the important point that we are dealing with pre-linguistic phantasy, of a profoundly unconscious nature. I would note that if underlying phantasy is employed to explain the interpersonal manifestation of PI in the manner described above, then there must be a fair degree of correspondence between the pre-linguistic ‘meaning’ and the linguistic versions we use to represent them. Absenting this, I would suggest that the inference of phantasy in PI should be restricted to an intrapsychic conceptualization of the construct. It would seem therefore that where PI is at issue, phantasy is best suited to the explication of psychotic cases of the kind presented by Rosenfeld (1983) where the outcome of something akin to enactment by the analyst, is not explored in the material.

element of PI, but then adds that PI in distinction to projection is characterized by the maintenance of ‘empathy’ with what is projected. A difficulty here is that Kernberg does not elaborate on what exactly is meant by *empathy* in this context, except in so far as it is opposite to what is observed in projection, where a distancing from the object is characteristic. One of the few moments of elaboration occur in the second case study of the article, which Kernberg claims is a typical example of PI, illustrating amongst other things, the patient’s “...*potential capacity for empathizing with what had been projected onto me because, at other points, it so clearly corresponded to her self-representation*” (p.809). Before considering this illustration, it will be useful to note that Kernberg makes repression a distinguishing feature of projection, in distinction to splitting which is identified as the primary defence in PI. Are we then to understand that in projection the individual, post repression, is *never* conscious of the intrapsychic contents projected onto the object, whereas in PI the individual, post splitting, will *at times* be aware of such intrapsychic experience? And, what should we make of the following where Kernberg notes, seemingly under pressure of clinical experience, that “*projective identification may permit a patient to localize aggression outside the self...[and furthermore that]...projective identification...is not necessarily based on a lack of differentiation between self and object representations (although it may occur under such conditions)...*” (p797). This is far too shaky ground upon which to erect a statement attesting to the absence of projection in PI. Ogden’s (1979) argument is similar, although instead of a poorly defined empathy, he relies on the notion of reinternalization by the projector as a prerequisite for the maintenance of identification. While differentiating projection from PI – on the grounds of psychological distance in the former and connection or closeness in the latter, he like Kernberg is forced to qualify that “*of course, the contrasting processes are rarely found in pure form; instead one regularly finds a mixture of the two, with greater or lesser preponderance of feelings of oneness or of feelings of estrangement*” (P.359). In my view, both accounts are a throwback to Kleinian

notions of ego blurring or self-object dedifferentiation which, as argued above may be seen as a decidedly psychotic experience. I would suggest and will argue below that self-object confusion in PI is in fact an experience which belongs more to the object, in many cases the analyst, and that these experiences have historically been defensively disavowed and displaced during theory development onto patients, leading to the view that it is the patient who experiences such. In conclusion, I take the view that PI includes, perhaps begins with projection, but involves further mechanics beyond it. Under this reading, PI *is* somewhat of a misnomer, but in respect of the term identification - accepting in so far as this is said to be a property/experience of the object.

Klein's original formulation of PI speaks of aspects of the self being put *into* the object (here, the *internal* object and in phantasy). The wording of this formulation seems sometimes to have resulted in short-hand imagery of a projector placing or forcing bits of the self into the *external* object, with a further, although I think mostly resisted, tendency towards the concretization of the metaphor. It is surely in response to this, that Grotstein (1991) makes a point of stating that "*one really cannot project into another person*" (p.189). To avoid ambiguity, it will be useful to specify the precise nature and site of the alteration under question in the mechanism of projection. Sandler (1987), Grotstein (1999) and Meissner (2009) clarify that it is the internal object – in related terminology the fantasy, image, representation, or construction – which undergoes alteration. This is an intrapsychic event, which Sandler usefully describes in terms of displacement; "*aspects of the self-representation are shifted to (and made part of) an object-representation*" (p.36).

I am in agreement with Knapp (1989) that "*the importance of projective identification as a defence mechanism rests on the assumption that it differs from pure projection in that it not only expels outward aspects of the self but does so while inducing the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection*" (p.54). The interpersonal inducement of the

object is the step beyond projection, beyond the intrapsychic, which grants the construct its distinct character and utility (Meissner, 2009). If there is agreement in one area of the literature, it is surely on the centrality of control in PI (Klein, 1946; Bion, 1962; Segal, 1954, 1973, 1983; Ogden, 1979; Rosenfeld, 1983; Sandler, 1987; Kernberg, 1987; Knapp, 1989; Josephs, 1989; Feldman, 1994; Grotstein, 1999; Goretti, 2007; Meissner, 2009). In my view, the act of pressurizing or controlling the object can be intuitively and simply understood as an attempt to certify an instance of projection. As Ogden (1979) notes, projective identification does not occur outside of an interaction, whereas projection may. It seems reasonable to assume that in the presence of the object, projection will be less affective because faced with the *real* possibility of contradictory evidence. The projector controls the object, in an attempt to ‘force the issue’. In this regard, Meissner (2009) speaks of “*an internal need or pressure in the projector to find support for the projection in the real order...*” (p.122). Feldman (1997), although offering an account of the motivation behind projection, nevertheless provides us with a statement which can equally apply to the act of controlling the object. If the terms are exchanged, we can say that control of the object, or the pressure exerted upon the object “*...represents an attempt by the patient to reduce the discrepancy between an archaic object relationship and an alternative object relationship that might be confronting the patient and threatening him*” (p.228).

As regards the type of control envisaged, the literature speaks of unconscious inducements or forms of pressure, manipulation and influence. Sandler (1993) suggests that they may be both verbal and non-verbal, with Kernberg (1987) in agreement, and elaborating that where the former is employed, words may be used “*...not as communication but as a means of action, a direct expressing of unconscious material...*” (p.801). Goretti (2007) picking up on Kernberg’s point, notes that verbalization is here seen as a way of ‘doing things with words’; “*in the relational situations it presupposes and institutes, this ‘doing’ is suited to*

*'arousing' in one or more objects the most complex emotional constellations...*" (p.400). Goretta notes further that tone, timbre, vocal warmth and rhythm may all play a part. Under non-verbal communication she includes physiognomic, postural and tactile influence. Outside of the therapeutic encounter and, absencing the therapeutic frame's constraints on motoric action in favour of verbalization, I think it is reasonable to suggest that behaviour will play a larger role as a mode of pressure and influence. In other words, it will function likewise as a 'direct expressing of unconscious material', to a greater degree than is commonly permitted in psychotherapy.

A final area that requires clarification is the nature of the alteration exacted upon, or experienced by the object. If nothing is 'put into' the object, then what type of thing is it that is induced, which can reasonably be thought of as sufficient in form to bring about enactment of the kind under consideration? Knapp (1989) and Meissner (2009) independently arrive at the same answer, although employing different terminology, she speaking of the inducement of "existing identity fragments" and he of the reactivation or reinforcement of "pre-existing introjective configurations". Their position can be summed up in the following way; that disavowed aspects of the self are activated within the object, in accordance with the form of a given projection and as a result of the supplementary pressure exerted by the projector. The key insight in this account is that what is activated in the object belongs in large part to the object<sup>10</sup>. A statement by Ogden (1979) would support this account. He notes that in PI "*the*

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<sup>10</sup> Both authors do in fact however include both a "contacting" and a "transferring" (in the sense of something being 'put into' the object) aspect to the workings of PI, but the former is seen as the more central mechanism and the latter augmented by certain caveats. Meissner for instance notes that where an introjective response is stimulated in the object, it is "*a relatively independent self-generative process...and not some magical taking-in of the projection*" (p.100). He speaks here of an ongoing 'self-creative modification' of the sense of self and, believes that where PI is concerned such self-generation is of secondary importance, and may not be present at all. Knapp makes a different point, surmising that where internalization does occur in response to persistent projections, it succeeds under specific conditions of vulnerability where the object's sense of identity is compromised or not well delineated. The vulnerability may be characterological, for instance disorders of character; a result of inherent power imbalance as in the case of young children; or situational, where the context is one of extreme environmental stress, for example prison. The emphasis is however placed on the notion of 'contacting' and activating pre-existing aspects within the object.

*recipient's feelings may be close to those of the projector, but those feelings are not transplanted feelings. The recipient is the author of his own feelings albeit feelings elicited under a very specific kind of pressure from the projector"* (p.360). Goretti (2007) understands Klein's position as amounting to the statement that in PI different projections will effect different objects differently, or not at all since the object has a certain 'right of refusal'.

### **Object Choice**

In addition to transference, projection and PI, externalization where RC activity is implicated may centre on object choice or 'object directed' repetition. According to the logic of RC which assumes a compulsive aim towards repetition, I am proposing that repetition involving the three above mechanisms would often occur where there is an absence of a suitable object in the external world allowing for 'object directed' repetition. In other words, if the right object cannot be found it is 'created'. Conversely, if it is found then the need to 'create' ceases<sup>11</sup>.

Under this reading, the individual searches for, or at the very least 'chooses' to engage with an object for the very reason that it will damage and hurt. The obvious question is why would a person do this, even if unconsciously? Armstrong-Perlman (1991) asks the same question, musing on the "*...compulsive, masochistic persistence of such relationships*" (p.346). She turns to Fairbairn's theoretical structure for understanding and I follow her in this. Specifically, an explanation can be found in his consideration of the nature of internal objects

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<sup>11</sup> I do not suppose that object choice ever occurs in complete isolation from manifestations of transference, projection and projective identification, nor vice versa. I would suspect instead that combinations of these mechanisms/procedures are required to bring about RC occurrences; that certain of them are well positioned to deal with distinct aspects of repetition, and others required for other facets. I also suspect that experientially the encounter with the other during RC may often be akin to Winnicott's (1971) presentation of the transitional object. One is never certain whether the object is 'found' or 'created', which can be seen in the constant questioning of 'is it me or is it them', 'are they like that or am I imagining it' which plagues romantic relationships and relationships generally.

and their reason for being. As he outlines, the need to maintain a relationship because one is dependent upon it for one's very survival is the central reason for internalization. This same need remains attached to caregivers, in the form of internalized objects, within the unconscious. As Fairbairn writes, *"the truth is that...the individual is extremely reluctant to abandon his original hate, no less than his original need, of his original objects..."* (1955a:117). Ego fragments are structurally attached to their objects, and what is more attached with a ferocity or intensity born from the presence of a singular uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive). *The proposition of object seeking or object choice as RC activity, would then amount to a cathexis of a substitute or replacement object, in the external world.* Although an account of RC defined in terms of object choice is not found in object relations thought it is observed in 'mainstream' psychoanalytic writing, for instance Kubie (1941), Russel (2006) and Orlandini (2004), who emphasise repetition through object choice. Although little more than a musing, it may be, that Freud (1920), hints at object directed repetition when he points out that repetitive behaviour causes less *"...astonishment when it relates to active behaviour....[and that] we are much more impressed by cases where the subject appears to have a passive experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality* (p.22).

It is important to note that this account does not posit a teleological aim, towards some form of restitution for instance. Rather, what is being conceptualized is that affect, centrally yearning, desire and need are directly activated in relation to certain object features or behaviours<sup>12</sup>. If, as Fairbairn suggests, the fundamental need of the individual is to be genuinely

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<sup>12</sup> A complication needs to be considered. Fairbairn (1952) defines libido as predominantly object-seeking. I stated that RC over-rides the basic libidinal tendency and yet am now claiming that it should at the same time be seen as centring on object choice. This seeming contradiction is overcome if we state the sense in which Fairbairn speaks of object seeking in the aim of object relating. He defines true object relating as amounting to a relationship where the individual is genuinely loved for who they are and where their love is genuinely accepted by the other (p.39). It is this account of object relating which RC negates, since it repeats the frustrating relationship which previously necessitated internalization.

loved and accepted by their objects, then what is being conceived here is that in repetition the need relates to a specific type of object; no other will do. Recall that for Fairbairn internalization concerns ‘bad’ aspects of the object. What gets ‘pulled down’ along with those object features is a libidinal ego, that yearns for an exciting *but* rejecting object.

For me, a difficulty arises here, because it is unclear what precisely the exciting object consists of. Or, more to the point, it is difficult to separate out exciting from rejecting features? Armstrong-Perlman (1991) uses the following terms to denote the workings of the exciting object. It may tantalize, allure, provide selective comfort, deliver certain measures of satisfaction, offer hope for something more. As she summarises it awakens “...*an intensity of yearning but it is essentially the elusive object of desire, seemingly there but just out of reach*” (p.345). She notes furthermore that a direct relationship exists between rejection and excitement; the more frustrating or rejecting the object the more it is needed for survival (especially in its primal guise as caregiver), and therefore excites. There is clearly a degree of overlap or ‘cross-pollination’ between the exciting and rejecting components. To some degree it would be valid to say that the individual yearns for its object precisely because it is rejecting. As Fairbairn (1952) states, “*there can be no doubt, however, that a bad (viz. unsatisfying) object may be desired. Indeed it is just because the infant’s bad object is desired as well as felt to be bad that it is internalized*” (p.111). He adds, “...*the unsatisfying object has, so to speak, two facets. On the one hand, it frustrates; and, on the other hand, it tempts and allures. Indeed it’s essential ‘badness’ consists precisely in the fact that it combines allurements with frustration*” (p.111). I think however, that the tantalizing component does need to be present – that the two work in tandem – but that the strength of its offering, what it provides of love and care, need not be very great at all. Armstrong-Perlman here speaks of a ‘just enough’ quality, and we can reason that in instances this ‘just enough’ may be a fabrication down to transference, for

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instance, or that it may exist only in memory, all kindness having occurred in the early stages of a relationship.

A final point that I would like to consider, is to question whether desire or more broadly need, is experienced consciously in the instance of object choice, where object directed repetition is concerned? I would think that it often is, and that in such instances it may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations. The need for the other, may concern a belief in something longed for, needed or better. As Freud (1920) observes, individuals under the compulsion to repeat, often “...produce a plan or a promise of some grand present – which turns out as a rule to be no less unreal” (p.21). RC as it occurs in erotic object choice, with its powerful tendencies towards idealization, would be a clear example. I suspect though, that the desire or need for the object may also be less clearly delimited at times, and take the form of a strong preoccupation where negative or positive affect is queerly absent; a preoccupation that one cannot quite explain or account for. Relevant factors in determining the level of awareness may relate to the degree of repression, the individual’s capacity for reality testing, etc.

I turn now to a hypothetical outline of the structures, dynamics and mechanisms which, based on this chapter, could be said to underlie RC activity. This outline will stand as an initial hypothesis which is put forward for verification and testing in accordance with the research method, discussed in the next chapter. Before providing the hypothesis, I would like to add a final note about the instinctual quality of RC, discussed above, in the section on Freud. The discussion ended with a question about the nature of the instinct-like quality. Why does RC have it? In what does it consist? We can now answer this from an object relations perspective. The intensity of the instinct-like character of RC, is a product of the purity of the drive derivative or affective component, expressed in the instance of activation of a given internal object relationship. In simpler terms, we can speak of the love or hate that was meant for a parent, being reactivated, with all the force of the original, although now directed at a substitute

(real or imagined). The alien or foreign character is a product of shifts in ego state, from the syntonic to the dystonic, in relation to the vicissitudes of split-off ego fragments, or apprehension/disownment of self-images.

## **Initial Hypothesis<sup>13</sup>**

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. We therefore infer the presence of ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive). The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
  
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego

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<sup>13</sup> The hypothesis development across cases is reproduced as appendix *b*

fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).

- Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
  - Transference
  - Projection
  - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
  - Object Choice: desire is here centred on a specific object choice, often imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better. A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is desired is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
  
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and

identification.

- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The research attempts to identify the dynamic, as opposed to etiological, causes of repetition compulsion (RC) activity. The literature review consolidates an object relations account of the repetition compulsion, originating both in Freud's writings and continuing in theoretical developments up to the present. The account provides a 'pool' of theoretical entities/processes, which, in accordance with the research method, Analytic Induction, are put forward as potential candidates for the title of necessary condition.

Empirical observation is prioritised as a means of generating knowledge, and to this end published case studies with rich verbatim transcription of psychotherapy sessions were deemed most suitable as data. My overall aim has been to follow a systematic research approach that employs a conception of causality in terms of tendency or disposition. Such an approach is in line with the philosophical paradigm of realism<sup>1</sup>, developments in the philosophy of science, specifically in the area of causal theory<sup>2</sup>, and is antireductionist, in the sense of respecting agency and intentionality in human behaviour. The approach is also in line with a notion of psychoanalysis as incorporating elements of both hermeneutic and empirical thinking<sup>3</sup>.

The basic requirement of the research method is that it do two things: it must identify the entity/condition about 'whose' tendency/disposition I wish to speak – considering that I am beginning with an assumed effect and asking what may have a tendency/disposition to cause it – and it must look at the ways in which tendency/disposition is contextually expressed

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<sup>1</sup> Proponents being for instance, Maxwell, 2004; Salmon 1984, 1989; Sayer, 1992; Archer et al. 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Bird et al. 2012; Salmon 1984, 1989; Harre & Madden, 1975; Bhaskar, 1975; Cartwright, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Gomez, 2005; Hinshelwood, 2013.

(facilitated, negated, diminished, accentuated, adapted, etc). Analytic Induction is proposed as a method of meeting both criteria.

As an introductory outline of the method, I'd like to refer to Lindesmith's (1981) presentation of the discovery and elucidation of the causative role of parasites in malaria. The account is intended by me as more than an illustrative analogy, as a larger claim is made throughout this chapter, about the suitability of the scientific method to psychoanalytic enquiry. In other words, the method attempts to approximate, as closely as possible, scientific practices of investigation and explanation. In this regard, it seems opportune to note Lindesmith's specification of the type of scientific enquiry under consideration; "*the malaria example...presents us with an instance of the verification of a non-quantitative theory by a 'soft' qualitative methodology*" (p.89). He adds that generalization of the theory, that is a *willingness* to generalize about the causative role of the parasite in malaria, was initially based on a single observation; "*one man seeing one parasite in one blood sample*" (p.94). We therefore have an example of accepted scientific practice that is qualitative, and where generalization may be based on limited instances of observation – two features that are characteristic of case-study research generally, and therefore amenable to the case-study design I am proposing.

To proceed with the analogy. In the malaria example a microscope is the means of observation and discovery. Broadly speaking the method of analytic induction can be viewed as the theoretical and methodological frame which gives meaning to otherwise arbitrary observation; that which allows for a relationship to even potentially be defined as one of cause and effect. In the malaria example, it is both the means of observation and what 'looks for', can 'conceive of', a relationship between the parasite and malaria. Analytic Induction is further a method for specifying the nature of that relationship, customarily in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.

### **Analytic Induction**

Analytic induction is a research logic proposed by Znaniecki in the mid-1930s, which emphasises rigorous empirical study of cases. Hammersley et al (2000) classify it as a mode of dealing with non-experimental data, that is naturally occurring cases, while aiming at causal explanation of universal applicability. The aim, in other words, “*is to produce a theory that conceptualizes a process of systematic causation that will operate whenever particular conditions are met*” (Hammersley, 2008:85).

Analytic induction, as the name implies, is an inductive research procedure, but one that crucially ‘formalizes and systemizes the method of the working hypothesis’ (Robinson, 1951). That is, it incorporates a procedure for ongoing verification and reformulation or modification of hypotheses. This process may be seen as the *practical* method of progression in science generally (Kuhn, 1962), and certainly as the characteristic “*process of advance in science by induction and verification*” (Hinshelwood, 2013:57).

Comparing analytic induction to the statistical method provides us with a key observation, allowing for a clearer understanding of what analytic induction tries to achieve, and of what it brings to the epistemic table, so to speak. The observation concerns the distinction between statistical inference and scientific or causal inference. Mitchell (1983) remarks on the well-known insight that statistical correlation tells us nothing about the nature of causal processes. When for instance generalizing to a parent population from a sample, “*the inference...is simply about the concomitant variation of two characteristics...[and] the analyst must go beyond the sample and resort to theoretical thinking to link those characteristics together*” (p.175). The important point is that correlation has no impact on, can tell us nothing about, the explanation that is provided for the relationship between the identified correlated

characteristics. We accept or reject the explanation on its own terms, in accordance with scientific or causal inference. Such *“inference is the process by which the analyst draws conclusions about the essential linkage between two or more characteristics in terms of some systematic explanatory schema – some set of theoretical propositions”* (p.176). It is such causal accounts that analytic induction seeks to generate, and in accordance with a systematic procedure.

Although Znaniecki did not formulate procedural steps for executing analytic inductive enquiry, other authors have developed such. Cressey (1950, in Robinson 1951) for instance offers the following outline:

- A rough definition of the phenomenon to be explained is formulated
- A hypothetical explanation of the phenomenon is formulated
- One case is studied in the light of the hypothesis with the object of determining whether the hypothesis fits the facts in the case
- If the hypothesis does not fit the facts, either the hypothesis is reformulated or the phenomenon to be explained re-defined, so that the case is excluded
- Practical certainty, may be attained after a small number of cases has been examined, but the discovery of a single negative case disproves the explanation and requires a re-formulation
- This procedure of examining cases, re-defining the phenomenon and re-formulating the hypothesis is continued until a universal relationship is established, each negative case calling for a re-definition or re-formulation

### Unique Qualities and Capacities of the Method

Hammersley (2008) draws our attention to a distinctive feature of analytic induction, one that is often omitted in competing methodologies; the explicit revision of the phenomenon to be explained. Here the conceptualization of the phenomenon of interest may be revised, as part of the research process, to exclude instances which contradict the hypothesis. Robinson notes that such revision ‘limits the range of applicability of the explanatory hypothesis’, what Dubs (1930) calls ‘limiting the universal’. As with the modification of hypotheses as part of the method of the working hypothesis *“such limitation of universals has occurred not infrequently in the history of science, and is now a matter of common acceptance”* (Robinson, 1951:189). Hammersley (2008) adds that the option of limiting the universal *“is surely a crucial element of any process of theory development”* (p.85); a statement with which it is difficult to disagree, given the immediate common-sense it displays. For surely, it is often only through the process of investigating a phenomenon that we come to know what the phenomenon is exactly.

Hinshelwood (2013) remarks on one of the primary limitations of inductive logic; the point that verification based on current observation provides a poor basis for predicting future occurrences. It is therefore important to stress that analytic induction does not function merely armed with the procedure of inductive verification, but also explicitly harnesses the power inherent in the logic of induction to conclusively prove a generalization false, based on a single instance of empirical observation. The distinction is summed up by Hinshelwood; *“proving the validity of some inductive generalization is uncertain; but proving it false can be definitive”* (p.61).

Analytic induction employs this capacity for ‘single-shot’ refutation by making generalized claims about the form of the relationship between assumed occurrences of cause and effect. It defines such relationships, usually in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. For the moment, for reasons that will become clear below, I will focus here exclusively on

those conditions specified as necessary. When we claim that ‘A’ is a necessary condition for ‘X’ we make a generalized claim about the nature of the relationship between ‘A’ and ‘X’; a statement that is open to empirical refutation. If we observe an instance of ‘X’ without the presence of ‘A’ we *must* conclude that ‘A’ is not a necessary condition of ‘X’. Our generalization is proven false. With this procedure, analytic induction demands through the comparative method, the seeking out of potential negative cases; those which may definitively falsify the implicit hypotheses it continually employs (the claim of relationships defined in terms of necessary conditions). As Hinshelwood (2013) notes, it is just such a ‘necessary condition thesis’ (NCT) that Grunbaum (1984, 1993) employs to challenge Popper’s view of psychoanalysis as unscientific. The key point is that by such means theories may be tested and falsified, and therefore considered ‘risky’ in Popper’s sense; the element of risk being essential to any enterprise claiming the status of scientific enquiry.

## **Critiques of the Method**

### *Critique 1*

Although AI was originally proposed as a method of causal analysis, Robinson (1951), while viewing causal explanation as tantamount to prediction, argued against such a use stating that the method *as often employed “cannot enable us to predict. It cannot because it gives us only the necessary and not the sufficient conditions for the phenomenon to be explained”* (p.191). He is saying that we cannot know the precise cause ‘A’ of a phenomenon ‘X’, that which *always* results in a specific outcome, unless we know that the phenomenon *never fails to occur* under certain conditions. We therefore need to include in our study all instances of ‘-X’ and verify that ‘A’ is never present. Although some (Bloor & Wood, 2006) have argued that the critique can be countered by the inclusion of a control group, this misses the point that where

prediction is concerned, what is required is that we examine *all* instances of ‘-X’, which can only practically, as Robinson observes, be achieved in terms of probability and the statistical method. Claims of sufficiency may however be *tested* by the inclusion of a control group, in the sense that one negative instance, here the presence of ‘A’ disqualifies it as a sufficient condition, but this does not get us any closer to knowing that where ‘A’ is not disqualified such will always be the case. It is worth noting that such *testing* of sufficient conditions has generally been omitted in previous undertakings of analytic inductive research (Robinson, 1951).

### *Critique 2*

Turner (1953) argues that one of the reasons why analytic induction cannot produce empirical prediction, “*is down to the very specifications of...[the] method itself...[and is partly a consequence of the fact that] “the alleged preconditions or essential causes of the phenomenon under examination cannot be fully specified apart from observation of the condition they are supposed to produce”* (p.198-9). He uses Lindsmith’s (1947) and Cressey’s (1953) research on opiate addiction and embezzlement respectively, to develop his critique. To illustrate, violation of financial trust results from a process where the individual has first a non-sharable problem which he recognizes as such, identifies embezzlement as a solution to the problem, and finally rationalizes his behaviour to provide justification. Turner’s point is that there is nothing which can be identified as making the problem of itself ‘non-sharable’, other than the fact that it eventuates in embezzlement. The same is true of the ‘recognition of a solution’, and of the ‘rationalization to act’; both must result in embezzlement to become as Turner says, discriminating conditions. He goes on to state that “*in any situation in which variable A is said to cause variable B, A is of no value as a predictor of B unless we establish the existence of A apart from the observation of B*” (p.199).

The type of explanation we are left with is then not one of a causal process of the sort ‘A’ is a...*something*...condition for ‘X’, but rather a tautology of the kind, ‘A’ = ‘A’. The key point about tautologies is that they convey little information about the world, tell us nothing about the nature of ‘A’ independently from it being identical to the second ‘A’, in ‘A’ = ‘A’. Any ‘truths’ about ‘A’ are purely a matter of definition.

Turner claims that analytic induction is best classified as a method for providing definitions; ongoing refinement of definition resulting from instances of ‘limiting the universal’. The method’s universal generalizations are then said to be deducible from such refined definitions. He elaborates that, *“it is, of course, not accidental but the crux of the method that these generalizations should be deducible...The operation in practice is one which alternates back and forth between tentative cause and tentative definition, each modifying the other...Once the generalizations become self-evident from the definition of the phenomenon being explained, the task is complete”* (p.202).

What I take issue with below is not the question of prediction, but rather the classification of analytic induction as a method of definition production. I will argue that analytic induction is perfectly capable of identifying ‘A’ apart from ‘X’, and is therefore no guiltier of producing tautologies than is any other scientific endeavour which acts to limit universals or modify hypotheses.

## **Rejoinders**

### *Response to Critique 1*

I am happy to concede the truth of Robinson’s argument, because I aim to work with a notion of causality viewed in terms of tendency and of phenomena having a disposition towards

certain effects. My aim is not one of identifying relationships of strict determinism, nor of prediction, and therefore isolation of sufficient conditions does not concern me.

I think however that AI can still be useful in its ability to identify necessary conditions, and I will use the approach in this manner. It is clear that an explanation in terms of necessary conditions does not deal in strict determinism; necessary conditions may or may not bring about a given effect, but the claim is that they are *required* to bring about the effect in question, and that the effect cannot be present without them. This indicates that we are considering phenomena that may have a tendency/disposition towards certain outcomes. Referring to my research topic; RC *cannot* occur without such conditions (those identified as necessary), but such conditions may be present without producing RC. I therefore assume that certain conditions/entities are causally *relevant* for bringing about RC activity, but that the context will always determine whether they in fact do bring it about. This would be in line with a realist ontology of causality, which “*typically understand causality as consisting not of regularities but of real (and in principle observable) causal mechanisms and processes, which may or may not produce regularities*” (Maxwell, 2004:247).

Edelson (1985) highlights a difficulty here. Drawing on the illustration of striking a match he points out that such things as the presence of oxygen, dryness of the match, or the surface against which it is struck, are all necessary conditions for the lighting of a match, and yet cannot individually cause such. We would not therefore want to say that these conditions, although necessary, *caused* the effect. He is stating that ultimately if we want to say anything about causes then we require the sufficient condition. Put in terms relevant to my position, how do we determine which of a multitude of necessary conditions can be viewed as possessing the specific disposition/tendency which makes the difference – produces the effect?

Edelson’s observation, although relevant, is also something of a straw man. We can see why if we turn to Lindesmith’s (1981) account of what he refers to as the ‘principle of limited

inquiry, or of closed systems', defined as "*a principle, that restricts scientific explanations in a field to influences and processes within that field*" (p.91). He illustrates:

*"the explanation of malaria does not include the earth's rotation on its axis as a causal factor despite the fact that the disease is spread mainly at night and the early hours of dusk. Similarly while common sense might conclude that the atomic explosions in Nagasaki and Hiroshima were caused by political events in Washington, such assertion makes no sense in physics.*

It is the same with Edelson's example: the presence of oxygen would perhaps concern a chemist; the surface against which the match is struck, a mechanical engineer; and the dryness of the match, a thermal engineer specializing in heat transfer. It is fair to say that nothing would concern the psychoanalyst, and if it did, only *then* does it become relevant as a prospective causal entity. This limits the possibilities substantially, making the task more manageable than Edelson's illustration would lead us to believe. We can also further assume that many of the candidates for a title of necessary condition will be negated through the process of searching for/confirming/dismissing necessary conditions.

*In summary:*

If 'A' is a necessary condition for 'X', then the occurrence/presence of 'X' = 'A'.

- Procedurally, I observe occurrences of 'X' and confirm that 'A' is always present.
- The previous point means that the attempt to search for negative cases, of the sort 'X' but '-A', is crucial as a mode of inductive testing.
- Again, I will not be searching for negative cases of the kind '-X', in order to determine 'A's candidacy as a sufficient condition.

It is worth reiterating that researchers such as Cressey and Lindesmith who employed analytic induction, although occupied with the attempt to account for sufficient conditions, where in practice restricted to the identification of necessary conditions (Robinson, 1951). In this sense stating from the outset that I will only be seeking necessary conditions, is not a departure from previous research employing the method.

### *Response to Critique 2*

In responding to Turner's classification of analytic induction as a method for producing definitions, I believe that his argument is founded on confusing the logical structure of the procedure in question, with that of the 'level of explanation' commonly employed. That is, analytic induction, *as commonly practiced*, does produce tautologies, however this results not from the method, but rather from the kind of explanations it tends to produce; explanations where the level of analysis is restricted to the conscious and rational.

What is striking to note about both Lindsmith's and Cressey's work is that the central causal entities, those which lead to addiction or embezzlement, are set out in terms of rational and conscious decision. I would argue that the inability to determine 'A' apart from 'X' derives in these instances from the fact that the explanation is couched in terms of propositional psychology. To expand, in describing the form of propositional explanations in ordinary psychology, Gardner (1993) notes crucially that there is characteristically no 'gap' between explanans and explanandum. He designates the term 'propositionally transparent' to describe the proximity between explanation and description. Using the example of self-deception, he states that there is

*“no gap between recognizing that the concept of self-deception has application, and knowing the kind of psychological state of affairs that it consists in. Just as identifying*

*a case as one of self-deception and knowing what sort of beliefs, desires and intentions it consists in are but one move, so there is no logical gap between making a judgement of self-deception and knowing an explanation of the phenomenon. Such proximity of description and explanation is a general characteristic of ordinary, propositional psychology (p. 28-9).*

It is precisely explanation at the level of propositional psychology which analytic induction has tended to employ. In trying to account for embezzlement Cressey highlights acts of conscious human agency where instances of agency identified are roughly equivalent to those characteristic acts of agency which result in embezzlement. In other words, he identifies the conditions that we are commonly aware of, given definitional knowledge of the phenomenon to be explained. It is the absence of a gap between explanans and explanandum, the inability to determine 'A' in the absence of 'X' – a characteristic of propositional psychology – which Turner mistakenly conflates with the logic of the method itself.

Gardner distinguishes propositional commonsense psychology from psychoanalytic explanation defined as pre-propositional. In summary, he includes the following under the heading of pre-propositional content: crude emotion of an infantile character, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations; 'chronic conflict', delineated as direct conflictual relations between love and hatred; the repressed seen in terms of mechanism, and consisting of primitive pre-propositional components; wishes defined as conative states; phantasy, as a purposive motivational state<sup>4</sup>. Introducing the distinction between kinds of content results as Gardner says in an amendment of our view on agency. He suggests the term mental activity,

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<sup>4</sup> Accepting Gardner's observations and arguments for a categorical distinction concerning the *content* of the two spheres under consideration – the domains of psychoanalytic and common-sense psychology – does not imply that I therefore also accept his characterization of psychoanalysis as an *extension* of common-sense explanation, which is one of the central tenants of his work. I do not hereby comment on the correctness of the notion, but simply conclude that the question falls outside the scope of the current investigation.

replacing the traditional term mechanism, and augmenting an existing generally accepted class of agency, that of mental action involving rational motivational structures. “*What distinguishes psychoanalytic from ordinary psychology is...[therefore] captured not by a contrast of personal with sub-personal, but by a distinction between kinds of mental agency*” (p.189).

By employing Gardner’s distinction of kinds of mental content, and by including pre-propositional data in the research, it is my contention that we gain the capacity to use the method of analytic induction in a distinct, relevant and more striking fashion than previous attempts. It does not mean, that by incorporating pre-propositional explanation, we necessarily get any closer to the possibility of prediction. For, if the aim were for instance to predict a behavioural outcome, then we might begin with a link in a causal chain occurring at the level of the pre-propositional, but would still end with the propositional, the point at which overt public behaviour occurs, and would here succumb to Turner’s argument, as before. What we do however gain by the move into the pre-propositional sphere, is a point in a causal chain where ‘A’ (a pre-propositional entity) can legitimately be said to be a necessary condition of ‘X’; ‘A’ being identifiable in isolation from ‘X’.

### **Analytic Induction summarised**

As a summary, the procedure is employed to search for conditions which are necessary (but not sufficient) to produce RC activity. Three central methodological points are the following.

- One case is studied in the light of the hypothesis with the object of determining whether the hypothesis fits the facts in the case
- If the hypothesis does not fit the facts, either the hypothesis is reformulated or the phenomenon to be explained re-defined, so that the case is excluded

- Practical certainty, may be attained after a small number of cases has been examined, but the discovery of a single negative case disproves the explanation and requires a re-formulation

The theoretical account is used as a means of initial ‘soft’ inference, and what decides on the nature of RC mechanisms and processes is empirical observation alongside procedures of limiting universals or modifying hypotheses.

### **In Defence of a Dispositional Account of Causality**

Edelson (1986) distinguishes between a causal pattern and a covering law model of explanation, the latter being the standard paradigm of explanation and hypothesis testing in contemporary science, and aiming at the generalization of law-like regularities. It is possible however, and in line with Edelson’s alternative account, to view causation, in terms of tendency and to speak of phenomena having a disposition towards certain effects (Bird et al, 2012). Such an account assumes that objects possess capacities “...*that naturally dispose towards certain outcomes or manifestations*” (Mumford & Anjum, 2012:101). Introducing the notion of disposition, puts us at odds with the aim of identifying universal regularities. This is because an object under a dispositional account may still be thought of as a potential causal entity without manifesting an assumed disposition; we are interested in the aspect of ‘characteristic potential’, and not simply actualized causal influence - i.e. that which may count as an instance of law-like regularity<sup>5</sup>. It should also be noted that dispositionalism views causality as real, consisting of actual processes and mechanisms, and therefore as potentially observable<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the dispositional account is compatible with the search for necessary conditions outlined as the aim of the analytic induction procedure. Recall that in searching for a necessary condition ‘A’, ‘A’ must be present whenever ‘X’ is, but that the presence of ‘-X’ does not negate ‘A’ as a candidate for the title of necessary condition.

<sup>6</sup> This is in marked distinction to the ‘regularity’ theory of causation which argues for the non-visibility of causal processes and is as Maxwell (2012) argues: “...*a genuine living fossil that is consistent with basic logical*”

Edelson's causal pattern model of explanation would seem to offer the rudiments of a research procedure underpinned by the above ontological commitments. His starting point is to argue for the existence of causes, "...out there in reality" (p.92) and to include their identification as a primary aim of research. He claims here to follow Freud, who in "*believing that unconscious psychological entities are causes, exerts himself to demonstrate that these entities actually exist in the patient's mind; they are not just fictions or mere figures of speech*" (p.92-3). He states further that such "*research must show that a cause has the power to produce its effects by virtue of its structure or properties, and also just how – by virtue of what processes or mechanisms – its causal influence is propagated from one space-time local to another*" (p.97).

It should be noted that we are again concerned with the distinction in the form of explanation, identified above, between causal and statistical inference<sup>7</sup>. In other words, to explain a cause-effect relation, an account or narrative of *how* a cause produces an effect is required – the steps or processes or mechanisms involved. Edelson provides the following examples of such mechanisms in psychoanalysis; 'mental operations', 'alterations in representations', 'shifts in emphasis', 'object substitution', etc. Analytic Induction is here viewed as a procedure for framing a process or narrative account of how tendency may be actualized<sup>8</sup>. To justify the approach, I proceed with a realist ontology that views causal processes and mechanisms as potentially observable, and follow Edelson (1986) in the belief that causal stories are not "*underdetermined by data in the same sense that empirical generalizations are*" (p.119).

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*positivist premises and has survived in virtually unchanged form since the positivist era*" (p.656).

<sup>7</sup> Edelson (1986) having the following to say about findings restricted to correlation or regularity, "*If the relationship thus established has not in addition been demonstrated to be a causal relationship, it is not an explanation of anything*" (p.113). He states further that "*to understand a cause-effect relation is to know what the causal connection...is*" (p.103).

<sup>8</sup> The aim is not to claim for instance that 'B', an identified independent variable, cooccurring with 'A' and 'X', but not with 'A' and '-X', is the causal condition which results in 'X'. Rather, the kind of statement aimed at is of the following sort: "in an observed instance, 'B' effected 'A' in such and such a manner, eventuating by this and that step in 'X' rather than '-X'.

### **Etiological vs Constitutive Explanations**

Edelson (1986) distinguishes between etiological and constitutive causal explanation. The distinction is found in other writings, though different terms are used. Hinshelwood (2013) uses historical vs dynamic causality, and outside of the psychoanalytic, Analytic Induction speaks of open vs closed or semi-closed systems, or of genetic vs systematic (Hammersley, 2008). Etiological explanations postulate causal connections in which cause and effect are at the same level, and causes are external to and impinge upon the system whose properties are to be explained. An example, relevant to the research would be loss or trauma as an etiological factor in RC production. Constitutive explanations on the other hand, postulate causal connections in which cause and effect are at different levels, and causes are internal to, or constituents of, the system whose properties are to be explained. Relevant examples might concern desire for an object, or the occurrence of projection and transference in relation to an object.

Edelson (1986) notes that psychoanalytic case studies might in general offer stronger evidence for the credibility of constitutive explanations. This makes a lot of sense given the remoteness in time of etiological factors, and the idea that one can view constitutive causal processes in the 'here-and-now' during psychoanalytic sessions. Following this line of thought, my interest will not be in the causative role of loss or trauma, but rather with the inter and intra-subjective processes that bring about RC activity in the present. It may be that historical experiences are considered, but in such instances, they will be explored on their own terms so to speak, with no claim being made about a supposed etiological role. In other words, they will be seen as simply an additional site of RC activity, akin to any other considered.

## Epistemological and Ontological Underpinnings

I would argue that both the phenomenon I am investigating, and the methodology employed, fits comfortably within the ontological and epistemological perspective suggested by critical realism. Alvesson & Skoldberg (2010) highlight that the philosophical paradigm is concerned with attempts at identifying the underlying mechanisms which generate empirical phenomena. The paradigm suggests that “...most aspects of interest transpire beyond individuals' conception and definition of situations. Social structure entails things that lie behind individual consciousness and intention. In other words, causal mechanisms operate largely independently from the mind and action of individuals” (p.41). Outcomes are here dependent on facilitative action or on the absence of intervening capacities. Oliver (2012) writes that “a critical realist methodology must therefore have the dual focus on agency and structure...” (381). The construct of RC has always straddled the line between poles of structure and agency, with various authors placing the phenomenon at different points along a continuum. In a sense it has 'called out' for a critical realist position, and also hinted at the necessity of one.

Turning to the research method, Alvesson & Skoldberg (2010) point out that the type of causal explanation aimed at differs from that of positivism, critical realism viewing causality as complex, contextual, socially emergent and as existing on multiple levels. Generative mechanisms are defined in terms of tendency, where an outcome may vary or even fail to materialize. This is in keeping with an Analytic Induction methodology that aims at a dispositional causal account. Roberts (2014) adds a point on the suitability of qualitative methods broadly, saying that where identification of causal mechanisms of the kind envisaged by critical realism is concerned, “qualitative methods assist the researcher...by helping him or her construct a model of a potential mechanism...which will then be used to explain a set of observable patterns” (p.5).

### **Procedural Outline**

Procedurally, I observe instances of 'X' (the strands of RC identified) and confirm through observation and inference, that 'A' (proposed necessary condition for 'X') is always present. Freud's case study on the Rat Man is used as the entry point, or initial case in the analytic induction procedure. Naturally, to confirm that 'A' is *always* present is a matter of across case analysis, and a second case is therefore required before the analytic induction procedure properly commences.

### *Repetition*

I begin by identifying strands of RC in each case study ('X'). I have chosen to focus on sexual and romantic relationships or encounters, both because the area seems unusually rich in RC activity, and because a narrower focus makes the research more manageable. In terms of the total analytic process, I read for RC phenomenology by considering content which meets the definitional criteria of RC outlined in the literature review section. The initial reading aims at content familiarisation and involves the recognition and retention of patterns occurring across large time periods and across multiple relationships. The definitional criteria are held loosely in mind during this reading and determine whether a given potential strand of RC, occurring across multiple relationships, merits further consideration. The procedure becomes systematized at the next stage, where a central sexual relationship between the patient and his/her object, which has been identified as potentially symptomatic of RC activity, is considered in-depth. All content related to the relationship is marked line by line as it is encountered. I mark for three primary aspects of relationship; the characteristics of the object, the typical effects of the relationship upon the patient, and the patient's affective state (libidinal and aggressive) directed towards the object.

These three aspects are targeted because they highlight distinct regions of RC phenomenology:

- The ‘characteristics of the object’ is concerned with the interpersonal dimension of RC activity, and with the notion that RC is best defined as the repetition of a *‘lived interpersonal situation’*. A consideration of the object’s nature allows us to explore the patient’s relationship to the other; the mode by which they employ the other to bring about RC activity.
- The ‘typical effects of the relationship’ centres on the question of unpleasure and damage; whether and to what degree these basic definitional elements of RC are present in the data.
- A consideration of the ‘affective state directed towards the object’ is incorporated because it provides a context for questions about the presence or absence of unconscious processes; If *X* seemingly felt one way, then why did he do *A*, if he felt another, then why *B*.

Next, I consider the fact of repetition. I do this by analysing additional relationships in the same way as above; in light of the same three regions of potential RC phenomenology. It is then possible to analyse points of overlap (repetition) between these regions.

If further strands of RC are encountered, which are phenomenologically distinct from the first, I repeat these same steps with each additional strand.

### *Search and Identification of Necessary Conditions*

The next phase of analysis is concerned with the identification of the hypothesised necessary conditions (‘A’). Broadly speaking, it amounts to a consideration of context and how relevant contextual features operate within that context. The outcome is a record and account of the processes or mechanisms that bring about RC in a given instance.

Having emphasised the aspect of context, it should further be noted that the occurrence of differing contexts, across cases, has a bearing on the degree of systemization possible. In short, since contexts differ from each other, it makes little sense to approach or organize this phase in the same manner in each case. For instance, one mode of systemization may be to begin by identifying the proposed contextual features of interest (proposed necessary conditions) in the manner of a check list. With each case we would begin with a specific condition and move down a list, either confirming or disconfirming, as we progress. The problem with this approach however is that it undermines the aim of capturing a comprehensive view of context. We could speak here of a ‘bottom up’ approach, and of an attempt to render the total context as ‘top down’. It is the latter that I implement because the aim is to see how features operate *within a specific context* and that context is required in order to make such an assessment. The consequence is that this phase of analysis resists ordered treatment. To illustrate the point, if a key area of context in one case is that of sibling relationships then it makes little sense to use such a heading in a case where siblings have no presence. As such, I proceed by focussing on whichever contexts RC operates in, within a given case; in one case it may be sibling relationships and in another parental ones. Once these contexts are adequately rendered, it is then possible to consider whether, and in what fashion, the necessary conditions operate.

### **Data Format**

Three published case studies are used as data. These are Sigmund Freud’s (1909) ‘Notes on a Case of Obsessional Neurosis’, Ben Karpman’s (1951) ‘A Psychoanalytic Study of a Case of Murder’ and Robert J. Stoller’s (1973) ‘Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity’.

## **Legitimization and Overview of Data Requirements**

The research is concerned with the identification of psychological causal entities/mechanisms complicit in the production of RC activity; the psychological features that are present preceding, or during a given strand of RC (the constitutive or dynamic factors). The data therefore needs to include micro-processes, for instance shifts in object-choice, transference vacillations or instances of projective identification, as such processes are assumed to be responsible – seen here as necessary conditions – for the generation of RC. Since by definition RC is identified as it occurs over large passages of time, the data must also include a record of the fact of repetition across a long period. Fulfilling these twin requirements (observation of both micro and macro-processes), is therefore what is minimally required to meet the aim of empirical observation.

Considering these requirements, the ideal form of data would have been audio-recorded sessions of long-term psychotherapy, accompanied by clinical assessments which specify and track the presence of repetitive activity during a given course of treatment. The latter would provide an inroad into dealing with data where I would expect a great deal of extraneous content. The psychotherapeutic approach should be broadly psychodynamic, as I assume that the type of phenomena I'm interested in, would be made more visible by an approach which itself tends to focus on similar or related entities. Unfortunately, practically speaking, recorded treatments proved exceedingly difficult to obtain, and their scarcity meant that the ones I did obtain simply did not deal with my area of interest. As such, I decided to use case studies, again broadly psychodynamic in orientation, with rich verbatim material instead, as the next most suitable option.

In searching for relevant data, I used data-bases and repositories which hold case study material, for instance Pep Wed, Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy and Single Case

Archive. Initially, I searched for the terms, repetition compulsion and others suggestive of RC activity such as enactment, self-destructive behaviour, repetitive maladaptive behaviour, poor object choice, the death instinct, negative therapeutic reaction, traumatic behavioural re-enactment, etc. A difficulty that I quickly encountered however had to do with the length of cases; they were simply too short. In this connection, Mahony (1999) speaks of the ‘waning of the case history as a expository genre’, noting that editorial policy places restrictions on length which “*no longer allow the publication of long case histories such as Freud’s...[these being replaced]...by the more popular vignette, which unfortunately, rarely gives details of the analysis process...is illustrative rather than demonstrative, and does not offer the longitudinal account...*” (p.454). Length then become the key search criteria, and I proceeded by assessing the longest cases I could find, with the richest verbatim content, for suitability to the topic.

### **Limitations of the Method**

One limitation, as I have implemented the method, can be introduced by returning to Lindesmith’s malaria example. Following the discovery of the causative role of parasites in malaria, the claim may be that the parasite is both a necessary and sufficient condition for malaria, the implication being that the parasite will always cause illness. There is a twist here however, because as Lindesmith (1981) writes “*If one insists on looking for a single cause condition, factor or variable, which invariably produces the effect with which one is concerned, the parasite does not qualify. It is true that it is always present when malaria occurs, but the sheer presence of the plasmodium is not sufficient to produce the disease*” (p. 90-91). He then lists instances when the parasite is present but without disease. As two examples, humans can be immune, and the parasite does not affect mosquitoes. The parasite may therefore qualify as a necessary condition and the question of generalization would seem to relate to issues of

context, which is where a further research procedure could have been useful. Once the necessary condition is identified, instances when it *does* produce a given effect could have been compared to instances when it *does not*. The surrounding content is identified as that which facilitates or negates tendency/disposition of an identified necessary condition. The comparison would have produced greater content for a consideration of how tendency is actualized or manifested. To return to the malaria example, we explain why the parasite does not cause malaria in certain humans, i.e. because they have acquired immunity.

In other words, it would have been productive to explore instances of 'A' (identified necessary condition), cooccurring both with 'X' (RC) and '-X' (-RC), to see how 'A' functions contextually. This would have amounted to a comparative procedure, highlighting the processes or mechanisms which lead to 'X'. The analytic induction procedure as implemented furnishes me with accounts where 'A' and 'X' cooccur. For comparative purposes, what would have been additionally required is data concerning the cooccurrence of 'A' and '-X'; a case where confirmed necessary conditions are present but no RC. The difficulty here, aside from time constraints, had to do with finding such a case. It may be that Turner's 'tautology' critique has some merit in this regard, and that such cases simply do not exist. However, the absence may equally be down to author bias, for what author of a case study, in the field of psychoanalysis, would provide a focussed account of 'healthy' relationships. I did in fact find cases where the overall health of romantic relationships was *stated*, even though many of the necessary conditions nevertheless seemed present. The problem here was that the absence of data concerning those relationships meant that there was nothing to analyse.

I believe that the greatest limitation of the method however, is one that Hinshelwood (2013) raises in relation to observation and data gathering broadly; the accusation of circularity. In short, circularity amounts to using a specific theory to identify relevant data, and then using observations based on that data, to support the same theory. The problem is what is left out;

data which could undermine the theory and is dismissed or overlooked precisely because it does not fall under the auspices of that theory. The limitation is therefore one of accounting for author bias, a matter which is discussed further, in the section on quality criteria

### **Generalizability**

As Mitchell (1983) notes, the question of generalizability in case study research, often centres on the issue of typicality; the extent to which a given case may be judged as representative. Mitchell argues, however, that *“the essential point about...making inferences from case material...[is] that the extrapolation is in fact based on the validity of the analysis rather than the representativeness of the events”* (p.168). As Stiles (2014) summarises, the aim is to produce an internally consistent, explicit, unified and logically coherent account. Mitchell goes on to outline, that what case study research is in fact concerned with, is the operation of a general theoretical principle, as it occurs within a particular event or situation. The emphasis here is on the *theoretical* and the argument, again references the distinction, mentioned above, between statistical and scientific or causal inference. In Mitchell’s words, on the latter, *“scientific or causal – or, perhaps more appropriately, logical – inference is the process by which the analyst draws conclusions about the essential linkage between two or more characteristics in terms of some systematic explanatory schema – some set of theoretical propositions”* (p.176). The analysis then, is set within, and balanced against, a matrix of existing knowledge and theory, and generalizability as I understand it in my research, has to do with contributing back into that matrix. Following Stiles (2014), I would classify my research as ‘theory building’ which has, as he says, the goal of *“...improving a theory as its product.”* (p.6). He speaks further of ‘living theories’, noting that they are never finished and *“...are always subject to modification by further observations, which may strengthen or weaken*

*confidence in them or illuminate aspects that might be elaborated or extended”* (p.8). As previously stated, Analytic Induction formalizes this process of verification and reformulation. The end product, following analysis of the three case studies, should equally not be thought of as a conclusive statement in the positivist sense, but rather as a ‘living theory’, which would no doubt change with further analysis of additional cases.

### **Consideration of Alternative Research Methods**

My choice of research method was circumscribed by the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. By definition, RC is identified as it occurs over large passages of time, which make direct observation of the phenomenon impractical. RC does not in any event seem easily accessible to observation for three further reasons; it is expressed as an interpersonal event, occurs outside of conscious awareness and is a manifestation of traumatic content. My reasoning here is that it would be impractical to attempt to be present at often private interpersonal moments in an individual’s life, that it would be difficult to identify instances of RC if the individual is him/herself unaware of them and that behaviour of a traumatic kind is often hidden from general social view. It is thus difficult to see how one could gain access to the phenomenon by methods other than reporting. This point applies to audio recorded therapy sessions as well, since establishing RC would depend on reports from the patient about their historical and contemporary relationships.

One alternative method that was given consideration, is the logical model developed by Hinshelwood (2013) based on the experimental approach in science. My first question or concern had to do with applying his model to existing case-studies or audio recorded treatments, and whether this would class the research as induction. By using existing data, I would not be making predictions which are put to the test. I would not be carrying out an

experiment. One potential solution that may have allowed me to approximate the ‘carrying out of an experiment’ with existing data, would have involved the inclusion of a comprehensive protocol. The protocol would need to specify the exact conditions that one aims at ‘testing’, and then my procedure would be about finding these conditions in the data where they have by chance and unknowingly been ‘put to the test’.

A central practical determinant in deciding against the method was the presumption that finding the desired test sequences (the test result here concerned with shifts in the transference-countertransference relationship) would have been extremely trying – perhaps best summed up as ‘finding a needle in a haystack’.

Another concern, was more fundamental, having to do with questions about the reliability of the model. Hinshelwood notes that where scientific experiments are concerned, conditions should keep variables to a minimum, preferably two – the independent and dependant variable, for if there is a third then the dependent variable will not necessarily occur.

My concern was the suspicion that interpretation (the independent variable suggested by Hinshelwood) can’t necessarily be viewed as the application of a single variable, since unknown variables no doubt exist, deriving from the subjective nature of interpretation, both regarding the way the client receives the interpretation and the way the therapist executes it. Ultimately, the encounter is simply not a controlled environment in the same way that an experiment is. Hinshelwood clearly notes these difficulties but argues that they can be surmounted through the use of exact prediction in the logical model. Perhaps prediction could show us that an interpretation is functioning as expected and thereby justify the theory upon which the interpretation is built, in the instance *of a verified prediction*. However, there is never a way to know whether *a failed prediction* is due to an incorrect theory or due to an extraneous variable in the interpretation moment. Recall for instance that Freud required both memory and affect for symptom alteration. Perhaps then in a given instance of interpretation the verbal

content (deriving from the theory under test) may be correct but an absence of affect precludes the predicted outcome. One solution would be to include the extraneous variables in the theory that is put to the test, but is it ever possible to be comprehensive enough to guarantee that you have accounted for them *all*? Is it even feasible to try?

I also gave a passing thought to survey methods, which might have been appropriate for the apprehension of certain aspects of RC, but concluded that they would not be particularly useful in aiding my central line of inquiry which concerns an in-depth analysis of some of the processes which are at the heart of the construct. This requires a holistic view of the individual and of the context they inhabit; one that is better furnished through case-based methods, which as Mishler argues grant the individual “...*unity and coherence though time, respecting them as subjects with both histories and intentions*” (1996:80).

Two alternative, qualitative methods, that I considered were Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and Grounded Theory (GT), but I rejected both for the following reasons. Smith and Osborn (2003) note that IPA is fundamentally centred on how individuals construct meaning and make sense of their experience. My interest in RC is however in a different area. I wanted to explore the dynamic, *unconscious*, causal mechanisms involved rather than focus for instance on how individuals made sense of RC episodes. In short IPA, answers a different question from the one I am interested in. GT was attractive because of the emphasis on generating theory in a direct manner from data. Traditionally, this involves the rejection of an early literature review in order to avoid ‘contamination’. As Dunne (2011) outlines the argument, contamination may consist of imposing “...*existing frameworks, hypothesis or other theoretical ideas upon the data, which would in turn undermine the focus, authenticity and quality of the...research*” (p. 114). A consideration of the literature on RC, indicates however, that the construct is an exceedingly complex one, and it is therefore doubtful how profitable an exploration would be without recourse to existing knowledge. Instead of

seeing a grounding in existing theory as contamination, I follow Dunne in reasoning that it may provide theoretical sensitivity, clarity of thought about concepts and in fact promote awareness of potential unhelpful preconceptions.

### **Quality Criteria**

Stiles (2014) writes that *“theory-building research provides quality control on theories by gathering observations and comparing them with what the theory leads them to expect...The observations may confirm or disconfirm or strengthen or weaken the theory, leading to increased confidence in aspects of the theory”* (p.8). This is the procedure that Analytic Induction formalizes, and we can state that the methodology itself, therefore explicitly incorporates a fundamental aspect of quality control.

Where this research is concerned, three levels of validity are implicated; the content provided by the patient, the therapist and author’s presentation and involvement in that content, and the validity of my own analysis. I will start with the patient’s content or narrative. To begin, I would like to highlight a basic point about the value of self-reports, which is that self-narratives have value because they are primary sources – an individual reflecting on themselves – and so an obvious question is where or how else could you obtain such data. How else do you gain access to subjective intentional states but through being told? Turning to the issue of validity, one method of assessing trustworthiness, is to establish the degree of verisimilitude obtained by the narrative through an appraisal of narrative coherence, the idea being that the more coherent the narrative the more trustworthy (Agar & Hobbs, 1982; Lind, 1993). My topic of interest, RC, is extremely helpful in this respect. Repetition is a fundamental feature of the phenomenon, ‘compulsion’ being the other key element, and identifying the fact of repetition, provides a way of assessing coherence where RC activity is concerned. In short, if something

is identified as occurring repeatedly, across multiple contexts, we are more likely to trust in the truth of its existence. This same basic tenant applies to the search and identification of necessary conditions, the other major area of focus in the analysis process, and roughly the ‘compulsion’ aspect of RC. Here again, conditions needed to occur repeatedly before being classed as necessary conditions, and not just within case, but in accordance with the research method, across case as well.

There was little I could do to identify or directly combat author bias in the case studies. One decision I did make, in this regard, was to largely ignore their theoretical contributions, in an attempt to privilege the patient’s verbatim content. Of the three case studies, the one I have most faith in is Stoller’s, as verbatim extracts were transcribed from audio recordings.

In terms of insuring research validity broadly, I have taken a common-sense approach and follow Riessman's (2008) emphasis on the importance of demonstrating that “*the data are genuine, and analytic interpretations of them are plausible, reasonable, and convincing*” (p.191). Concerning plausibility and reasonableness, in displaying my analysis process, I have included a trail of evidence, that indicates each step leading to a given interpretation, so that the reader is provided with sufficient content to reflect on the validity of interpretations and conclusions, themselves.

An issue relating to credibility, that I would like to return to, is Hinshelwood’s (2013) accusation of potential circularity. As outlined, the problem has to do with leaving out data, which could undermine a theory, because it does not *seem* relevant to, does not fit, the theory in question. Where the identification of RC activity is concerned, I attempted to guard against this possibility, by dividing the analysis into themes. As outlined above, I looked in turn, at the nature of the object, affect directed at the object and the impact of the relationship. In each instance, any content pertaining to the theme in question, was included in the analysis. For example, there were repetitions that had elements which were not painful and damaging and

therefore did not meet that criteria of RC. These were noted, and impacted on the analysis. Another example, would be affect, where a patient felt different things about an individual. Again, all affect was included, and the disparities in feeling employed to further discussion and analysis.

Stiles (2014) raises a further issue relating to quality control that is worth considering, noting that it is essential that central terms have a stable or fixed meaning allowing for common usage and understanding. He highlights the particular relevance to the psychoanalytic field; *“meanings of such terms as transference, alliance, conflict, stimulus, automatic thoughts...shift continually in informal psychological discussions, so getting them to hold still within a theory is challenging...”* (p.17). It is for this reason, to ensure transparency and consistency, that I have gone to lengths to define constructs such as transference, projection, projective identification and object choice before applying them to the analytic process.

### **A Final Point**

In closing, I turn to the question of why the method has fallen out of favour, or more accurately why it never really caught on to begin with. There is no doubt that Analytic Induction would have suffered during the long-standing climate of anti-positivist critique in the social sciences, and that as a prospective representative of the scientific method, it has appeared outdated given endorsement of the hypothetico-deductive method.

Although the criticisms related to methodological vogue, and the logic of the method, may have merit, I yet wonder if part of the story is not that it simply lacked intuitive appeal. My suspicion is that the accounts it produced were for the most part seen as uninspiring, a quality I believe results from the kind of explanations it produced; explanations where the level of analysis is restricted to the conscious and rational. My suspicion is that such accounts when

applied to the context of human intentionality, which has been a common area of application, feel limited, leaving readers with little appetite for repeat outings.

# CASE STUDY ONE: FREUD'S 'NOTES UPON A CASE OF OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS'

## RC Identification

### *A First RC Strand*

I will begin by identifying strands of RC in the case study, focussing on Ernst Lanzer's (aka the Rat Man, and patient) romantic relations. The first strand of RC identified, involves a repetitive relationship established by Ernst, which is most fully exemplified in the study involving the patient's cousin Gisela, who he courts and intends to marry. Examples are given of additional relationships which display the same features highlighted between Ernst and Gisela, and therefore support the claim of repetition.

### *Object Nature*

The case study provides little information about Gisela as an individual, and Freud informs us that this is initially due to a refusal on Ernst's part. As Freud states, "*so long as he makes difficulties over giving me the lady's name his account must remain incoherent*" (p.272), and "*the lady still remains most mysterious*" (p.260). Freud classifies the refusal as resistance, and notes that a 'violent struggle' (p.260) was required to combat Ernst's reticence. Freud had for instance to pointedly request him "*to bring a photograph of the lady with him – i.e. to give up the reticence about her*" (p.260). In the end, what we do learn is summarized by Zetzel, "*we get a picture of Gisela as (i) a first cousin; (ii) possibly too old for him (her age is not mentioned); (iii) almost certainly sterile...; and (iv) a woman who was subject to frequent*

*serious and disabling periods of ill health...*" (1966:127). If we do not have sufficient information on her character to go by, then we can still profit from an attempt to determine what she represents for Ernst. Freud notes that Ernst while he loved the lady, "*had never felt very sensual wishes towards her*" (p.182). Owing to the practical matter of an ongoing indecision concerning marriage, on *both* their parts, the relationship simply did not have a consummated sexual dimension. Given that there is little evidence of Ernst desiring such (he is quite open about sexual desire where it centres on other women), I am proposing that Gisela signifies a desexualized object choice. This is a point that Zetel also makes, referring to Gisela as resembling 'a prepuberty little girl' and theorizing that "*the fact that this cousin who was herself highly ambivalent may also have been 'abused' by her stepfather, and was at least as disturbed in respect of her psychosexual life as the patient, suggests that her own personality loaned itself to a relationship characterized by many infantile features*" (1966:127).

### *Effect of the Relationship*

Turning next to the question of how the relationship effects Ernst, we find that the dynamics of the relationship seem mostly to centre on rejection – whether the fact of rejection is correctly described as due to perceptual distortion of the kind exhibited for instance in projection or concerns objective behaviours and features of the object, is a line of enquiry that will concern us at a later point. One can however make the surprising generalization that – outside of ongoing contact; the fact that the two have a relationship of some sort – the only distinct relational propensity Gisela is *shown* to evince, is the capacity for rejection. Her absence in order to look after her sick grandmother is experienced as rejecting (p.187), and so is her refusal of his offer to visit at that time (p.259). She is supposedly preoccupied with other men on specific occasions (p.188, 265, 303). She refuses his marriage proposal (p.194), and this is followed by a certain 'coolness' (p.237). Ernst also believes that she sets "*great store by the*

*social standing of a suiter*” (p.194), and that this negatively effects his chances. In a dream, he sees her ‘making a face’ at the prospect of being engaged to him (p.273). He describes another dream on the night following her rejection of the proposal. *“There was a pearl on the road. I stooped to pick it up but every time I stooped it disappeared. Every two or three steps it appeared again...”* (p.274). Ernst sums up Gisela’s feeling towards him thus, *“it might be true...that she could not love easily; but she was reserving her whole self for the one man to whom she would some day belong. She did not love him”* (p185). Although examples of Gisela’s behaviour centre on rejection there must of course be elements of acceptance implicit in the very fact that the two of them have an ongoing relationship; they are in contact, spend time together and she is a willing participant in this to whatever degree.

#### *Affective State*

What of Ernst’s affective states (libidinal and aggressive)? Freud notes that he *“...passed through alternating periods, in which he either believed that he loved her intensely, or felt indifferent to her...”* (p.194). As mentioned, he did not view Gisela as a sexual object, and since we are not provided with further evidence about what precisely is meant by ‘intense love’, it remains difficult to clarify the nature of the supposed libidinous trend. Although he would probably be able to provide conscious reasons for his ‘want’ if pushed – charm or intelligence for instance – he does not offer these of his own accord at any time in the case study. What we do see, is that the experiences of rejection often result in suicidal thought/compulsion or self-punishing behaviour (p.188). There are episodes of aggression following these reactions, directed not at Gisela, but at a related object (displacement) that is deemed responsible; for instance, Gisela’s grandmother (p.187) or other men (p.188). Freud perhaps expands on the tendency towards displacement with the statement that impulses to do harm to Gisela *“...where usually silent in her presence, but came to the fore when she was not there”* (p.255). Ernst

therefore struggles to direct aggression towards the ‘correct’ target while it is present. The case study also mentions phantasies of punishment or torture (p.167), mild revenge scenarios (p.185), and ‘vindictive impulses’ (p.185) centred on Gisela. In my view, the following dream, mentioned above, seems to sum up the situation succinctly. In it, Ernst is engaged to Gisela, and after she ‘makes a face’, he ends by telling himself “*you’re engaged and not at all happy. You’re pretending to be happy so as to persuade yourself that you are*” (p.273). We know little about the quality of the positive libidinous attachment to Gisela. Ernst’s desire remains largely undefined and is perhaps best described as a formless *need*, in the nature of, or in the semblance of love, although not ‘love proper’. This does not imply that it is weak for clearly the converse is true; it consumes him. There is additionally clear evidence of reactive pain and aggression, following repeated rejection. It seems to me that there is enough here to conclude that we observe an instance of desexualised object choice, centred on a predominantly rejecting object. Since there is an implied degree of acceptance down to the fact of there being a relationship and because of Ernst’s overwhelming need, Armstrong-Perlman’s (1991) classification of an ‘alluring but rejecting’ object would be more apt than to class Gisela as exclusively rejecting. For ease of use, and to highlight the central dynamic at play, I will however employ the term rejecting object, but the reader should note that the alluring aspect is implicit.

The case study contains examples of other relationships which mirror key aspects of the relationship between Ernst and Gisela, and so provide evidence of repetition. As with Gisela the term rejecting object is employed, but the alluring aspect should be considered implicit. To proceed, Ernst mentions a childhood love of his, Marie Steiner. Freud writes that when the patient “*was 14 or 15 he had a sentimental passion for her [and] insists upon her narrowminded conceit*” (p.270). What is interesting here is not simply the fact of rejection, but also the notion of a *sentimental* passion, and the thought that such a term may imply an absence of *sexual* passion. Lest the reader conclude that the absence of sexual desire is down to age, 14

or 15 is no longer young – well past the latency period – especially in an individual who states that his “*sexual life began very early*” (p.160), and that from a young age he was “*left with a burning and tormenting curiosity to see the female body*” (p.160). Freud does state that “*in his childhood his sensual impulses had been much stronger than during puberty*” (p.182), but there is no suggestion that his sexual impulses disappeared altogether. Freud for instance comments that “*in his earlier years he had exhibited frankly. When he was thirteen he still did so to [Fraulein] Lina*” (p.279). There are other examples with both elements, rejection and an absence of sexual desire. “*When he was twelve years old he had been in love with a little girl, the sister of a friend of his. (In answer to a question he said that his love had not been sensual; he had not wanted to see her naked for she was too small.) But she had not shown him as much affection as he had desired*” (p.178). In later life he spends a day and evening with Marie, walking and playing cards. The following morning he has a dream, reported to Freud, in which he tells Marie about the elements of a previous dream as these relate to her, “*the meaning of which [of the dream elements] was that I might neither marry her nor have sexual intercourse with her. But that is nonsensical, he said, I might just as well have a prohibition against ever washing again. She smiled and nodded to him. In the dream he took this to mean that she agreed with him that both things were absurd. But when he woke up it occurred to him that she had meant that he need not wash any more. He fell into a state of emotion and knocked his head against the bed-post*” (p.271). Even in aggressive phantasy, designed to injure Gisela, Ernst stumbles, almost *as if* by chance, upon the rejecting object. His imagined plot is to “*grow very rich and marry some one else, and...then take her to call on the lady in order to hurt her feelings*” (p.185). The phantasy breaks-down “*for he is obliged to own to himself that the other women, his wife, was completely indifferent to him*” (p.185). The same reactive aggression occurs here too: after he acknowledges that the imagined wife is indifferent to him, “*his*

*thoughts had become confused, till finally it had been clearly borne in upon him that this other women would have to die” (p.185).*

### *RC Identification*

Before continuing, I want to be explicit about how the suggested strand of RC meets the definitional criteria of RC outlined above. The relationships described, result in damaging and painful experience (rejection and self-harming behaviour), and I have also given examples which argue for the fact of repetition. Concerning the question of unconscious motivation in RC, a basic assumption must be that the individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition while it occurs, and that what is desired is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. The unpleasurable experiences Ernst repeats in his relationships are not seen as repetitive by him, and are also consciously unwanted and unintended.

### *Second RC Strand*

There is a second type of relationship which is viewed as an additional component of the above RC strand, meaning that the full picture of a proposed single repetitive phenomenon remains to be outlined. This sub-strand contains features which are diametrically opposed to those in the first. Here, object choice centres on women that are *unusually* accepting of Ernst’s sexual advances, *he* often rejects *them*, and aggression is overtly expressed. The women also tend to occupy a lower socioeconomic standing.

Ernst describes a scene from his childhood, where he is lying on a sofa with his governess. *“I was lying beside her, and begged her to let me creep under her skirt. She told me I might, so long as I said nothing to any one about it. She had very little on, and I fingered her genitals and the lower part of her body...” (p.160).* Again, with a later governess – the Fraulein

Lina mentioned above – he says, *“I took a great many liberties with her. When I got into her bed I used to uncover her and touch her, and she made no objections”* (p.161). What is striking about both encounters, is the easy and willing receptiveness to his advances. In the following exert overt expression of aggression is linked to sexual activity. At the time of seeing Freud, Ernst one day arrives home and meets his servant girl *“He cannot think why, but he suddenly gave her a kiss and then attacked her”* (p.261). The same elements are present in his relationship to his sister Julie, which is portrayed as highly sexualized. *“Even the servants said that she loved him and kissed him [the patient] like a lover, not like a brother”* (p.314). Following a dream of copulating with Julie, he entered *“her bedroom and smacked her bottom under the bedclothes”* (p.278). Ernst adds further that *“he made...repeated attacks on his...sister, Julie”* (p.278). At the time of treatment, there is mention of his behaving aggressively to a dressmaker he is having sexual relations with (p.278). There is also the suggestion of a tendency towards rejecting her, *“when I [Freud] asked him whether he was already getting bored with her he replied Yes, with astonishment. He confessed that he was afraid she would ruin him financially...”* (p.316).

### *Object Nature*

I will now consider the same three primary aspects of the relationship explored above in relation to the first RC strand, as they apply to the second sub-strand. Little can be stated about the characteristics of the object, beyond an observed receptiveness to Ernst’s sexual advances, and their position of lower socio-economic standing.

### *Affective State*

In turning to Ernst’s affective state, we have seen that sexual desire is a prominent feature, and that aggression is overtly expressed.

### *Effect of the Relationship*

Ernst seems to find pleasure in his sexual exploits, describing them for instance as a '*glorious feeling that one might do anything for...*' (p.264). Freud echoes these sentiments, mentioning for instance Ernst's spirits rising "*...greatly on account of his rendezvous with the dressmaker*" (p.292). There is a complicating factor however, discussed in-depth below, as Ernst also equates sex with guilt, injury, suffering, illness, and death. This leads Freud to conclude that "*it was always the same with him: his fine or happy moments were always spoiled by something nasty*" (p.261).

### ***One Strand; Two Sub-relationships***

I stated above that it is possible to identify one strand of RC consisting of the two types of romantic relationship described; one desexualized, rejecting and characterized by the repression or displacement of aggression, and the other sexual, accepting and characterized by overt aggression. The case study provides ample support for the suggestion of an inherent link between the two types, and also affords insight into the nature of the proposed link. As a general statement the iconography of 'two women' and indecision between them, runs throughout the study, featured in dream, phantasy, compulsive thought, transference manifestations and even on the transgenerational level. Evidence therefore converges from multiple sources. Freud himself draws a parallel between an experience of Ernst's father – the decision to choose Ernst's mother because of her wealth and position, over a '*pretty but penniless girl of humble birth*' (p.198) – and Ernst's wish to not make the same choice, that is he should remain faithful to Gisela rather than '*marry the lovely, rich, and well-connected girl*' (p.198) suggested by his mother. Freud finds evidence of the same scenario manifested in a transference phantasy. Ernst

there substitutes Freud's own daughter for the wealthy acceptable girl, and suffers indecision between her and Gisela. The fact of 'who' Freud's daughter is substituted for, seems to be Freud's own construction. Ernst in fact takes the line that it would be *him* who "*raised the wealth and position of [Freud's] family to a level which agreed with the model he had in mind*" (p.199). I think the 'who' that Freud's daughter is substituted for, can more accurately be described as a 'what', and that the 'what' in question is the sexualized object choice described above. Ernst has, as Freud writes in the eventually published process notes, "*many phantasies of being unfaithful to Gise with this daughter [of mine] and punishment for this*" (p.282). As the treatment progresses Ernst goes on to describe phantasy scenarios which must surely have pushed Freud to his limits! Freud's daughter is pictured giving fellatio to a naked deputy judge (p.283); Ernst has the idea, Freud writes, of "*ordering me to bring my daughter into the room, so that he could lick her, saying 'bring in the Miessnick'*" (p.284); Ernst phantasies about "*lying on his back on a girl [Freud's daughter] and...copulating with her by means of the stool hanging from his anus*" (p.287). There are more phantasy scenarios along the same line, and some incorporating Freud himself, his wife, his children and his mother. The scenarios clearly also exhibit the expression of overt aggression as the scenes contain humiliating sexual content, murder and death.

The point I want to make is that Ernst repeats this formulation of 'two women' (two types of object choice) in a compulsive repetitive fashion. He eventually, as Freud says, displaces "*his love for his cousin on to the dressmaker; and...is now making the latter compete with my daughter...*" (p.295). There is also the suggestion, made by Freud, that the whole tormenting debacle about paying back the money to Lieutenant A, and the agonizing indecision of the train trip to Vienna (see case study), are founded on indecision over the choice between two young women who were 'kindly disposed' towards Ernst (p.210-212). As stated, the motif of two women also features in dream, there represented by two swords, signifying marriage

and copulation (p.267) and seems to be granted an emphasised position in conscious waking experience (p.311). After Ernst spends the night with a waitress, who speaks about her first love, Freud reports that Ernst regretted it because, *“he always sought to make a sharp distinction between relations which consisted only of copulation and everything that was called love: and the idea that she has been so deeply loved made her in his eyes an unsuitable object for his sensuality”* (p.263). I take the following phantasy imagery as representative of an attempt at integration. Ernst meets a woman on the street who he suspects of being a prostitute, *“she smiled in a peculiar way and he had the strange idea that his cousin was inside her body and that her genitals were placed behind the woman’s in such a way that she got something out of it every time the woman copulated.”* From the perspective of integration, the phantasy does not however end well, as *“then his cousin, inside her, blew herself out so that she burst her”* (p.312).

### *RC Identification*

Under this reading the whole entity – two relationships, diametrically opposed – is viewed as a repetition compulsion. I have spoken above of how the first type of relationship may be classed as an instance of RC, I turn now to the question of how this additional sub-strand may qualify alongside it and *in relation to it*.

Ernst repeatedly experiences guilt over betraying Gisela. For instance, while kissing a woman he had a *“distressing compulsive idea that something bad was happening to his lady”* (p.267). We can class these responses as relatively mild although nevertheless neurotic due to the element of concretization/displacement – he believes *something* bad happens to her rather than the bad thing being his act. Ernst is also often overcome by more extreme guilt and dread where sex is concerned generally. As stated above, and discussed further below, it may be experienced as tantamount to murder. Turning to Ernst’s aggressive outbursts, we find that his

attacks are unjustified, involuntary (in fact surprising to him) and destructive. The guilt, shame and dread experienced in relation to this second type of object choice are most forcefully illustrated in the transference. While Ernst relays his detailed phantasies (sexual and aggressive) about Freud's daughter he cannot stop moving about the room, and acknowledges that this is because he fears being beaten (p.283-4). Freud describes the scene further "*his demeanor during all of this was that of a man in desperation and one who was trying to save himself from blows of terrific violence; he buried his head in his hands, rushed away, covered his face with his arms, etc*" (p.284). An important factor here is the counter transference, or rather in this instance, to Freud's credit, the expected counter transference response. Freud refers to him privately as a 'dirty fellow' (p.283), but overall, seems to have contained his reactions. Ernst however expected brutal retaliation and feared for his safety. His phantasies were undeniably provocative; as Freud says to him you are "*...playing the part of a bad man in relation to me*" (p.314). These libidinal and aggressive currents occur in sharp relief in one encounter where Ernst spontaneously kisses and attacks his 'servant-girl'. He immediately flees the situation and Freud concludes, "*it was always the same with him: his fine or happy moments were always spoilt...*" (p.261).

We can conclude therefore that this second strand does meet the basic definitional RC criteria; it is unconscious, repetitive and unpleasurable. We may however question whether neurotic guilt (either in mild or more extreme form), although unpleasant, can here be viewed as an unconsciously motivated RC outcome. Perhaps it would better qualify as a *pathological consequence* of behaviour which has its own self-contained motivation – i.e. sexual desire. Taking this reservation into account I would suggest that we are on firmer ground if we treat the two strands as one situation/event. This is supported by Ernst's repetition of the 'two women' motif, concerning two distinct types of object-choice and indecision between them. It is furthermore due to the solution of two types of object choice that things become 'messy'. If

it were not the case, Ernst's sexual desire could be sanctified by the 'stamp' of love and marriage. His aggression would be justified because directed at an object that deserves rebuke when such is fitting. As things stand, Ernst instead continually fears harming or in fact does harm, an undeserving object. The first, underserving to his mind, and the second objectively so. The outcome is that he always comes off 'wrong', 'guilty', 'bad'. In total then, in respect of RC criteria both options are ultimately unpleasurable (painful and damaging); the first engendering rejection and self-harming behaviour, the second culminating in guilt, shame, dread and the dissolution of the sexual encounter/romantic engagement. The fact of repetition has been established in relation to both strands and as applying to the 'two women' motif as a whole. The unconscious nature is surly established by the patently unwanted nature of the outcome Ernst repetitively engenders. Consciously his want alternates between the rejecting and accepting object, but nowhere is it his desire to be 'eternally' trapped between them, 'eternally' denied either.

## The Search for Necessary Conditions

### Externalization of Internal Object Relations

#### *Repressed Ego Fragments and Split-off Self-images*

In trying to comprehend the nature of object relations, focussing specifically on the presence of repressed ego fragments or in related terminology, split off self-images, I begin by identifying and considering moments of stark alteration of a state of mind within a given relational situation. Above, in the case of the desexualized rejecting object choice, I identified an undefined libidinal trend, a ‘need’ that can be described as formless, becoming desperate in the face of rejection and precipitating an immediate self-punishing tendency – a near automatic shift to a position of self-harm.

These dynamics are also observable as the affective and behavioural dispositions populating certain compulsions experienced by Ernst. The compulsions, or as Freud calls them ‘commands’ or ‘compulsive impulses’, are trains of thought that propose/command/encourage behaviour of an extreme nature – behaviour which Ernst himself would not sanction under normal circumstances – and seem always to follow an experience of rejection. Since internal vicissitudes are here recorded in detail, they provide an unobstructed view of Ernst’s broader intrapsychic response to rejection.

It is possible to identify seven distinct elements: (i) the presence of an undefined libidinal trend (ii) a contextual experience of *rejection* (either, real or ‘imagined’); (iii) an immediate response of *self-directed aggression* and the aim of self-harm; (iv) an instance of *anomaly* (a ‘pause’, ‘gap’ or moment of indecision); (v) a redirection of *aggression turned outwards* confined to phantasy, often, and nevertheless, (vi) missing the target through

*displacement*; and (vii) a moment of self-reflective horror over the expressed aggression, that may precipitate an attempt at ‘undoing’.

The following extract provides an illustration, and concerns Gisela, in relation to which the undefined libidinal trend (i) has previously been established. The context (as Freud confirms, p.187, 259) is one where Ernst, experiences rejection (ii) over Gisela’s absence. She is nursing her sick grandmother and has also refused his offer to visit.

*“if you received a command to take your examination this term at the first opportunity, you might manage to obey. But if you were commanded to [iii] cut your throat with a razor, what then? He had at once become aware that this simple command had already been given, and was hurrying to the cupboard to fetch his razor when he thought: [iv] ‘No it’s not so simple as that. [v and vi] You must kill the old women’. [vii] Upon that, he had fallen to the ground, beside himself with horror” (p.187)<sup>1</sup>.*

Most of these elements are again found in the next encounter:

Freud tells us that when Ernst was “... twelve years old he had been in love with a girl...he said his love had not been sensual [i]... But she had not shown him as much affection as he had desired [ii]. And thereupon the idea had come to him that she would be kind to him if some

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<sup>1</sup> Freud reverses the order of iii and v, to argue that the moment of self-punishing/self-harming is borne out of guilt over the expression of unconscious aggression (directed ultimately against Ernst’s father). As he says, “the whole process then passed into consciousness...in reverse order – the punitive command coming first, and the mention of the guilty outburst afterwards” (p.188). Freud’s construction traces the same steps i to v, that I have highlighted above, although ignores ii, and adds a final theoretical amendment by swapping ii and iv. He does this again to explain Ernst’s behaviour while away on his summer holiday. Here Ernst punishes himself over thoughts of murdering Richard, a man who had interfered in his relationship with Gisela. With respect to the chronology of events however, as with the previous example, he would seem to punish himself in response to rejection, and then ‘correct’ the inward direction of aggression, in a move towards externalization and displacement. Freud’s theoretical amendment loses the connection in the present between rejection and an immediate response of self-harm, and minimises Ernst’s ongoing battle to place the aggression ‘where it belongs’. Of course, here Ernst struggles further, often resorting to displacement.

*misfortune were to befall him [iii]; and as an instance of such misfortune his father's death [v,vi] had forced itself upon his mind. [vii] He had at once rejected the idea with energy. And even now could not admit the possibility that what had arisen in this way could have been a 'wish' ..."* (p.178).

Although *iv* is not present in this example, we do observe it at other times. Midpoint through a phantasy which centres on revenge against Gisella, Ernst "... *had been obliged to own to himself that the other woman, his wife, was completely indifferent to him; then his thoughts had become confused [iv], till finally it had become clearly borne in upon him that this other woman would have to die*" (p.185).

What we find then is a near automatic assumption of a position of self-harm, in the face of rejection, followed by an amendment towards displaced and/or phantized aggression. I would suggest that the point of amendment betokens the presence and activation of a split off ego fragment, formed out of a primal experience where the external expression of aggression in response to neglect or rejection, was *then* inhibited (i.e. the ego fragment was repressed), making self-directed aggression the only viable expression of aggression – a *now* structurally engrained tendency<sup>2</sup>.

Alternatively, viewing the matter as one of object relations units, that is in terms of self- and object images connected by an affective link<sup>3</sup>, the object relations unit which is defended against, and hence made unconscious, is one where the object image is ruthlessly rejecting and

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<sup>2</sup> This construction (in distinction to Freud's account discussed in the previous footnote) makes intuitive sense, possessing the feel of verisimilitude, and remaining true to the actual chronology of events; it does not 'sound' right that Ernst would punish himself so severely out of guilt, over aggressive thoughts directed at near strangers, nor that he would respond with self-harm before the fact of aggression, that is to an unconscious as yet unexpressed aggression (Freud's account). It is for these reasons perhaps that Freud appends a final statement; "*I cannot think that this attempt at an explanation will seem forced or that it involves many hypothetical elements*" (p.188). Freud excludes a step which illustrates the degree to which, and the mode by which, aggression is curtailed in the present.

<sup>3</sup> To remind the reader, Fairbairn's terms, ego fragments and internal objects, are preferred when the focus is on agency and, Kernberg's, self- and object-images, when self-perception and defence are foremost at issue.

‘deserving’ of hatred – is hated. What we find instead is an object image that is rejecting of a self that is presumably experienced as not good enough. We can say that the rejecting object precipitates an experience of self (a self-image) in which punishment/annihilation is ‘seen’ to be justified. Although the object image may be ‘deserving’ of hatred, it is seldom the focus of conscious aggression. A split-off self-image that is kept from awareness, seen as foreign – *in relation to this object-image* – is the one which openly hates an alternative, but *undeserving* object; often as we will see, the accepting object.

### *Mechanisms of Ongoing Repression and Degrees of Ego Syntonicity*

Extending this account, we can consider Freud’s comments (p.239) on a characteristic inability by Ernst to assume an ambivalent affective position in relation to one and the same object. Freud theorizes that the state of affairs is contingent on the presumption of repressed hatred, where the mechanism of repression is partly a conscious intense love directed at the same object. The libidinous trend therefore prevents the hatred from surfacing and maintains its ongoing existence in the unconscious. We are here entering the terrain of object relations – an encounter with mechanisms such as splitting and introjection – which Freud himself seems to foreshadow with the statement that *“the necessary condition for the occurrence of such a strange state of affairs in a person’s erotic life appears to be that at a very early age, somewhere in the prehistoric period of his infancy, the two opposites should have been split apart and one of them, usually the hatred, have been repressed”* (p.239).

Theoretically, Freud postulates the existence of an intense love<sup>4</sup>, but as argued above this is not observed in the case study. What we find instead is a ‘shapeless need’ that suggests

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<sup>4</sup> Freud argues that *“in such circumstances the conscious love attains as a rule...an especially high degree of intensity, so as to be strong enough for the perpetual task of keeping its opponent under repression”* (p.239). This is largely new territory to Freud and we do not need to take his account as correct. We can equally turn to Fairbairn who argues that aggression is the central mechanism of repression with the aim being the protection of the good object.

the presence of a particular form of idealization. In Fairbairn's terminology, we can equate it with the central ego where need is shorn of its sexual and aggressive elements.

Freud notes that at times the aggressive impulse enters consciousness, and the result is violent hostility "*in the nature of senseless rage*" (p.191). He argues that the outcome, is a situation where love and hate are 'chronically' bound together, both inescapably directed at the same individual (p.239). We should recall however that for Ernst, aggression is generally displaced where the rejecting object is concerned, and that therefore the closest he gets to the direct expression of aggression – the moment where the aggressive impulse enters consciousness – is within phantasy. Even here however he does not take 'ownership' of the impulse. Ernst for instance mentions a phantasy scene of the 'rat punishment' with Gisela as target. He states that "*it was not he himself who was carrying out the punishment, but that it was being carried out as it were impersonally*" (p.167). He breaks off the story to ensure Freud that the "*thoughts were entirely foreign and repugnant to him*" (p.167). As Zetzel (1966) summarizes, "*the Rat Man...remained at all times aware of and disturbed by the ego alien negative transference fantasies which determined his behaviour*" (p.124). Freud confirms this point, writing that while Ernst heaped "*the grossest and filthiest abuse upon me and my family...in his deliberate actions he never treated me with anything but the greatest respect. His demeanor as he repeated these insults to me was that of a man in despair*" (p.209). Activated pathological affective valences are therefore not entirely ego syntonic during expression. Freud however adds the famous line, of interpreting Ernst's expression, while reporting a phantasy scenario, as "*one of horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware*" (p.167). There is therefore the observation of an alien aggression and the suggestion of an alien pleasure, the latter being observable only as a subtle bodily occurrence.

There is a further vicissitude following the occurrence of aggression in phantasy – an attempt to undo it (vii, above) through what Freud refers to as a 'sanction'; a "*defensive*

*measure which [Ernst] was obliged to adopt in order to prevent the phantasy from being fulfilled”* (p.167). Ernst in effect attempts to solve the problem of his aggression by concretizing the matter – i.e. if he can carry out a self-designated program (or command) in the external world, it will negate the effects of the partly alien affect. The conversion of the problem from the internal to the external has the further benefit of aiding repression, by shifting awareness to external matters. Great confusion follows as Ernst and others (participants in the events, Freud, the reader of the case study) get caught up in the intrigue of an *unsolvable*, because displaced, concrete problem. We can see the workings of the procedure in the exhausting debacle centred on the misplaced need to pay back money to ‘lieutenant A’ (p.165 – 173), which originates as a response to an aggressive phantasy targeting Gisela and his father. Freud’s observations support the notion of a ‘sleight of hand’ where displacement of the problem and resulting confusion facilitate repression. As he writes *“it would not surprise me to hear that...the reader had ceased to be able to follow. For even the detailed account which the patient gave me of the external events of these days and of his reactions to them was full of self-contradictions and sounded hopelessly confused”* (p.169). I believe that Freud falls for the ‘trickery’ himself, exerting a great deal of effort to untangling the facts of the matter over multiple pages of the case study, and requiring that Ernst tell the story three times before ‘errors of memory and other obscurities’ were laid bare (p.169). He even goes to the lengths of producing a map of the area where the events took place (p.212).

#### *Dynamics of the First Relationship: The Rejecting Object*

What Ernst is trying to negate is the potential effects of expressing aggression that feels shockingly alien to him, as well as perhaps knowledge of Freud’s insight that at times he showed ‘pleasure of which he was unaware’. He is trying to repress the activation of a split off ego fragment or in other words awareness of a split-off self-image. We find the same attempt

at repression depicted throughout the case study, for instance in Ernst's reliance on a friend who he used to employ in the following way: "*he used to go to him when he was tormented by some criminal impulse, and ask him whether he despised him as a criminal. His friend used then to give him moral support by assuring him that he was a man of irreproachable conduct...*" (p.159). The content of Ernst's phantasies is at times also transformed in line with the attempt at repression. Summarizing, Freud tells us that in many of Ernst's phantasies he "*did the lady some great service...*" (p.195) adding that "*in these he only recognised his affection, without sufficiently appreciating the origin and aim of his magnanimity, which was designed to repress his thirst for revenge...*" (p.195).

In summary, what we find where general object cathexis of the rejecting object is concerned, is a state of mind characterized by the pre-eminence of the central ego and an effective valence that can be described as a 'shapeless need'; a form of idealization shorn of sexual and aggressive elements. Under this endopsychic state of affairs, self-directed aggression is the reactive norm. Instances of stark rejection may however activate a split off ego fragment characterized by an aggressive effective valence, where the aggression is either displaced (onto a substitute object) and/or manifested in ego-dystonic phantasy. Continual attempts to repress the activated ego fragment are observed, and there is also the suggestion that the experience of pleasure over aggression is characteristic of the ego fragment. Self-reflective continuity *across* ego states is maintained to a degree, and although Ernst as we saw does his utmost to deny this 'foreign' part of himself, we do not see anything in the nature of dissociative identity disorder, where affective valences are wholly ego syntonic during activation and memory across ego states is disordered. The former point, discussed above, is illustrated again by Freud's statement that Ernst "*...kept hitting himself while he was making these admissions [of sexual and aggressive phantasy] which he still found so difficult*" (p.284). Turning to the issue of memory, while discussing the notion of a "*splitting of the*

*personality...between a moral self and an evil one*” (p.177), Ernst for instance tells Freud that “*although he considered himself a moral person, he could quite definitely remember having done things in his childhood which came from his other self*” (p.177). He later continues with this theme, speaking about a specific deplorable act, “*...whose author [Freud tells us] he did not recognize as himself, though he quite clearly recollected committing it*” (p.184). As Ernst puts it, quoting Nietzsche “*I did this, says my memory. I cannot have done this, says my pride and remains inexorable*” (p.184).

#### *Dynamics of the Second Relationship: The Accepting Object*

What of the second kind of relationship, the sexual and accepting object choice, where overt aggression is more permissible? Since the object is an accepting one, undeserving of aggression, we infer that displacement occurs. We may therefore wish to conclude that we view the activation of the previously outlined attacking ego state, although here targeting a substitute object. Recall that Ernst is paralysed in the face of the rejecting object; he cannot hate it, hence the need for a substitute. We could reason further that a lessening of repression relating to the cathexis of an accepting sexual object allows for sexual desire. As with the outlined ego fragment, Ernst ultimately experiences himself as bad, a state of mind that is captured in the transference/counter transference where he expects to be punished and ‘annihilated’. I.e. there is clear evidence of repression and of a need to protect against what is felt and expressed which must be indicated if the argument is made for the same ego fragment. To conclude, the two types of object choice may concern not two distinct spheres of ego functioning but rather a continuum between repression and consciousness involving the same ego fragment.

This formulation is however problematic for two reasons. First, we need to account for the libidinous strand. Here the difficulty concerns the fact that Ernst sexually desires the accepting object but that we have no evidence of him feeling the same way about the rejecting

object, and on the face of it the contrary was shown to be true. We know that there is something alluring or tantalizing about it, that theoretically something akin to sexual desire may be repressed, but there is little evidence of this. The central question should be, is the ego fragment fundamentally desirous; is that the nature of its link to both kinds of object? The second objection relates to the hostile strand. It concerns the fact of there being two distinct types of object and this sitting uncomfortably with the theoretical assumption of enduring ties between ego fragments and internal objects, which is at the heart of object relations theory. Simply put, how do we conceptualize the displacement of aggression onto a second object? I.e. if the repressed relationship is between a *hateful* ego and a *rejecting* object why is the same ego fragment here activated by an *accepting* object?

Two sites of internal conflict in fact argue against the wholesale adoption of the proposal that it is the same ego fragment observed in both types of relationship. What is supported however are vicissitudes which amount to outcomes analogous to displacement, where aggression is concerned. The result is an account which pictures attacks on the accepting object, being again in the service of protecting the rejecting object. Before commencing with this argument, I will discuss the libidinous strand.

### **Sites of Conflict**

As previously suggested, it is possible to identify a conflict involving sex; that between sex and love, such that the two seem unable to occur together, centred on the same object. Ernst's sexual encounter with a woman who speaks about a prior love the morning after their liaison, was mentioned as illustrative. Her admission leads Ernst to regret having had sexual relations with her, because he *always*, as he says, sought to make a distinction between relationships which consist of sex and those which include love (p.263). He seems to be stating that knowing

she was loved by another, makes her a suitable object of potential love, and therefore not of desire, the two being incompatible. We also see that the two areas are distinguished in dream representation by two swords, which signify according to Ernst, ‘marriage’ and ‘copulation’ (p.267). The discordancy of the two areas was further highlighted in my analysis of RC activity, where two distinct affective dispositions are seen to relate to two types of romantic object choice.

To return to the question about the nature of the libidinous strand, given the severity of split relating and the absence of any evidence that Ernst does feel sexual desire for the rejecting object, I feel secure in concluding that the previously outlined ego fragment is not in essence desirous. To argue that it is in operation in both instances, would therefore require conceptualizing an ego fragment that ‘feels’ differently about different objects, and this undermines the very notion of an ego fragment. Instead, I would suggest that Ernst’s desire originates elsewhere, from more conscious segments of his ego. There are numerous instances throughout the case study of Ernst being preoccupied with sexual desire and finding satisfaction in encounters of a sexual nature. He has easy or unimpeded access to desire; it is not a capacity that is repressed. What we find instead of repression is a pressure or prohibition which comes into play alongside or after the fact of desire or sexual activity. This is indicated by a second site of internal conflict identified by Freud in the case study, that between sex and death.

Ernst equates sex and death, such that sex or acts of sexuality betoken injury, suffering, illness, and death. He tells us for instance that from the age of six or seven, “*there were certain people, girls, who pleased me very much, and I had a very strong wish to see them naked*” he adds however, introducing the aspect of conflict, that “*in wishing this I had an uncanny feeling, as though something must happen if I thought such things, and as though I must do all sorts of things to prevent it*” (p.162). When asked to provide an example of what might happen, he replies that his “*...father might die*” (p.162). Freud remarks that “*a conflict was evidently in*

*progress in the mind of this young libertine. Side by side with the obsessive wish [to see females naked], and intimately associated with it, was an obsessive fear: every time he had a wish of this kind he could not help fearing that something dreadful would happen”* (p.163). In later life the conflict is expressed in prohibitions such as *“if you indulge in intercourse, something will happen to Ella [his niece]”* (p.226), or compulsive ideas that, *“you can only save your sister by renouncing all sexual pleasure...”* (p.272). There are also manifestations of the conflict in dreams (p.267), and perhaps in his transference phantasies centred on Freud and his family, which concern themes of graphic death and humiliating sexual acts, although never admittedly simultaneously (p.284-286). A fundamental point to note is that sex is avoided because of signifying harm to the rejecting object. Freud observes that *“on the few occasions on which he [Ernst] had had intercourse with girls...he never felt self-reproachful”* (p.263). This is immediately followed by mention of the sexual encounter, described above, where the woman’s admission of a prior love leaves Ernst regretting the liaison, and explaining that his compunction is due to an explicit separation of love and sex. It is here that Ernst’s rejection of the accepting object occurs, his hostility being generated out of a pressure to protect the rejecting object. Furthermore, because of the split between sex and love/need, the accepting object importantly is not an object that he cares enough about to fear injuring. He can be ruthless with it. In all of the examples presented above, where sex equates to death/harm his concern is for the de-sexualized object – for example, his father (p.162); Ella, who was *“a charming little niece of whom he was very fond”* (p.226); his sister Gerda who was ill (p.272); and Gisella (p.267). I would suggest finally that it is not sex per se that is bad but rather its capacity for injuring; the central issue is the conflict between inhibition and the expression of aggression detailed previously<sup>5</sup>. We find the same conflict manifested in compulsive protective

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<sup>5</sup> Following a thread introduced by Freud’s comment (p.167) on unconscious pleasure experienced over the expression of aggression lends support to the notion of the primacy of aggression. As previously mentioned, Ernst has multiple transference phantasies of a sexual and aggressive nature involving Freud’s family and

and reparative acts related to Gisela. One of these for instance involves removing a stone from a road upon which her carriage is due to pass so as to protect her from harm. The act is followed by a recognition of its absurdity, impelling Ernst to replace the stone to its original position (p.190). Freud notes that “*here again we have a hostile impulse against his cousin remaining alongside a protective one*” (p.307). He concludes that Ernst’s obsession for protecting “*can only have been a reaction – as an expression of remorse and penitence – to a contrary, that is a hostile impulse...*” (p.191).

We are now able to return to the question of how we conceptualize the displacement of aggression, given theoretical assumptions of enduring ties between ego fragments and internal objects. What the above account – the supposition that an ego fragment is not in operation where the accepting object is concerned and that protection of the rejecting object is salient – amounts to, is the conclusion that the same ego fragment is not activated in relation to both the rejecting and accepting object but is restricted to the former, and what is more that aggression results from a pressure to defend the former. Thus, we have Freud’s “*...hostile impulse...remaining alongside a protective one*” (p.307).

In an attempt to contextualise the above conflicts, I will next consider how the areas may be situated within Ernst’s developmental history and within the ongoing parent/child relational matrix.

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specifically his daughter. The sexual content of Ernst’s phantasies speaks to sexual pleasure, but there is also pleasure related directly to the aggressive acts described. Although sexual and aggressive components are clearly intertwined, we also find, for instance in phantasies with coprophagic content, a clear progression whereby aggressive content comes more to the fore while sexual content recedes, and yet a sense of pleasure remaining. In one transference phantasy Ernst was “*lying on his back on a girl [Freud’s daughter] and was copulating with her by means of the stool hanging from his anus*” (p.287). Here the act is clearly of a sexual nature. In another, Freud tells us that “*a number of children were lying on the ground, and he went up to each of them and did something into their mouths. One of them, [Freud’s son]..., still had brown marks round his mouth and was licking his lips as though it was very nice*” (p.286). Another phantasy involving coprophagy leaves him with a feeling of ‘pride and high regard’ for the perpetrator of the act (p.286). These two phantasies are concerned more with the aggressive aspect of the act, there being no suggestion of a penetrative sexual rhythm, and yet there are indications of pleasure all the same.

### **Internalization of Parental Figures**

Freud informs us that Ernst, from a young age and continuing into adulthood, had a ‘morbid idea’ that his parents knew his thoughts (pp.162, 178). Ernst expands, *“I explained this to myself by supposing that I had spoken them [the thoughts] out loud, without having heard myself do it”* (p.162). It is not only that they have access to his internal world but that he fears something bad will happen if he fails to hide, suppress, certain thoughts (often of a sexual nature). He gives the example of his father dying (p.162), and Freud tells us that he then *“learnt with astonishment that the patient’s father...had died several years previously”* (p.162). There is the suggestion that Ernst’s father is therefore ‘alive’ in some sense and able to hear and be affected by his thoughts (pp. 162, 174, 264-265, 303).

#### *Ernst’s Father*

In Ernst’s fantasies, Freud identifies a wish to do harm to his father, and takes this as evidence of repressed hatred. He argues that we can *“only presume that the hatred must flow from some source, must be connected with some particular cause, which made it indestructible”* (p.181). Freud exerts a great deal of effort (p.183,185,189, 201, 205, 237, 263) into confirming the presence of an oedipal cause for the unconscious hostility, surmising that the cause was *“something in the nature of sensual desires, and in that connection [Ernst] must have felt his father as in some way or other an interference”* (p.182). He seeks for a primary causal event, at one-point venturing *“to put forward a construction...[and]...hypothesis”* (p.205) of a childhood scene involving punishment over a ‘sexual misdemeanour’ connected with masturbation (p.205-6). No evidence of such an event is found however, although Freud does stumble upon a frightening experience of punishment coinciding with the fatal illness and death

of Ernst's sister Katherine, which he attempts to employ in order to support the theoretical inference of placing Ernst's father in the role of 'sexual opponent or interferer'<sup>6</sup>. He goes to great pains to view the cause of the punishment as of a sexual nature (see his extended footnote p.206), but this is not confirmed, and in fact refuted by Ernst's mother, who states that the punishment was a consequence of Ernst biting someone. Freud also tries to establish the presence of an oedipally derived conflict manifested in the present, suggesting that Ernst's indecision where Gisella is concerned, is essentially due to a "*struggle between the persisting influence of his father's wishes and his own amatory predilections*" (p.200). As previously argued however (...), Gisella is not experienced as a sexual object by Ernst; there is therefore no sexual aim for Ernst's father to oppose or interfere with. Furthermore, there is also no real evidence of his father objecting to the union, other than for a single statement about Ernst

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<sup>6</sup> I believe that Freud here encounters a site of traumatic loss and that he negates the traumatic nature of the experience, partly out of a need to support the theoretical inference of an oedipal event and partly owing to complexes of his own. Freud emphasises that Katherine's death was a central issue in the events under consideration, but does not say how exactly it featured, beyond a suggestion that "*his sister's premature death [was] linked up with the young hero's chastisement at his father's hand*" (p.206). In my view the inability to get clarity on *what exactly happened*, points to the presence of a site of trauma, and a resulting characteristic distortion of information and memory processing. What we know of the period is that Katherine was fatally ill and died, that Ernst was beaten and responded with 'an outburst of elemental fury', and that the violent confrontation left a 'permanent impression' on both father and son (p.205-6). The central issue of importance is surely Katherine's death, and its impact on the family. As often happens, Freud provides us with a clue to his failings or oversights, here in the form of denial; "*I am not to be blamed...for this gap in the analysis*" (p.206). He is referring specifically to his failure to confirm the presence of a sexual act, but also broadly to his inability to gain clarity on the situation. I wonder further whether he is not also defending himself against a potential accusation concerning a counter transference response; that Freud was counter transferentially effected by the same distortions of memory that plague Ernst. This position is corroborated by content included in the process notes. Freud there, *belatedly* as he says, describes three painful memories Ernst had of the period surrounding Katherine's death. I include these as it gives us a sense of the pain and distress the family experienced. The first memory was of Katherine "*being carried to bed. The second was of his asking 'where is Katherine?' and going into the room and finding his father sitting in an arm-chair and crying. The third was of his father bending over his weeping mother*" (p.164). Freud then adds "*it is curious that I am not certain whether these memories are his or Ph. 's. [another of Freud's patients]*" (p.264). Freud next emphasises the fact of his 'uncertainty and forgetfulness', and concludes that he forgot, "*owing to complexes of [his] own*" (p.264). We cannot know what complexes Freud refers to, nor whether they contributed towards the counter transference in a way that went beyond simple forgetfulness. This specific line of thought therefore remains speculative, but I do believe that even without it there is enough to support the notion that Freud, for whatever reason, did not pursue an enquiry into a site of trauma.

appearing foolish as a result of his continued, but thus far failed courtship, which could equally be read as a statement of protection and frustrated concern (p.201, 274).

In my opinion Freud fails to support the inference of an oedipal cause for the unconscious hostility and I will therefore focus simply on the fact of unconscious aggression, considering instances or indications of hostility, anger and violence between Ernst and his father. We learn first that Ernst's father could be 'hasty and violent', and that he had a temper which sometimes resulted in "*severe castigations upon the children, while they were young...*" (p.201). Returning to the childhood event mentioned above, Ernst's father is said to have given him a beating, and Freud informs us that Ernst in response "*had flown into a terrible rage and had hurled abuse at his father even while he was under his blows...His father shaken by such an outburst of elemental fury, had stopped beating him...The patient believed that the scene had made a permanent impression upon himself as well as upon his father. His father, he said, never beat him again; and he also attributed to this experience a part of the change which came over his own character. From that time forward he was a coward...out of fear of the violence of his own rage*" (p.205-6). Two aspects of the encounter stand out for me. The first is that both father and son are frightened by the extreme nature of the event to the point where a lasting impact is claimed. The second, concerns the nature of that impact, Ernst identifying an ongoing predisposition, on both their parts, concerning the suppression/repression of aggression. Since this is the only historical experience of relatively extreme violence suffered by Ernst, we are left with a strong suspicion that it is partly what is repeated in the transference where Ernst attempts to "*save himself from blows of terrific violence...*" (p.284). As previously indicated Ernst expects to be attacked because of the open hostility directed towards Freud, and additionally experiences extreme guilt and shame over his behaviour.

What is undeniably apparent in the case study, is that Ernst carries a great deal of guilt related to his father. Although there is guilt during childhood concerning sexual desire, in

relation to *both* parents (p.162-4), in adulthood Ernst's guilt centres on general injury of his father. He seems to feel that he neglected his father at times (p.174-6) and that certain of his behaviours would leave his father feeling rejected and unwanted, or simply harmed in some unspecified way (p.303). He also worries about disappointing his father (p.300), and implores himself to action to avoid this (p.275)<sup>7</sup>. Ernst also seems to have been incredibly fond of his father. We learn that the two of them were extremely close (p.182) and that Ernst "*loved him more than anyone else in the world*" (p.180). Freud summarises that Ernst's father was a man of good character, had a friendly and lively disposition for the most part, and was an involved and communicative father (p.201). These two observations – that of guilt over possible injury and seemingly justified, high regard – suggest to me that the father signifies more something in the nature of the ego ideal than he does a persecutory prohibiting superego. He represents an ideal self – an ongoing attempt at identification – which Ernst continually fears falling short of. Of course, it is possible that overwhelming guilt of this sort may be debilitating, inhibiting and experienced as persecutory, which does seem to be the case for Ernst. My point is simply that where the father is concerned Ernst seems to experience these things more over falling short of being the person that he ought to be, than he does over breaking a sexual taboo.

To conclude, it seems to me that there is generous support for the supposition that the conflict between inhibition and aggression has a strong base and continuing manifestation in Ernst's relationship with his father. We can state further that for Ernst the ego ideal is characterised by a marked negation of aggression, and that this characteristic derives from protective emulation of the father. Anger harms the father both on the inter and intrapersonal

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<sup>7</sup> Freud seems to view the guilt as ultimately defused or non-specific, noting that there is a mismatch between affect and ideational content and arguing that the self-reproaches belong "*to some other content, which is unknown (unconscious)...*" (p.176). One of the aims of the analysis, as he states, is therefore to discover "*the unknown content to which the self-reproach is attached*" (p.176). As previously noted, Freud believes it centres on unconscious sexual guilt. I have suggested that there is little support for this inference.

level, in the former case directly, and in the latter by earning his disappointment at who Ernst is/becomes. The ego ideal pictured in Fairbairnian terms would here equate to the “...aspirations and expectations supplied by the ideal object in relation to the central ego” (Gomez 1997:65). The relationship that Ernst has to his father would seem to lay down the ‘form’ of the relationship Ernst has to the accepting object *on a conscious level*.

### *Ernst’s Mother*

There is mention of Ernst identifying with his mother (pp. 59, 62), however it is difficult to establish a sense of her as an individual, and therefore to construct an idea of her form or meaning as an internalized object. The absence of content is down to Freud. As Mahony (2007) persuasively argues, Freud reduced her significance to the point where she barely features.

*“In Freud’s grand schema of detecting and assigning influence, she hardly exists. The facts speak for themselves. Whereas Ernst’s mother appears in thirty-one places in the case notes, she is nearly laundered out in the published case history... It is reasonable to infer that, given Freud’s minimization of the Oedipal mother and complete negligence of the pre-Oedipal mother, her name came up many times during the treatment; but he reduced her significance step by step...” (p.103).*

Even though the material is limited, there is in fact far greater evidence of Ernst’s mother, rather than his father, occupying the role of ‘sexual interferer’. Freud seemingly appreciating this possibility asks Ernst the following *“Hasn’t it ever occurred to you that if your mother died you would be freed from all conflicts, since you would be able to marry?”* (p.283). Turning to specific examples, Ernst’s mother is said to have come *“into the picture as an obstacle to his sexual activity”* in relation to his youngest sister, and to have thwarted the housemaid’s

(Lisa) attempts at seducing Ernst (p.279). She herself serves as an off-putting model of female sexuality, imparting a sentiment of disgust to the female sexual organs which Ernst transfers onto other objects in his imagination. As Freud reports, Ernst *“had a very early recollection of her lying on the sofa; she sat up, took something yellow out from under her dress and put it on a chair...it was horrible...He assumed that all women had disgusting secretions...His mother suffered from an abdominal affection and now has a bad smell from her genitals, which makes him very angry. She herself says that she stinks unless she has frequent baths...and this appals him”* (p.296).

Turning to the issue of unconscious aggression, Freud remarks on a *“hostile current of feeling against his mother”* (p.296), and about Ernst’s *“low opinion of his mother”* (p.297). The hostility is said to be a response to *“educational strictures, especially about his dirtiness”* (p.296). The limited content relating to the mother in this area however prevents any meaningful inference from being made.

Having now assessed the impact Ernst’s parents may have had on the endopsychic situation under consideration, it must be admitted that the outcome is not particularly fruitful. My feeling is that there is just sufficient content on Ernst’s mother in the area of sex and sexuality to suggest that she played a pivotal role in Ernst equating sex with ‘badness’. However, there simply is not enough contextual content for that insight to be put to any use; it does not lead anywhere. For instance, even if we know that the prohibition derives from the mother, we do not learn why sex should harm the rejecting object. We do not know ‘who’ the rejecting object is. We do not know who furnishes the ‘ingredients’ of the repressed relationship to the rejecting object.

## Consolidation and the Derived Hypothesis Following Analysis

The repetition of, and indecision between two distinct types of romantic relationship was documented as an occurrence of the repetition compulsion. The encounter with the rejecting object (the first type) is defined by a formless libidinous trend, where ‘love’ or more accurately neediness/dependency is shorn of aggressive and sexual components. Ernst’s ‘love’ is here described as hollow because sexual desire and aggression cannot occur alongside it, directed at one and the same object. The encounter with the accepting object (the second type), on the other hand, is characterized by an increase of aggression, and by the presence of sexual desire and sexual activity. We here observe an internal splitting of the ego where dependency and the capacity for needing or ‘loving’ the other is starkly separated from sexual desire and the possibility of aggression. In this connection a construct echoing Fairbairn’s central ego was identified as being dominant under the first type of relationship with obligatory aggression emerging in the second. This aggression served to protect the very object which precipitated the specific form of central ego dominance observed. *Indecision* between the two types of object, founded on the fact of ego and object splitting derives from the endopsychic situation; a situation where the dominance of the central ego or of mandatory aggressive attacks on the accepting object, respectively negates either sexual pleasure or love/need. The two cannot occur together, and object indecision is seen here as an attempt to continually claim what is absent.

The presentation of split object relating was shown to be asymmetric in the sense that at least consciously it is the rejecting object that is designated good, and the accepting object bad. Continuing from this point, Ernst is shown to repress an object relations unit in which the object image – being ruthlessly rejecting and therefore *deserving* of hatred – is hated. What is found instead is automated self-directed attacks, seemingly taking the place of aggression directed at the deserving object. We can say that the rejecting object precipitates an experience

of self (a self-image), in which, self-punishment/annihilation is seen to be justified. This is not a self which is capable of retaliatory aggression, and yet such a self, kept from awareness and seen as foreign, is shown to survive in the form of a split-off ego fragment. Although capable of open hatred, we find that aggression is nevertheless restricted largely to an alternative and *undeserving* object, the accepting object<sup>8</sup>. The outcome, where the rejecting object is concerned, is shown to be a *specific* form of idealization, which rather than elevating the object, centres on the reduction of ‘tarnish’. For Ernst the rejecting object cannot be denigrated, but neither is there evidence of idealization of the elevating kind – no praises extolling the wonders and virtues of Gisela. Ernst keeps the ‘dirt’ off her but does not place her with the divine. In Fairbairn’s terms we are concerned with a relationship to the ideal object, one characterized by neither “*an over-intensity of...anger or need*” (Gomez, 1997:61).

In considering the role of different modes of externalization, it is noteworthy that there was little evidence of a primary role for transference, projection and projective identification. We may wonder for instance at Ernst’s role in perceiving or bringing about experiences of repeated rejection where the rejecting object is concerned. Could it be that the operation of transference, projection and projective identification created or contributed to Ernst’s experience of continual rejection? I.e. that he simply experienced the other as rejecting, or for instance projected his own indifference onto rejecting objects, or precipitated enactments of rejection via projective identification? This may well be part of the explanation, however an important point in this connection is that Ernst does not designate the rejecting object as rejecting, that is as bad, which would be a requirement of all three mechanisms as they are

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<sup>8</sup> When activation of the split off ego fragment did occur in relation to the rejecting object, secondary defensive procedures were employed to displace aggression onto substitute objects of a fairly inconsequential sort (not the accepting object, where ‘displacement’ was a result of underlying split ego structure). Further secondary defences were also observed, including a type of concretization involving a supplanting of the internal problem to the external world in an attempt to ‘undo’, reaction formation in the form of restitutive phantasy scenarios, and pleas to third parties that they confirm his goodness/deny his badness.

understood in the literature review. Although he is greatly affected by indifference and rejection, the experience is not one that results in the assignment of blame to the rejecting object. As we saw, there is instead an automatic shift towards self-directed aggression which protects this object, and in other cases a displacement of aggression away from this object (onto irrelevant substitutes; not the accepting object), again protecting it from the status of bad object. We may wonder if the permissible expression of aggression observed where the accepting object is concerned, relies on transference, but here again Ernst does not attribute any specific qualities to the accepting object which justify aggression. Instead we find automated aggression that surprises and confuses Ernst. I.e. the aggression does not seem to be predicated on any specific experience of the *accepting* object. Rather than being down to the operation of these three mechanisms, in Ernst's case, pathological repetition within romantic relationships seems to occur largely as an outcome of the operation of object choice and object substitution. Ernst employed real objects through crippling and persistent object indecision and systematic object substitution (both actual and fantasized), to mirror the vicissitudes of internal object relationships. It is via such means that externalization occurred, rather than for instance through projection and projective identification.

It is not necessarily surprising that transference, projection and projective identification were not observed as primary mechanisms, because it may be that in each case considered, a determining variable decides between potential modes of externalization. I would suggest that such a variable will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and in line with this modify the initial hypothesis to include the following clause: 'it is posited that a variable which decides between the modes of externalization will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture'. Is such a variable identifiable in this instance? For Ernst, the use of the real object, through object choice and object involvement, provides a mode of repeating an object relationship without consciously acknowledging the role played by the

object, in that relationship. The mode of externalization can here be understood partly as a reinforcement of repression; a defence against the conscious apprehension of the *total* repressed object relationship. I would therefore suggest that the variable we are looking for is one which acts to fortify suppression of the total repressed object relationship and include this amendment in the revised hypothesis.

One outcome of the analysis certainly worth commenting on is that, in Ernst's case it is the *adaptation* to a primary site of loss and/or trauma which seems to give partial form to RC activity. Ernst's aggression is for instance repeatedly directed at the 'wrong' object, and therefore does not repeat the supposed primary experience, of being harmed, and harming or at the least wanting to harm, the 'loved' although rejecting object. We can reason that the whole purpose for the repression of the aggressive ego fragment resides in alarm over its destructive capabilities where valued objects are concerned, and yet in relation to ongoing RC activity, Ernst only harms unvalued objects. This finding is included in the hypothesis and reads, 'a central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience'.

Referring back to the initial hypothesis, it is noteworthy that a more nuanced picture was observed than that of an unambiguous separation between object relations defined by a positive affective valence (libidinal) and those by a negative affective valence (aggressive). What is seen instead is a division within the libidinous strand; a separation of the sexual and those capacities which speak to attachment of a more prolonged kind, the former occurring alongside aggression and the latter in isolation. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this observation outside of reference to extra-metatheoretical considerations<sup>9</sup>, and I therefore

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, those pertaining to a fusion of the sexual and aggressive drives which would undermine the notion of a separation within the libidinous strand, or Fairbairn's distinction – between a repressed ego fragment's overwhelming (likely sexual) need for the exciting object, and the more 'considered love' characteristic of the relationship between the central ego and ideal object – which would allow us to make sense of a separation within libidinous currents.

proceed under the banner of inclusivity, altering the initial hypothesis as follows. I stress the term ‘tendency’ in the statement, ‘splitting mechanisms here have a *tendency* to keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart’. I then alter the statement following this, which initially supported the inference of an *uncontaminated* affective valence, as follows. ‘However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive)’.

Finally, given that Ernst’s choice of the rejecting object, is not imbued with compelling fantasy representations I will add the following amendments to the section in the hypothesis concerning object choice. That in addition to desire, the object may be ‘chosen in line with an undefined want or need’.

Outside of the above amendments, the RC definition and initial hypotheses remain unchanged as all conditions were confirmed.

### **Bullet Point Presentation of Findings in Relation to the Initial Hypothesis: Hypothesis Development**

Below, standard text indicates the initial hypotheses. Bold text indicates changes made as a result of findings and carried forward. A line through the text indicates that a statement has been invalidated. Bold italics indicate that a change has occurred in the case under consideration.

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### The Repetition Compulsion Defined Following Case 1

RC is defined by four descriptive criteria:

- it is *unconscious*; characterized on an experiential level by a lack of conscious awareness or conscious rational deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either broadly unconscious, or specifically, repressed, dissociated or ego dystonic.
- it is a *repetition* of a past unpleasurable experience
- it is *unpleasurable* because it is painful and damaging
- RC should be thought of as the unconscious repetition of a '*lived interpersonal situation*'.

In relation to the last point, RC concerns the repetition of an experience, rather than of cognition, and therefore does not include the kind of repetition viewed in obsessional neurosis. Cognitive repetition is furthermore excluded under the above RC definition, since it proceeds alongside an awareness of the fact of repetition. I.e. the patient suffering from obsessional thinking is keenly aware of the repetitive nature of his/her thought.

### Hypothesis Following Case 1<sup>10</sup>

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here *have a tendency to* keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. *However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive).* The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - 'Crude emotion of an infantile character', circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.

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<sup>10</sup> The hypothesis development across cases is reproduced as appendix *b*

- 'Chronic conflict', often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
- Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
  - Transference
  - Projection
  - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of "existing identity fragments" or "pre-existing introjective configurations" *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
  - Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
- ***It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.***

- *A central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience.*
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

## CASE STUDY TWO: KARPMAN'S 'A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF A CASE OF MURDER'

### RC Identification

This chapter is an analysis of Ben Karpman's 'A Psychoanalytic Study of a Case of Murder'<sup>1</sup>. The case concerns Henry Valon, a patient Karpman saw for psychotherapeutic treatment during the former's commitment to a federal hospital for the crime of murder. The duration of treatment lasted from June 1927 until May 1928, for a total of 126 sessions. At the start of treatment, Henry had been incarcerated for 3½ years and was 34 years old.

Before proceeding with the analysis proper, it will be useful to briefly comment on the nature of the murder Henry Valon committed. What is striking about the case is the noticeable absence of a rational or easily understandable motive. Henry did not know the man he murdered and seems to have chosen him at random. As he says, during one of his 'walking spells', with a gun in possession, he reached a specific street and "*decided to hold up [the] first man [he came across]*" (p.145a). He adds that he 'didn't know why he did it' (p.145a). He chooses a car conductor, shooting him three times, and killing him instantly. Henry takes money from his victim, but only \$2.16, while failing to find the further \$29.51 in the victim's possession, along with other valuables such as a watch and diamond ring. After running a short distance and disposing of a stolen wallet and empty change box, Henry immediately gives himself up to a

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is spread over two issues published in 1951. All references below marked *a* refer to the April publication, and those marked *b* to the July one.

watchman at a nearby college. He is acquitted by a jury on the grounds of insanity and committed to hospitalization.

My analysis considered three regions of potential RC activity; Henry's relationship with his wife (Ann), parents and sexual partners. The parental relationship (both parents) was examined as a supposed 'primary experience', aspects of which are suspected of being repeated in the other relationships.

### **Ann and Henry's Marriage**

I will begin with an analysis of Henry's relationship to his wife, Ann. Karpman summarises their marriage with the statement that Henry was "*...married when he was 21 years old, but his marital relations were unsatisfactory from the beginning. His wife was frigid, extremely puritanical, and in constant fear of pregnancy*" (p.157a). He elaborates, saying that, "*...as a result of his wife's puritanical attitude to sex, he began to cultivate extra-marital relationships, and eventually formed such a relationship with a woman, Ellen, with whom his sexual relations were entirely satisfactory*" (p.265b).

### *Object Nature*

I proceed first with an analysis of the characteristics of the object. With respect to appearance, Henry simply notes that Ann somewhat resembled his sisters Rhodda and Mary. He also adds that she was not particularly attractive (p.255b). He describes his wife as unsophisticated (p.145a), cold (p.253), scared (p.145a), dumb (pp. 155a, 249b), frigid (p. 149a), in constant fear of pregnancy (pp. 145a, 149a, 259b), and afraid that he would 'tell his mother everything' (p.145a). He notes that she was a virgin when they met and later married (p.249b). Providing examples of her frigidity, the case study records that Ann "*never cared for sex from the*

*beginning; complained that it was dirt*” (p.149a). Henry notes that “*it was a week [into their marriage] before they had sexual intercourse*” (p.145a), and that he “*slept with her very little, especially after first child was born*” (p.253b). He states that he “*got less pleasure from sexual relations with his wife than with anyone else. ‘she lay like a log’*” (p.245b). He sums up that “[my] *sex life with my wife was not normal. Sometimes I didn’t kiss her three or four months*” (p.246b). Speaking of the further decline of their sexual relations and the breakup of their marriage, he states that “*generally, after first two years, hardly more than four times a year. For one and a half years before breakup – no relations. At that time I was willing to think that my last boy was not my child*” (p.249b). Associating from the dream imagery of a naked women with the absence of a vagina, he says, “*lack of vagina – brings back to my wife...No vagina, – sexless woman*” (p.251b).

Henry also accuses his wife of ‘never having made a good home’ (p.254b), and further that she was in fact “*never at home much*” (p.254b). He expands on the theme of her absence, saying that after he found a ‘love letter’ written in her hand to an unknown man, two years before they eventually separate (and just under three years before the murder), “*it was I that stayed at home, she went out*” (p.259b). During this two year period before the separation, he believes “*she was going out and running around with other men*” (p.254b). He notes that she was pregnant, giving birth at the end of this period, and yet still “*was out every night till early morning 1 or 2 A.M. Ten days after the last baby was born, she was out late, and continued so*” (p.256b). He recalls that during this period it “*seemed that I laid around the house watching wife*” (p.249b). In the month prior to the break-up, his wife ‘disappeared’ and he suspects with a man he knew. He adds that “*it was very wrong for a woman to desert four children*” (p.252b). In summary, Henry pictures Ann as frightened and over anxious. He also views her as indifferent and uncaring; she did not create a nurturing and loving marriage/home. He sees her as sexually rejecting, of him specifically; she is supposedly sexually willing with other men.

As he says, he could not bear “*that she was cold to [him], but would go with someone else*” (p.253b). In the final assessment, he believes she cruelly abandoned him and their children.

### *Affective State*

I turn now to considering Henry’s affective state (libidinal and aggressive), directed towards the object. Henry’s sexual desire for Ann has been discussed above, and is associated largely with disappointment and frustration. He mentions being ‘much aroused’ while the couple were dating, in the period before being married (p.246b), but this desire was never borne out in reality, being restricted to, or manifested only as masturbatory fantasy (p.246b). As Henry states “*if he had had relations with her before marriage he would never have married her*” (p.155a).

Henry mentions getting on well enough with his wife for much of their marriage (p.146a), and that he ‘believes he loves his wife still’ (p.259b). These sentiments are unsupported in the case-study by illustrative examples, for instance specific reported occasions where he felt or showed warmth or love. As with other of his statements, they appear as throwaway context-less sentiments. Karpman concludes that “*it is clear all the way through that he never loved her*” (p.261b).

His aggressive feelings towards her are far more numerous and convincingly illustrated. He says he often wished her dead and would have felt little sorrow (p.251b), that at times he contemplated her murder (p.253b), and that he blamed her “*directly [as] the cause of [his] insanity and of the homicide*” (p.259). As Henry states, “*I had death wishes against Ann. I’d curse her, would wish accident should happen, die from childbirth...*” (p.249b). Added to this, we have the numerous statements of dislike and dissatisfaction discussed above.

To sum up, Henry seems to periodically assume a frame of mind where there is some affection for Ann. There is however no indication that the aggressive strand of affect, which

seems far stronger, is at those times inaccessible to awareness. We do not for instance observe ingrained tendencies towards the displacement of aggression, nor a predisposition towards idealization. In relation to Ann, Henry is evidently capable of expressing his aggression directly, and if anything, it is the libidinous strand which suffers. As we will see below, Henry *does* have an entrenched propensity for idealization where certain love objects are concerned, but this does *not* apply to Ann.

### *Effect of the Relationship*

I turn now to a consideration of the effects of the relationship upon Henry. Henry provides relatively scant detail about the bulk of the marriage and the ongoing impact the relationship had on him during the union. Most of what he tells us has been covered above and provides only a ground for tentative inference. After a synopsis of this material, the analysis will centre on the roughly three-year period following from the ‘finding of the letter’. The period includes the break-down of the marriage over two years, the separation, and eleven-months of inter and intrasubjective disintegration suffered by Henry, culminating in murder.

As stated above, Henry experienced his wife as rejecting, both sexually and in broader relational areas concerning an absence of affection and care. It is however difficult to determine how this affected Henry. Karpman believes that it pushed him to ‘cultivate extra-marital relationships’ (p.265b), and yet Henry is shown to be prone to infidelity from the first. As Karpman notes elsewhere, he had regular sexual relations with an actress, Patricia, while dating Ann before they were married (p.157a). During this period “*he would be with his sweetheart until 10:30pm, and then with the actress until two or three o’clock in the morning*” (144a). Henry also “*continued going with a girl after he was married*” (p.145a), who I assume to be this same actress. He acknowledges that he always struggled to maintain interest and attachment where his sexual objects are concerned. In his own words, “*it seems I’d conquer a*

woman and then get tired of her fast – from two weeks to eight or nine months” (p.255b). Given his history, it is therefore doubtful that the infidelity was simply a response to Ann’s treatment of him.

Another effect that the relationship incited in Henry, *from the beginning*, was jealousy. As mentioned, the jealousy may at times have taken on a delusional intensity, which is Karpman’s assessment. It is also shown capable of precipitating psychosocial collapse. Both these points are observed in the following episode. While still dating Ann, Henry experiences extreme jealousy related to the feeling that “*every fellow was cutting [him] out*” (p.144a). As Karpman reports, “*at that time he began to think that life wasn’t worth living, had homicidal ideas, and made an attempt at suicide by turning on the gas*” (p.144a). It is however difficult to identify where exactly the jealous affective state originates – with Henry as a transference disposition, or as a contemporary response to Ann’s behaviour; Henry saying at differing times that both are correct. At one point, he asks a question which seems to indicate genuine confusion over the matter. He asks in puzzlement, “*why was I jealous of wife if I didn’t care for her?*” (p.254b). He is suggesting that regardless of whether she cheated or not, the jealousy has no clear rational origin, or at least not a conscious one. I would say that the presence of transference and delusional ideation is supported, but that for all we know Ann may have played a contributing part too. When questioned about the letter she for instance first responds with laughter, Henry saying that she “*didn’t give an explanation – then later explanation that it was a decoy letter she wanted me to find...*” (p.249b). One experience of jealousy that is noteworthy, centres on his suspicion that his fourth child was not his own (p.249, 252, 253b). It is worth highlighting that his jealousy increased overwhelmingly, with the birth of this child, and that after accusing Ann of adultery two days after the birth, they separate two weeks later (p.146a). Again, it is jealousy which seems to precipitate a fall. Interestingly, the timeline of events provided by Henry, implies that Ann’s ‘disappearance’ occurred either in the two weeks

before she gave birth, or soon after she gave birth – neither period, one would imagine, being conducive to sexual activity. Although I am inclined to believe that Ann was faithful, in the final assessment we simply cannot know. It is however doubtful that her many absences are a fabrication. And yet here we do not know why she stayed away. Were there in fact affairs? Or did she act to escape an increasingly paranoid and jealous husband? Or was she driven by other motives, perhaps seeking out an emotional connection with another man, or simply a place of peace and security?

I now focus on the nearly three-year period leading up to the homicide. As mentioned, Henry finds a ‘love letter’ addressed to his wife, and although initially enraged to the point of contemplating murder, he seems ultimately to sink into a state of helpless despondency. As he states, during this time *“I hardly had any relations – masturbated – spending most time at home, not working... Health poor. It seemed that I laid around the house watching wife”* (p.249b). It should be kept in mind however that he was still seeing Ellen, the woman with whom his ‘sexual relations where entirely satisfactory’, for a further six months after finding the letter. This puts into question the claim of a global state of dejection, but does not detract from the fact that he was struggling where his marriage was concerned.

As we know, with the separation (Ellen being out of the picture by now), Henry sends his wife from the house, places the children in an asylum and does not visit them (p.146a). He later remarks that *“putting the children in an orphan asylum – hurt me more than anything else”* (p.252b). Commenting on how the separation affected him, he says, *“the day we separated, I believe was the turning point in my life. I was psychopathic all the time until the day of the homicide...I went to pieces...These eleven months – a nightmare – I had dual personality – my thoughts were on suicide”* (p.256b). He describes feeling depressed, restless and struggling with insomnia. He steals three automobiles in one week, is arrested and locked up for thirteen days. He also recalls dissociative fugues or as he puts it ‘walking spells’; periods

of recurrent daily wondering which last from ten days to three weeks. In his own words, *“sometimes would just come home, change cloths and then go on another one.”* (p.256b). He states explicitly that during the walks, *“I thought a thousand times to kill myself”* (p.255b), and that *“these walking spells where associated with suicide”* (p.256). He also had the feeling that everyone was against him, and used the walks to hide from people, especially his father who he believed was persecuting him (p.263). One night, around six months before the homicide, he felt ‘so bad’ and suicidal that he asks his father to get him ‘locked up’. He sums up this period, *“I had feeling of double personality, felt something wrong, thought I should be locked up...”* (p.146a). It was also then that he tried to choke his favourite brother, Leo (p.254b). He describes the final period leading up to the homicide; *“for twelve days previous to homicide I walked and walked. During 12 days, I thought a thousand times to kill myself...”* (p.255b). And then the very last days; *“was talking to mother and father, kept walking, went to sister’s house, slept there, woke up – more walking, worrying – next night homicide”* (p.146).

### *RC Identification*

In summary, there are experiences which can be identified as noticeably painful and damaging. In chronological order Henry suspects his wife of infidelity, terminates his relationship with Ellen, separates from his wife and gives up his children. These losses precipitate a period of psychosocial disintegration, culminating in murder. We will focus closely on Henry’s state of mind below – what he was thinking, feeling, attempting to do, etc. – when addressing the dynamic psychological mechanisms and processes evinced, but for the time being we can state the following. Henry is consumed by jealousy and an ingrained persecutory belief that people act with malevolent intent to damage him. What is more, he felt as though they were succeeding; taking what could have been his. He is increasingly isolated, his attachments strained to breaking point, and sinks into a state of abject psychological and physical

deterioration. He assumed the role of passive onlooker while still living with his wife, and then later becomes something analogous to a spectre, wondering the streets in a state of psychological torture. There are intermittent returns to those of his attachment figures which remain, the visits amounting either to unheard pleas for help, or attempts to further damage relational bonds. He is plagued by suicidal ideation, and seems to inhabit a somewhat dissociated state. I have here described the phenomenology of an experience which could potentially qualify as a repetition of loss and trauma. To say that the break-down of the marriage and its aftermath were unpleasurable would be an extreme understatement. The whole period was clearly damaging and painful and meets the relevant RC definitional criteria.

What we have learned thus far, in relation to the RC unconscious definitional criteria, is that Henry seems to have gone into the marriage with some hope of it working out, and evidently had no conscious foreknowledge of the horror it would lead to. As he notes, he was very much in love with Ann when they married (p.256b), and at that time his “*intensions where to be faithful to [her]*” (p.252b). Concerning the breakdown of the marriage, he describes a feeling of double personality, fugues which imply a state of derealisation, and the inability to maintain awareness or knowledge of the links between an internal world of thought/feeling and the behaviour it precipitates. He knows *something* is wrong, but not what; he knows he needs to be confined or treated but not why exactly; he does not know why he is walking; he does not know why he murdered.

### **Other Relationships: Henry’s Mother**

In order to argue for the fact of repetition, that Henry is repeating an experience of trauma or loss, I now examine the supposed ‘primary experience’ – that which is suspected of being repeated. I look at each parental relationship in turn, beginning with Henry’s mother. Henry

was the fifth of twelve children (eight boys and four girls), four of which had died by the time of Henry's incarceration. His parents remained married until the death of his mother, six months into Henry's sentence.

### *Object Nature*

In appearance, we are told that Henry's mother was slight of build and dark in complexion, Henry emphasising that she was "*the most beautiful women*" (p.154a). As we will see, Henry adored his mother with a fierce loyalty and was extremely dependent on her. He says that his happiest childhood memories are of his mother; that she was "*always hugging and kissing me – I was happiest then – I was a favourite*" (p.250b). He recalls that if she "*kissed me where I hurt [the] pain would go away [but] if she scolded me, it would break my heart*" (p.257b). Henry says that he spent most of his early childhood with her, and Karpman categorises their relationship as one of 'maternal overprotection', stressing the presence of an 'exaggerated mother attachment' (p.264b). The loyalty Henry displays however, sits uncomfortably with much of his mother's behaviour, and with her overall capacity to adequately fulfil the role of parent. We learn that she suffered from depression (p.146a, 263b), fits of 'peculiar behaviour' and irritability (p.263a), that she was 'unbalanced' (146a) and at times in a 'poor mental condition' (p.150a). She attempted suicide on numerous occasions, either with a razor or by means of gas (p.146a, 148a), and was once in a mental hospital (p.148a). We are told that as a suicide preventative measure "*father would tie her to him*" (p.250b), and can only wonder at the psychological impact of witnessing this parental scene. Henry's mother also threatened to run away (p.146a) and frequently did flee the home, often following altercations with her husband (p.148a, 156a, 263b). Henry speaks of her further decline, saying that during his puberty she "*began to be sick, lose her looks, etc*" (p.253b). In the last fifteen or so years of her life she "*was almost an invalid*" (p.257b). Henry reports that his mother once attacked him,

hitting him on the head with a chamber (p.148a), and he believes sometimes contemplated killing him (p.147a, 148a). As he says “*during her last days it seemed to me, mother was afraid of me. She would lie awake waiting for me to come home. Once she took a butcher knife – I thought she was not normal. Thought maybe she wanted to kill me...*” (p.152a).

### *Affective State*

I now consider the libidinous and aggressive trends directed towards the object. As noted, Henry was loyal to a fault. He says he had ‘a great affection’ for his mother (p.152a); that everything she said, ‘was right’ (p.257b); that he always sided with her over his father (p.146a,148a); that his ‘love never lessened’ in the face of the neglect he suffered at her hand; that he cannot recall ever having ‘antipathic emotions against her’ (p.155a), and that he ‘never feared her’ even when he thought she wanted to kill him (p.152a). He states that his reaction was always one of “*hurt rather than hate and revenge*” (p.155a), and that he never lost his temper with her (p.152a). In short, he sums up that she was ‘the greatest love’ he ever had (p.257b). Henry mentions only a single instance of aggression, admittedly an extreme expression of it, saying that “*once, five months before homicide, thought of killing mother*” (p.147a).

### *Effect of the Relationship*

Given Henry’s devotion to his mother it is doubtful that he would betray much awareness of the negative impact the relationship had on him. For the most part, this line of reasoning seems correct. What we do learn, from self-reports, is the following. In childhood, Henry was extremely dependent on his mother to the degree that he eschewed playing with his siblings or other children in preference to her (p.149a, 150a, 264b). As he evocatively phrases it, “[I] followed her around like a dog” (p.257b). He concedes that a withdrawal of attention and

affection took place with the birth of his younger siblings, and that this affected him: “*I felt lonesome – no one in the world to love me. Had longed to go back to mother, and developed feeling of jealousy towards the younger children, even hate...*” (p.154a). He confirms again that during this period “*I was sad of losing my mother’s love*” (p.245).

### **Other Relationships: Henry’s Father**

#### *Object Nature*

There is less data concerning Henry’s father. What we learn about his character is that he had a ‘violent temper’, and that he and his wife often quarrelled (p.156a). In the eleven-month period before the homicide, Henry says his father threatened to kill him at gun point, because he suspected Henry of stealing from his brother (p.257b).

#### *Affective State*

Henry nowhere claims that he loves his father, nor mentions anything amounting to feelings of affection or warmth. He recalls that as a child he hated him (p.155a), thinking him “*the worst thing in the world*” (p.146a). In childhood Henry seems to have held his father responsible for his mother’s suffering and ultimately perhaps for much of *her* behaviour as a parent. He blamed his father for his mother’s numerous suicide attempts (p.253b), and notes that their fights were often the cause of her running away (p.156a). He says that he always sided with his mother when his parents quarrelled (p.146a, 148a).

### *Effect of the Relationship*

Again, we learn relatively little about how Henry's father affected him. Henry says that he could never talk to him (p.146a) and that in childhood he feared him (p.155a). Henry's father, seems also to embody and represent something akin to a super ego function, which is discussed further below. The picture we get is therefore of a sometimes violent, generally distant, and frightening figure who, as we will see, also signifies judgement, disappointment, potential punishment and perhaps an opportunity at clemency.

### *RC Identification*

Before continuing with an analysis of further relationships, I will consolidate the above in relation to the question of repetition. What is repeated across all these relationships? In terms of the repetition of an experience of victimhood what stands out most strongly in the considered relationships is surely the fact of abandonment, absence of care, and overwhelming jealousy. These are enduring experiences undergone by Henry. Other phenomenology is repeated, but not *visibly* by Henry across relationships. There is the presence of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, alienation, and psychosocial disintegration. The difficulty here is that we do not know how Henry was affected by his mother, especially during his childhood - an absence, which I think, can be attributed in part to his ongoing loyalty. Did his mother's behaviour, for instance cause him to feel suicidal as a child? Did it cause him to feel alienated, depressed, or despondent? Henry does not say. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Henry suffered these experiences *himself*, I do not think it unreasonable to say that he certainly lived through them. His mother, the person who he loved most in the world experienced these things in the home, right in front of him, day after day. I believe, to a degree, this makes them as much Henry's experiences as they are his mother's. There is also the dynamic of Henry occupying the role of perpetrator at times, especially where the act of abandonment is concerned. In his

relationship to Ann, he is the one who is initially often out. It is also him who finally forces her to leave, and both who jointly abandon the children. Henry has here done to his wife and children what was done to him. There is a repetition, but with a role shift from victim to perpetrator.

One of the central differences in the relationship between Henry and his wife and Henry and his mother, is Henry's affective state. He persistently adores his mother, while vocally hating his wife. With respect to repetition, we can say little about the father besides noting that Henry's feelings about him, perhaps approximate those directed at his wife.

### **Other Relationships: Numerous Sexual Partners and Forbidden Desire**

Henry's sexual history consists of numerous brief sexual encounters, and short to mid-term relationships (lasting anywhere from a few weeks to ten months). There is a tendency to move from one relationship to the next, rather than engage with multiple partners simultaneously (p.145a, 157a). The case study strongly suggests a pattern of object cathexes, possessing the quality of an ineffable 'searching after something', followed by inevitable disenchantment and ensuing disengagement.

#### *Object Nature*

I begin with the nature of the object, which I take to consist not only of the individual with whom Henry is involved, but also of the sexual experience as a whole. The treatment of the sexual encounter as an object, is justified because part-object relating is evident; the individual's ability to provide sexual satisfaction would seem to be a key feature of desire and object choice. It is clear, that for Henry tactile intimacy is a crucial and valued component of sexual engagement. He speaks of 'taking his time' (p.147a), 'doing things calmly' (p.149a) and

of the lengthy pleasure he gets from caressing a women's body, especially her breasts (p.246a). Reading these descriptions, one gets a sense of absorption and contentment, reminiscent perhaps of infantile satisfaction. In his own words, "*All my sex life – I liked to suck and even bite breasts – kiss them. I played with Ellen's breasts more than anyone else's – beautiful breasts – five or ten pounds...I often played with Ellen's breast for an hour*" (p.246b).

There is also support for the notion that Henry craved and sometimes found emotional intimacy in his sexual exploits and relationships. As he says, "[I] *always had to have a love object to be stimulated into phantasies and dreams*" (p.246). He speaks of 'enjoying the company' of women, even if it did not lead to sex (p.147a), and as Karpman writes, of shunning prostitutes "*because it was necessary for him to have a love-object and there was no element of affection in relations with a prostitute*" (p.265b). In Henry's own words; "*they didn't care for you, you didn't care for them – disgust. I'd prefer one kiss from one I would imagine cared for me*" (p.153a). It is perhaps suggestive of a broader ambivalence concerning intimacy, that although Henry counts a kiss as the mark of caring and claims to aim at such in his sexual encounters, he at the same time generally "*rarely kisses a women, but wants to suck her breasts and finger her vagina [instead]*" (p147a). This ambivalence is further displayed in his comment that "*he never could see anything beautiful about vagina...Sometimes didn't feel like playing with vagina*" (p251b).

Object choice and therefore object nature is additionally circumscribed by a heightened awareness concerning the presence/absence of other men. Henry categorically states that he has a strong aversion to engaging sexually with married women, and that he never knowingly had sexual relations with a married woman (p.147a, 255b). His desire for Rhodda decreases after she is caught with another man. In his words, "*not the same feeling, the feeling of having sex relations with her was gone because she had relations with another man*" (p.150-1a). This diminishment of desire, perhaps more fully explains his aversion to prostitutes; it is not just

that they do not care for him and that no emotional connection is possible, but also that there are other men involved, ones who perhaps in fantasy have already taken possession of any potentialities for love and affection. This line of reasoning is supported by the following statement concerning Rhodda's marriage. "*The way she lowered herself marrying that fellow – like a prostitute – that is, to my mind. She could not lower herself any more by marrying this man than if she were a prostitute*" (p.253b). When it was time for Henry to marry, he chose a virgin, saying that he could not marry a woman who had sexual relations out of wedlock, even if with himself (p.249b). The one explicit exception was Ellen, 'even though she had previously lived with a man for four years' (p.248b).

Henry also shows a tendency in dreams (p.147a, 151a, 246b, 247b, 250b) and fantasy (p.149, 251b) to sexually desire younger women or girls, noting once that "*I was surprised that I could allow myself to have sexual intercourse with a girl 10 years old, even if it happened in a dream*" (p.247-8b). It should be noted that there is never confirmation of Henry acting on these fantasies. He is often emphatic about his refusal to do so (p.145a, 247b, 251b), suggesting a conflict between unconscious desire and conscious restraint.

Henry's objects of desire and sexual partners, amount to an apparent chain of recurrent substitutive object cathexis. As Karpman puts it, Henry's "*sexual development was...an extension of the incestuous fixations formed within the family circle*" (p.262b). Under this reading, his mother may be viewed as the primary object, his sister Rhodda as the first complete substitute, and Ellen as the last of the case study. As we will see, the signification of repetition is detailed for the most part in terms of physical appearance.

Karpman notes that Henry transferred "*...his mother attachment...to his sister Rhodda*" (p.264b). This is borne out by Henry who states that after his mother withdrew her affection, he became closer to Rhodda than to her (p.150a), and that in puberty when his mother became ill, 'losing her looks', "*Rhodda took the place of mother in my mind*" (p.253b). Henry makes the

point of saying that his mother was strikingly similar to her daughter in appearance, both being slight and dark (p.154a, 253b). Rhodda he says, never grew beyond “5 feet 4 inches, 100 pounds. [She was] *very beautiful [and] retained her figure until death*” (p.151a). He describes his attraction to Rhodda in the following manner; “*when she was ten or twelve – a little peach – coal black hair, beautiful eyes. I then began to develop feelings for intercourse*” (p.150a). He adds that as she grew up “*breasts suddenly developed, legs...used to kiss her...used to kiss Rhodda as a sweetheart*” (p.150a). Their father intervenes at this point, and Rhodda is eventually sent away to boarding school at fifteen. Henry notes that she was sent away “*probably to protect her from an affair she was likely to get into*” (p.151). He adds, “*I think father really thought that I had relations with her, but I didn’t*” (p.151).

There are multiple explicit statements of similarity between love objects, Henry saying the following about women and girls who remind him of his mother. Between the ages of four and seven he recalls dreams where “*most of the people around me were beautiful women and were exact images of Mother, but mother would not be in the picture. One of these strange women would be my wife*” (p.245b.). At the age of ten he forms a strong attachment to a girl called Reba because she was ‘almost an exact picture’ of his mother (p.245b). He stresses that his mother’s body, when she was younger, was similar to Ellen’s and Rhodda’s body (p.250-1b). He adds that when his mother was happy her expression reminded him of Ann, and when unhappy of Ellen (p.257b).

Concerning Rhodda, he highlights the following instances of resemblance. In a dream, he has a sexual encounter with “*the exact duplicate of [his] sister Rhodda at the age of 15*” (p.151a). Upon waking, he associates to a girl he knew and tried to have intercourse with. She was 5 feet 2 inches and reminds him of his sister (p.151a). Another girl/woman<sup>2</sup>, again ‘reminds

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<sup>2</sup> I use ‘girl/woman’ because the age of Henry’s love objects is often unspecified, the term girl being preferred throughout the case study text. A further complication is that even when he is speaking about a resemblance to a woman, it is often a resemblance to her at a younger age. In instances where it is clear that the female in question is better described as a woman or girl, I use those terms.

him of his sister', as does one in a dream (p.151a). He has further dreams of a sexual nature, where the girls again resemble Rhodda (p.247b, 249b). He encounters two girls/women who strongly remind him of Rhodda, and has sexual relations with one of them (p.251b). Another girl who he impregnates at the age of sixteen, resembles Rhodda (p.256b). There is a girl/woman he cannot stop thinking about because of her 'striking resemblance' to Rhodda (p.154a). Finally, he adds that "*Ellen is much like [Rhodda] – mere touching her would excite me – my emotions towards her were so different – her touch would tingle*" (p.252b).

There are only three instances where Henry mentions personality features, or affective tendencies on the part of his objects. Ellen is described as having an extremely jealous disposition (p.152a) and as 'level-headed' (p.154a), and Rhodda as passionate (p.152a). This absence of non-physical object characteristics provides us with little opportunity to determine the full nature of Henry's objects. However, the sexual act seems in part to be the arena that the substitution is concerned with, or even restricted to, and as such the broader nature of the object is to some degree irrelevant. Where it does seem to feature is in relation to other men – the object must be his alone and not elsewhere engaged. Otherwise, its nature is to provide intimacy and attachment; a state reminiscent of the one he shared with his mother during his early childhood.

### *Affective State*

The most visible and consistently expressed affective states in these relationships are sexual desire (p.150a, 154a, 248b, 250b, 258b, 262-3b) adoration and idealization (p.150a, 155a, 248b, 257b), contentment (p.155a, 246b, 250b, 252b), and possibly love (p.248b, 252b, 253b, 257b). His description of what it was like being with Ellen seems to sum these states up; "*Ellen, the most enjoyable emotional experiences in my life, like fire – to touch her breast, etc. Was*

*like an electric shock – forgot myself...I was just madly in love with her, even to date I still think of her – sometimes will stop in the middle of work and think of her”* (p.152a).

There is also mention of a loss of interest and failing attachment. As discussed, his desire for Rhodda becomes restrained after she’s had sexual relations with another man and eventually marries. We also saw above that he would ‘conquer’ women and then get ‘tired’ quickly.

A final affective state that is strongly expressed, especially in connection to Rhodda, is jealousy and envy. We see it resulting from Rhodda’s first sexual encounter and from her choice of spouse. Henry also has a strong, and clearly for him torturous, suspicion that his brother Geoffrey had sexual relations with Rhodda, taking her virginity. This belief caused him to ‘distrust and hate’ his brother (p.250b, 253b, 258b).

Clearly the affective state displayed in these relationships is for the most part markedly different from what Henry directs towards his wife. Sexual desire, adoration, idealization, contentment, and love are not evident in the marriage. These affective features therefore cannot be said to be repeated across all the considered relationships. They can however be seen to occur repetitively across this ‘set’ – the sexual encounters and relationships. Two states that are for the most part shared across relationships are jealousy and the diminishment of object cathexis. I will return to these points below. I will also further address the question of the unconscious nature of repetition.

### *Effect of the Relationship*

As we have seen, Henry persistently emphasises the pleasurable satisfaction he found in his sexual encounters. There is also evidence that his relationships provide a measure of emotional and behavioural stability; that they assist in the regulation of affect and protect against self-injurious behaviour. When he lost Ann and Ellen he “*took to gambling or taking other women*”

(p.246b). He also tells us that when he met a woman called Hellen, after a most extreme period of gambling, involving nights on end without sleep, he eventually ‘dropped gambling altogether’ (p.247b). Thus far, the sexual encounters and relationships do not therefore meet the unpleasurable, because painful and damaging, definitional criteria of RC. The one area that does however suggest the presence of this dimension is the end point of the relationships. I am assuming, that ‘something’ *causes* them to end, and it is at the point of loss that we see a repetition of isolation, disintegration and suffering.

### *RC Identification*

As mentioned above, Henry inevitably becomes ‘tired’ of his objects and ends relationships. He notes that this is a pattern for him – that there is a dampening of interest and ultimately of object cathexis – and accepts this without interrogating the reasons behind it. The one exception to this stance of indifference, is Ellen, who for Henry was “*the best of anyone before or since*” (p.155a). Henry cannot understand why he ended it with her nor can he let the question go (p.155a, 246b, 248, 249, 255, 258, 259,). I will discuss the conclusions Henry himself reaches below, while considering the psychological processes and mechanisms involved. For the time being I simply state that Henry suffered when he ended relationships and was unaware of why he ended them, markedly so in the instance where he really did not want to. In conclusion, the feature that is repeated across all relationships is the point of loss and the accompanying isolation, disintegration and suffering. The breakdown of his marriage was an extreme and complete occurrence of this.

## The Search for Necessary Conditions

### Object Circumscription

I turn now to a consideration of the psychological entities/processes which are identifiable in the procedure of object circumscription, beginning with Henry's alarm over 'other men'. As noted, Henry married a virgin, and explicitly states that except for Ellen he could not have married anyone who had prior sexual relations with other men, including himself (p.249b). He would not be able to trust their fidelity (p.255b) and seems to take the fact of virginity as proof of singular devotion and as ultimately signalling an absence of competition. As Karpman confirms, Ann "*was a woman whom he could possess without any feeling of competition. She would be all his*" (p.261b). A violation of a sense of security impacts object desire, as we saw with Rhodda (p.150-1a), and in relation to prostitutes (p.265b, 253b) and married women (p.147a, 255b). It may activate feelings of disgust, anger and rage – a mechanism by which desire is inhibited – directed at the object of desire and relatedly also at the men who are involved. We previously observed the disgust Henry feels for prostitutes, and also his classification of Rhodda as amounting to one, following her 'betrayal'. Henry says the following about men who have 'replaced him' by having sexual relationships with his former objects of desire. One husband is described as "*an effeminate man – not good looking, but pretty like a women*" (p.148a), another as 'drinking and beating his wife and infant' (p.151a). Concerning Rhodda, he notes that she "*didn't get the best of husbands – alcoholic – cruel*", and adds by comparison that, alcohol simply makes *him* go to sleep (p.154). His suspicion of fraternal incest, between his brother Geoffrey and Rhodda, caused him to 'distrust and hate' his brother (p.250b, 253b, 258b). As a reaction to the love he felt withdrawn by his mother during childhood, he speaks of developing a feeling of "*jealousy towards the younger children, even hate, especially towards victor*" (p.154a). By contrast, the *only* man in the case study who

is described in complementary terms, is his younger brother Leo, who he ‘liked very much’ and saw as ‘a symbol of goodness’ (p.156). He adds tellingly, that “*he was pure and only had relations with his wife*” (p.156). I am arguing for the presence of extreme anxiety and hypervigilance, centred on the appearance of a rival, the suspicion or occurrence of which, results in denigrative attacks directed at the rival/supposed rival and at Henry’s object of desire, as well as for the related observation that continuity of attachment, requires reassurance of full or sole possession of the object.

I would contend that the requirement of proprietorship is further manifested in Henry’s relationship to masturbation. I am not suggesting that masturbation amounts to a full replacement, for it is clear that Henry enjoys sex, but rather that there are indications that it is unusually successful in approaching such, in certain respects. I would argue that one of the reasons why this is so, is because retention of the sexual object in fantasy allows for a degree of control, thus insuring an absence of the rival and therefore a reduction of anxiety<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> It is of course reasonable to assume that the nature of masturbation as an act of fantasy, and the control it therefore affords over an imagined object, is one of the basic components of the pleasurable satisfaction provided by the act, in general. This is not unique to Henry, but what is noteworthy is a periodic preference for masturbation over sexual intercourse, and an ability to ‘loose’ himself in masturbation to an unusual degree. Masturbation is a prominent element of Henry’s sexual life (p.144a, 147a, 149a, 153a, 246b, 247b, 258b), and he tells us that he got ‘more kick’ from masturbation, than he did from his first sexual experience at the age of thirteen (p.144a). This preference, given his age and lack of experience, could here reasonably be attributed to a lack of ability, and yet Henry restates it, as a thread running into later life. Speaking about the memory of the girl he lost his virginity to, he says that from around that time, “...*and all through life, in the absence of intercourse – so long as I had this girl [in my mind] – at night I would think of her and masturbate and usually get as much out of it as from real intercourse...*” (p.149a). Henry also notes that for him sexual phantasy is linked to, and reliant on, an object image of a specific desired object. It is the individual, retained/owned in fantasy, and not for instance an abstract fetish or proclivity, which excites him. As he states, “[I] *always had to have a love object to be stimulated into phantasies and dreams. When I was going with Ann, and much aroused, I would masturbate with accompanying fantasies of having relations with her; had to have her as stimulus... The same is true of Ellen; I used to masturbate; while going with her, and picture her in my phantasies...*” (p.246b). He notes elsewhere, that “*sometimes he would enjoy a girl’s company and then masturbate*” (p.147a), again highlighting the use of a specific object referent. My suggestion is that Henry retains the object in fantasy, with the intention of, and emphasis on, saving the experience for ‘later’; a later where he is alone and feels secure. This is echoed in the observation, that often after having sex with Ellen he “*would go home and have wet dreams about her*” (p.255b).

There are fantasies which could be taken to argue against the notion of ‘direct object reliance’ in fantasy, Henry instead for instance using fictional stories to generate sexual excitement. As he says, while “*reading dirty stories – would imagine myself in the role of the female of the story, her sensations. I would get an erection then masturbate...*”(p.247b). I reason however that imagining yourself into the body of another,

### The ‘Something’ that Ends Relationships

Focussing on the observed characteristic reduction of desire for the love object, Henry places a condition upon desire – that there be no sign of the rival. The desire for the idealized sexual object, a repetitive search for a union characterized by regressive infantile fusion, outlined above, breaks down at this point. As mentioned, Henry speaks of a repetitive loss of object interest, ultimately resulting in a loss of attachment, which is seemingly without cause or reason. He does not simply become tired of his objects, he also does not know why he does; ‘something’ ends his relationships, and in most cases, he attributes this to a simple loss of interest. I.e. he employs a tautology; a loss of interest causes/equals a loss of interest. In this respect, it is worth wondering about Ellen, because although here too something unknown/unexplained caused the relationship to end, Henry at the same time never stopped desiring her. My suggestion is that the same psychological processes which caused this relationship to end, may operate unconsciously in other relationships where Henry simply cannot be ‘bothered’ to identify their presence/mechanics. My reason for inferring and investigating the presence of an underlying psychological mechanism – one that is observable with Ellen and yet possibly operative at other times as well – is due to the air of unavoidability characterising Henry’s encounter with a ‘something’ which causes him to end his relationship with Ellen. As Henry sums up, *“It seems I’d conquer a woman and then get tired of her... But when I parted with Ellen it didn’t seem to me it was because I was tired. In her case I was*

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involves an attempt to experience another’s subjectivity, but also a sort of ownership through possession. Such a fantasy would not be inconsistent with a general requirement of sole object possession. If this line of reasoning is correct, then a statement of Henry’s, about prostitutes being unsatisfactory because *“you might as well masturbate”* (p.153a), can be read as, ‘it is better to masturbate and feel secure, rather than to risk engaging sexually with someone who is encircled by rivals for their affection’.

*really scared*” (p.255b). The case study leaves one with the impression that this ‘something’, an *unknown* frightening ‘something’, will always lie in wait for Henry.

### **The Father’s ‘Law’ and the Activation of a Repressed Object Relationship**

Henry grapples with the question of why he ended his relationship with Ellen. One gets the impression of a fixation to the question; he keeps on coming back to it, as though trying different pegs for fit, and finding each time that none is quite right. He periodically settles on religion as the cause (p.246b, 248b, 249b, 259b), but not in a conclusive or satisfactory manner. For instance, at one point the statement that religion was the cause, is phrased as a question (p.246b). Elsewhere, Henry puts the break-up down to a specific “*sermon by a priest who preached about morality*” (p.248) in relation to adultery (p.266b), but does not describe the sermon which apparently impacted him so forcibly with any further detail, leaving the account unpersuasive. There are also contradictions concerning the degree of his adherence to religious doctrine. He states that, “*I never doubted my religion...I would consider divorce worse than adultery* (246), and elsewhere that, “*I wanted to divorce Ann and marry Ellen, but she refused*” (p.249). He mentions guilt and a fear of punishment in the ‘next world’, over the adulterous nature of the relationship, but as Karpman points out, “*that reason does not carry a great deal of weight*” because many of his previous relationships were of the same nature (p.265b). Karpman remains unconvinced, and explicitly dismisses the religious motive, as ‘pure rationalization’ (p.261b), instead, introducing the notion of unconscious motives<sup>4</sup> (p.266b). Henry goes on to muse about other possible reasons for the break-up, and although they are not of a strictly religious nature, they do seem to involve a moral quandary. They centre on anxiety

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<sup>4</sup> Given that Ellen was a mother substitute, Karpman concludes that Henry suffered from revived oedipal guilt due to the incestuous nature of the union, and that this was the unconscious reason for ending the relationship. “*Maybe I parted with Ellen because she reminded me of mother...*” (p.248).

and fear over punishment. He speaks of feeling ‘guilt and worry’ (p.259) and mentions that maybe he was “*afraid to get into trouble*” (p.155a). He states that he was ‘scared’ (p.255b), and that while seeing Ellen he suffered from headaches (p.255). He speaks of Ellen as ‘forbidden fruit’ (p.255b), and in this connection states that, “*the feeling that prevented me from having relations with Ellen is the same feeling that caused me to give myself up at the time of the homicide – I felt something was wrong*” (p.258). To summarise, Henry felt that he was transgressing on something forbidden, and experienced extreme anxiety and fear over doing so. He struggles to determine the nature of the forbidden entity or experience, resorting to the rationalization that it concerns adultery and religious transgression, both of which are shown to be inadequate as explanations. The nature of what precisely he is doing that is wrong, is left undefined, although Henry feels the wrongness acutely, and ends his relationship – with a woman he seems to have cared for greatly – as a result.

The analysis highlights the operation of powerful moral constraints suggestive of punitive superego prohibitions. The case study provides us with an account of phenomenologically similar prohibitions in action, deriving in this instance directly from an external source – Henry’s father, who amongst other things laid down an explicit directive against fraternal incest, preventing Henry from acting on his sexual feelings towards his sister Rhodda (p.150a). It is also reasonable, without relying on the theoretical formulation of an essential and unavoidable oedipal dilemma, to infer that Henry experienced his father as getting in the way of his relationship to his mother. As recorded above, Henry ‘hated’ his father (p.155a), always took his mother’s side (p.146a, 148a), and blamed his father for his mother’s suffering, suicide attempts (p.253b) and flights from the home (p.156a). It is a small matter to conclude that Henry experienced his mother’s disintegration as a loss of love, and held his father partly responsible. As Karpman summarizes, Henry’s father “*...stood between him and the...object of his affect. First he stood between him and his mother; then, by means of warning*

*and proscription, between him and his sister whom he had substituted for his mother”* (p.261). His father further exacts a ‘punishment’ by sending Rhodda away, Henry losing the object of his desire<sup>5</sup> (p.151).

Henry is clearly embroiled in an impossible predicament, involving on the one hand a desperate desire to breach the incest barrier, made more difficult by his sister’s cajoling, and on the other an attempt to follow the stark prescriptions set out by his father. These prescriptions lay the ground for the idea that Henry’s father embodies and represents for him, features typically characteristic of super ego functioning. There is further support for this notion, and for the conclusion of a global and ongoing adoption of this role by the father. As we have seen, along with laying down an explicit embargo against fraternal incest (p.150a), he also holds Henry to account for suspected theft (p.257b). Henry’s father, further blames him for Rhodda’s early sexual development (she is caught with a married man at the age of fifteen), saying that he ‘started it’ (p.150). At the time of chocking his brother, it is his father who he asks to lock him up (p.146a, 254b). During the fugues, his mind was on suicide, but also on his father who he believed was persecuting him (p.263b). When Henry gives himself up for murder, he tells the watchmen to *“arouse the sisters to request them to notify his father that he had committed a murder”* (p.144a). We do not know what the college sisters – the request that they specifically be awakened – signify for Henry, but the meaning of the father – that he be notified – is less opaque. To my mind, there are three options. Henry seeks forgiveness for his

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that Henry claims that he never acted on his desire, a task made all the more difficult when we consider Rhodda’s part. For the duration of the case study we view Rhodda being under siege from Henry’s lust. There is a voracious dimension to his need, and we worry for her safety. It is only at the very end of the study that we are given a more comprehensive account which dramatically illustrates Henry being under siege.

*“Often at sixteen or eighteen Rhodda plainly spoke to me of desires to have relations with me. Showed herself nude on many occasions and asked me if I wanted it. She’s often come close to me. She’d put so much temptation in my way – it was hell. Our rooms were adjoining – she’d call me in. The first time she tried intercourse with me was after she came from convert. She called me in her room – she was nude – I left. After that she made regular trips to my room. I used to put Rhodda out of my room – had to, had erection, but had to control. I wouldn’t let her touch me – even get near me...”* (p.262).

crime, or he requires condemnation of his wrongdoing, or he seeks to punish his father by providing evidence of how he failed as a father – i.e. he raised a murderer. The third option may be a factor, but I do not think in isolation. It is the first two which speak to the function of moral arbitrator which the father seems so strongly to embody; signifying judgement, disappointment, potential punishment and perhaps an opportunity at clemency. It is here worth recalling Henry's statement that the same feeling which caused him to give himself up, caused him to end his relationship with Ellen (p.258).

It is significant that in serving as Henry's conscience, the father *as function* remains noticeably externalized. Henry does not simply feel mistreated by an 'inner voice' but rather persecuted by his father as a differentiated external entity<sup>6</sup>. We are not concerned here with the internalization of the 'father's law' as an outcome of identification. I do not believe that Henry could identify with his father – a basic requirement for internalization where super ego formation is at issue – both because of his stark hatred, and because it would be a betrayal of the idealized mother. If Henry had internalized his strictures fully, then the matter would theoretically be solved via those means; an ego syntonic self-censorship would be the outcome, one that allows for a relinquishment of the incestuous object and paves the way for *disguised* object substitution as a future solution. Henry would then 'know' that the core embargo applies to the incestuous situation, and not to desire generally. Henry however keeps on aiming for the incestuous object, a point which Karpman confirms with the observation that "*all of his sexual development was simply an extension of the incestuous fixations formed within the family circle*" (p.262b). It is for this reason, as we saw above, that Henry's substitutes remain markedly undisguised; i.e. they are obviously substitutes. It is also for this reason that he must continually respond to the inherent threat of transgressing a taboo.

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<sup>6</sup> Henry attempts to hide from *him* during his walks; he must tell *him* about the murder; he must rely on *him* to lock him up; it is the father who lays down the directives of moral behaviour, and who punishes transgression.

It is being argued that the ‘something’ which ends his sexual relationships, is this intolerable situation; it is as though Henry is told repeatedly, that the objects of his desire are forbidden. There is the constant threat that the rival will take them from him, and awareness that even while they do not, what he is doing is dangerous and somehow immoral. His response is either yielding to the pressure (as he seems eventually to have done with Ellen), and/or cued or pre-emptive aggression directed at both the rival and the object of desire who is judged complicit. For Henry, the rival, epitomised by the father, threatens the experience of blissful sexual fusion previously identified; a state characterized by feelings of sexual desire, adoration, idealization, and deep contentment. It has been observed that frustration is experienced when signifiers of potential object infidelity are encountered, often centred on those which betoken the presence of a rival, Henry in fact requiring a show of singular devotion, such as that of virginity, to feel secure. I would argue that this is not a matter of persecutory superego dictates, but rather of the activation of a repressed object relationship, Henry experiencing signs of the rival as though being faced with the father’s prescriptions.

In addition to the hypervigilance, anxiety and reactive aggression described above, Henry experiences persecutory beliefs of, or approaching, a delusional intensity, about men and their wish/capacity to take what is his. As noted before, while still dating Ann he experiences extreme jealousy related to the feeling that “*every fellow was cutting [him] out*” (p.144a). He felt at such moments that everyone was against him, that people “*had it in for [him]*” (p.255b) and, used the walks partly to hide from them (p.263). Henry’s suspicion that his fourth child was not his own (p.249b, 252b, 253b), leads him to accuse Ann of adultery and they separate just over two weeks later (p.146a). It would seem therefore to be the suspicion of infidelity, which precipitates the fall into psychosocial disintegration. We find the same disintegrative trajectory occurring at the time when Ann and he were still dating. Then, while in the throes of delusional jealousy he began to “*think that life wasn’t worth living, had*

*homicidal ideas, and made an attempt at suicide by turning on the gas*” (p.144a). At one point, he relatedly states that a reason why he did not get involved with married women, was because the “*man may...kill you*” (p.147a). This disintegrative outcome is shown again during the ‘finding of the love-letter’ which pushes Henry into a state of helpless despondency. It is clear, that the ‘appearance of the rival’ triggers deeply painful and unmanageable emotion in Henry. I would suggest that what occurs at such moments is the activation or externalization of an internal object relationship, and that it is this that we see in Henry’s repetitive diminishment/destruction of the idealized good object, illustrated starkly in Henry’s attempted choking of his younger brother Leo (p.146a). Leo was his ‘favourite and closest brother’, and he classes him along with his mother and Rhodda, as the ‘most important’ of the family (p.156a). He describes Leo as ‘pure’ and as a ‘symbol of goodness’ (p.156a). Leo is someone that Henry seems to have idealized for his goodness. Although he wonders if he choked Leo out of jealousy for his goodness (p.156a), adding that “[he] *was jealous or envious of Leo, his good morals, very good boy*” (p.259b), I think a more comprehensive explanation will include the experience of persecution defining the period under consideration. Following the attempted choking he asks his father to ‘lock him up’, noting that at the time he felt the “*...whole world was against him*” (p.254b). The key point is the persecutory belief and the unconscious and automated impact such a state of mind has on the apprehension of the (previously) good object. As Henry admits, he had little conscious awareness over his reasons for attacking Leo: “*as a matter of fact, I recall little of the incident with Leo. There was no argument started, remember reaching for his neck, I remembered his hollering and he biting my thumb. I was in a kind of daze – when he bit on the thumb, I came to myself. When father came, I asked to be locked up. Six months later I was locked up for murder*” (p.259b). In my view, what we observe here is the re-emergence of the repressed frustrating object which both eclipses apprehension of good external objects and cues the activation of a split-off ego fragment that when active generates

ego-syntonic behaviour that is a response to the encounter with the frustrating object – i.e. a response to past experiences of extreme deprivation. Under this state of affairs, any hint of frustration may signal a return of the split-off frustrating object; an experience of minor frustration, by such means becoming equivalent to one of extreme frustration and potentially generating overwhelming anxiety and possibly hatred. This conceptualization accounts for the amount or magnitude of aggression observed. It is furthermore easy to see how mutual reinforcement results where a loss of desire occurs: frustration breeds responsive aggression, and aggression causes object depreciation (a loss of idealization) which leads to further frustration and so on.

### **Idealization**

I focus now on the desire for the idealized sexual object, manifested as a chain of ongoing object cathexis and replacement. I argue that the constraint upon the object that it be fully pleasing, to a degree reminiscent of infantile fusion, leaves no place for the inevitability of frustration, and therefore no possibility of relational continuity. This dynamic is echoed in Henry's desire for girls and younger women, who will certainly age and therefore frustrate. It has also been noted that part object relating was a feature of Henry's romantic relationships, with the sexual encounter as object. Here, tactile satisfaction reminiscent of infantile absorption was observed. It is easy to see how the general 'stuff of living' could frustrate a state with the twin core requirements of sole possession and blissful fusion. The following 'actions' by the love object are for instance shown to frustrate: a drifting attention or preoccupation not centred on Henry (p.154a, 245b); aging, which as previously noted effects desire; an illness or psychological mood which may impact pliancy or perhaps a willingness for sexual and

emotional engagement (p.153b); a flirtatious or perhaps simply interested response to another man, which again has been discussed above.

In summary, for Henry desire is 'shaped' from two directions; by the rival's claims which place prescriptive constraints upon desire, resulting in consequent denigrative attacks, and by idealizing tendencies which are incompatible with unavoidable frustration. An account incorporating the notion of idealization therefore further explains the inevitable time constraint on Henry's romantic relationships, and by extension the fact of repetition. Idealization is here viewed as a product of splitting, which is understood as a largely unconscious process with roots in early childhood experience. Henry provides us with illustrations of its functioning during childhood and the mechanism's presence is plainly delineated in the behavioural and affective dispositions directed towards both parents and towards Henry's sexual objects.

### **Splitting**

As already noted, Henry *always* sided with his mother when his parents quarrelled (p.146a); judging his father wrong (p.148a), and his mother right (p.153a). He states categorically that he cannot recall 'entertaining any antipathic emotions' towards his mother (p.155), even though as discussed he had good cause to. Again, as already noted, he describes her in loving idealized terms - a representation that is devotedly safeguarded from challenge. His father on the other hand is described in opposite terms. He is feared and hated as the worse thing imaginable (p.146a, 155a), believed to offer Henry no comfort whatsoever (p.146a), and is held responsible for the suffering of the household (p.156a, 253b). And yet, Henry's father is also shown by the case study, to be a persistent and engaged presence in his son's life. He may have been prone to losing his temper (p.153a), and while there is little doubt to my mind that he did contribute to the mother's disintegration, his 'voice' is simultaneously one of ongoing moral guidance

(146a, 150a, 151a, 248b, 254b). When an argument is mentioned between father and son, it is the mother who holds a knife at the time, and who Henry thinks wanted to kill him (p.147). There are clear indications of splitting here, with the father as the wholly bad object, and the mother as all good. The same dynamics are observed in Henry's romantic relationships, where on the one hand idealization and part object relating define the region of the all good object, and where on the other, Ann along with sexual objects which 'fall from grace', are designated as all bad. This is shown in the following statement, where Henry says "*I wanted to divorce Ann and marry Ellen, but she refused...I had death wishes against Ann. I'd curse her, would wish accident should happen, die from childbirth*" (p.249b). We therefore conclude that the object's status (its goodness or badness) depends largely on underlying splitting mechanisms. Ann and the father (along with the ever-threatening rival) are blamed for disrupting/negating the union with the idealized object. In line with this point, Karpman argues that Henry's "*...suspicion of his wife, and much of the resulting antagonism toward her, followed upon his break with Ellen. He 'took it out on' his wife because he was deprived of the relationship which approached most nearly the one which he had truly desired unconsciously...*" (p.260b). What is noteworthy is that Henry cannot acknowledge that the object of desire itself may undermine the longed-for union (as seems to have been the case with his mother), idealization here protecting against such knowledge.

### **Ann, and the Protection of the Good Relationship**

Karpman seems ultimately to hold a pejorative view of Ann, dismissing her concerns as minor or irrelevant, and finally blaming the marital difficulties on her suggested frigidity. His assessment, within the framework I am employing, could be said to centre on the notion of pathological object choice, where the choice of a disappointing and rejecting object is the

primary dynamic considered. This was roughly the depiction presented above when considering Ann's nature. Although there are grounds to justify this view<sup>7</sup>, there is also marked evidence in the case study, to support a more multifaceted picture, one where aspects of Henry's behaviour are highlighted and his contribution to the marital difficulties are more fully explored.

As just indicated, the displacement of aggression onto Ann, a by-product of splitting, places her in the role of the bad object. It can be reasoned that her status as the hated object is here established by transference and projection and further confirmed through projective identification, the need to denigrate her, in order to safeguard the good object, providing an unconscious motive for the use of these mechanisms. Concerning the status of the *unconscious motive*, I am not arguing for a form of propositional explanation, or means-end reasoning where Henry in each given instance *chooses* to denigrate Ann in order to protect the good external object. Rather, by comparison to an imagined or fantasized idealized object she will always fall short; be seen as less. It is due to such entrenched or structuralized comparison that Ann is perhaps for instance seen as fringed, frightened and over anxious<sup>8</sup>. Then too, as we saw, she

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<sup>7</sup> As previously noted, there are multiple statements concerning ongoing absences and a lack of care, and in the 'love letter' a strong suggestion of infidelity on her part, or at the least a portrayal of a provocative nature. The letter Henry finds in her handwriting, addressed 'dear sweetheart', invites a man to spend the day in the woods with her, the tone indicating a 'sexual relationship' and capturing sentiments of 'longing' (p.249b). Upon being questioned, Ann initially laughs and refuses to account, but later counters that the letter was a 'decoy' intended to induce a response in him. If the letter is authentic then Henry's jealousy is a response to her behaviour. If it is a 'decoy', then we still find evidence of behaviour that is meant to incite jealousy. In either case, there is something about Ann's nature that induces jealousy.

<sup>8</sup> We do find content which challenges Henry's standard characterization of Ann. For instance, contrary to his accusations of frigidity, Henry says that following the first week of his marriage they had relations "*twice and sometimes six times a night*" (p.153a). Concerning her frightened nature, it is not surprising, and quite understandable that she feared pregnancy given her experience of it. As Henry mentions, "*his wife was very sick following her first pregnancy...*" (p.149a), and also that "*in nearly seven years – she was pregnant seven times – three miscarriages, and four births*" (p.153a). He adds at one point that he used to think that "*if wife were pregnant and should die, I'd be better off*" (p.254b). Henry here concedes knowledge of the fact that pregnancy equates to vulnerability; the state providing the most fertile available context for his wish that she die/disappear. Ann also fears that Henry would tell his mother 'everything', and this also seems reasonable. As we've seen, Henry is extremely attached to his mother and mentions being unable to stay out of town for too long at a time, as he, "*had to go back to mother. Sometimes I would leave my work in the middle of the day to see mother. She was always glad to see me, would throw her arms around me and kiss me*" (p.257b).

may be blamed (hated) for standing in the way of Henry's grasp of the idealized object. Considering the examples provided in the case study, what is seen most clearly are however attempts to protect a view of the *self* as good.

As previously noted, while claiming that Ann was guilty of neglect, unfaithfulness and abandonment, there is at the same time undeniable evidence of Henry having committed these very 'crimes'. Illustrating this point, after accusing Ann of abandoning the children and him, Henry admits that it was him finally who "*made her leave the house, [and him who] put the children in an asylum and didn't bother seeing them*" (p.146a). Here, projective mechanisms are surely in operation, having to do with attempts by Henry to disavow shameful behaviour and therefore to safeguard a view of the self as good. As Henry confirms, "*my suspicion of jealousy was all in my head*" (p.249b).

There is also evidence of projective identification being employed to incite neglectful and abandoning behaviour by Ann. Henry blames Ann for staying out and yet states that he "*used to stay away from home quite often, even for as long as two or three months*" (p.146a). Presumably this occurred before Ann began to 'wander', Henry suggesting that they swapped behaviour from that point on: "*shortly after I found the letter, it was I that stayed at home, she went out*" (p.259b). What may be in evidence then is a reversal or fluidity of relational roles; a complementary shift by both, between the poles of victim and perpetrator. Such a role shift may denote the operation of projective identification, where Henry incites Ann's abandoning behaviour through a gradual and subtle intersubjective process. Although there is insufficient data to determine the precise functioning of the procedure, following the conceptualization presented in the literature review, I assume that it is grounded in projection. We can say that Henry's 'wish' that Ann be bad, is a basic ingredient for making her thus. Other 'ingredients' may have been a continual denial of badness by Henry, thus leaving it to be situated in the other; or his contribution to the establishment of an unhappy marriage, thus creating an

environment where care and faithfulness simply could not exist, leaving room only for their opposite; or it may be that Henry's denigrating attacks caused Ann to respond in kind. We can only speculate about these however but can note that projective identification also serves to protect the good self. Taking this into account, we can phrase the matter differently and say that we are here speaking not only broadly of the protection of the idealized external object but also of an attempt to identify with it.

The case study seems to indicate that what Henry is continually aiming at, trying to insure, is a fusion between good objects; a blissful and perfect (often sexual) union. He nowhere for instance assumes the role of bad object in relation to an idealized one; there is never a statement along the lines of, "I am bad/pathetic/laughable", in relation to a love object that is "perfect/beloved/transcendent". Yes, Henry may be rejected as 'not good enough', but he does not allow this characterization of self to 'settle'; projection and projective identification provide Henry with a method of both determining Ann's character and of ridding himself of the very qualities put into/onto her, and this, partly in the service of allowing for *another* relationship with someone else. It may be noted that the strategy employed by Henry is what Fairbairn refers to as the paranoid technique. Key features of the technique are an identification with the exciting object, and the projection into the external world of an internal rejecting object. The consequence being, that while the individual attains the status of good self, the world becomes hostile and frightening. This outcome was shown as applying to Henry where delusional ideation occurred. We can summarise and say that Henry makes Ann bad to protect the good relationship, but that in making her thus, she becomes a site of badness, that is to be hated and feared.

### **The Unacknowledged Relationship**

The occurrence of splitting, along with Henry's sustained attempt to identify with the idealized object, suggests the presence of an unconscious relationship. What Henry cannot acknowledge is disappointment or betrayal by the idealized object. It is true, apart from his mother and Ellen, that they do 'fall', are denigrated, but here, in 'falling' they cease to be what they once were - beloved and desired. What is not possible is an ambivalent stance, where the object can both disappoint and yet remain somewhat good. Additionally, there is the further deflection, of blame falling on the ever-present rival with the emphasis being on the rival's relation to *him*; the occurrence of impending or experienced 'theft'. The object-image that is repressed would seem to be of an object, that while loved, yet disappoints, abandons, frustrates and mistreats. Linked to this – the other half of a repressed object relations unit – we find in Henry's ongoing efforts to identify with the idealized object, an attempt to escape a self-image in which the self is injured, overlooked, unloved and worthy of abandonment.

To consolidate, we need to reconcile this statement, of repressed self and object-images, with what was said previously about the activation of a split-off ego fragment. In short, are we referring to the same or to different entities with the designates self-image and ego fragment? A starting point will be to state that for Henry *in reality* both parents were responsible for the ruin of his mother's love. In this sense, both the rival, and the inevitable fall of the idealized object, betoken the same experience. What is different is that Henry seems more able to hold the rival to account. He responds with blame, often of a hostile or violent nature, which speaks to the agentive nature and operation of an ego fragment. Conversely, the self-image that is protected against would seem to suggest more an experience of self. We can say that this state of affairs is grounded in the historical moment of splitting where Henry blamed the father. We could extrapolate further and suggest that in Henry there simply does not seem to be a capacity to accuse the mother. I.e. there is no indication of a split-off ego state that is primed towards,

or even capable of this. We therefore reach the surprising conclusion that the split-off ego fragment is seemingly itself, at least partially, defensive in nature; it functions to protect against the apprehension of a self and object-image.

### **Consolidation and the Derived Hypothesis Following Analysis**

Overwhelming envy and jealousy along with a seemingly unavoidable loss of attachment resulting in isolation, disintegration and suffering were shown to occur repetitively across *all* of Henry's romantic relationships, applying also to his relationship with his mother. Although these factors were constant, two different types of relationship could be distinguished in respect of the affective disposition directed at the object, indicating split object relating. On the one hand, Henry's mother along with his objects of desire and sexual partners, define the region of the all good object. Adoration, idealization, contentment, and love are characteristic. On the other, Henry's father, his wife Ann, along with sexual objects which 'fall from grace', are designated as all bad.

It was observed that Ann's status as the hated object is established in large part by transference, projection and further confirmed through projective identification. While claiming that Ann was guilty of neglect, unfaithfulness and abandonment, there was clear evidence of the operation of projective mechanisms, having to do with attempts by Henry to disavow shameful behaviour of the very kind Ann is accused of. In trying to safeguard a view of the self as good it was seen that Henry does not simply aim at protection of the idealized external object but also at a chance to identify with it. What Henry is continually aiming at, trying to insure, is a fusion between good objects; a blissful and perfect (often sexual) union. Projection and projective identification therefore provide Henry with a method of both

determining Ann's character and of ridding himself of the very qualities put into/onto her, and this, partly in the service of allowing for another relationship.

Concerning the repetitive loss of attachment, it was noted that extreme anxiety and hypervigilance centred on the appearance of a rival, results in denigrative attacks directed at the rival/supposed rival and importantly at Henry's objects of desire, leading to their 'fall from grace'. It was further seen that the constraint upon the object that it be fully pleasing, to a degree reminiscent of infantile fusion, leaves no place for the inevitability of frustration, and therefore no possibility of relational continuity. The desire for the idealized sexual object, a repetitive search for a union characterized by regressive infantile fusion, breaks down at this point. It is the bad object epitomized by the oedipal father and by Ann who are blamed, along with the now denigrated former object of desire. What is noteworthy is that Henry cannot ambivalently acknowledge that the object of desire itself may undermine the longed-for union (as seems to have been the case with his mother), idealization here protecting against such knowledge. The object must be denigrated and therefore lost before being held responsible.

Henry's experience of fearing and hating the rival, as well as turning against the idealized object was analysed in greater detail in relation to the notion of the activation of a repressed object relationship. The matter was understood as partly concerning the activation of a split-off ego fragment, Henry experiencing signs of the rival *as though* being faced with the father's prescriptions. It was further argued that the threat of loss signified by the rival, overlays a greater and more powerfully denied experience of loss – fundamentally a loss of the mother's own doing. This was described and understood in terms of self and object-images. We can note finally that with the destruction of the good object Henry loses the capacity to identify with it, and that the transference erects a frightening object, capable of further – in addition to the rival – reconfirming Henry's status as the one who loses out (through abandonment for instance).

Fairbairn's paranoid technique breaks down at this point, leaving Henry with an internal and external world populated by frightening and persecutory figures.

As in the previous case (that of Ernst) it is again the adaptation to a primary site of loss and/or trauma which gives form to RC activity. Henry, (like Ernst) partially blames the 'wrong' object, here the rival. In other words, much of the intra and interpersonal dynamics leading to pathological repetition originate out of experience where defensive splitting measures are operative and dominant. This supports the prior reformulation that, 'a central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience'.

. With Ernst, the libidinal affective valence was split, with the sexual aspect occurring alongside aggression, directed at one and the same object. For Henry by comparison, each affective valence is seen to be distinctly untainted by the other – objects are idealized or ruthlessly denigrated. Both versions are accommodated by the most recent revision of the hypothesis.

Differing forms of idealization were observed in each case. For Ernst object choice centred on the ideal object, an object that was protected from his aggression, but not elevated in his esteem. In distinction, for Henry objects of desire are elevated and imbued with compelling phantasy representations of a blissful union reminiscent of infantile satisfaction. The difference in presentation is captured by Kernberg's (1975) distinction between 'primitive idealization' and 'later idealization', where the latter is a reaction formation motivated by the need to defend against aggression - a motivation highlighted in Ernst's ongoing conflict between inhibition and aggression. With primitive idealization on the other hand, the object's role is fundamentally to protect against a world of hostile objects. Here, *"the good object representation is unable to withstand contact with the bad object representation, it must be free from all negative features and all aggressiveness... an unrealistic, all-powerful, all-good*

*object*” (Summers, 1994: 202-3). The requirement that the object fulfil such a role was plainly observed in Henry’s case. The protective function of idealization allows us to add to our understanding of the variable which decides among the modes of externalization employed. We can recall that Ernst’s employment of object choice as a primary mode of externalization provides a method of repetition in which the object is not acknowledged or designated as bad, and that the object’s status is here determined by ‘later idealization’. For Henry on the other hand transference, projection and projective identification were observed as the primary modes of externalization and ‘primitive idealization’ was operative. I would argue that primitive idealization *requires* such mechanisms in order to establish the inherently unrealistic experience of the all-powerful, all-good object. The hypothesis was previously amended to state that the variable under consideration acts in accordance with the aim of supporting repression of the total unconscious object relationship. We can now add that it does so through the mechanism of idealization and that object choice as a mode of externalization is preferred where later idealization is observed, and the other modes required where primitive idealization is necessitated. This amendment is included below. Outside of it, the RC definition and initial hypotheses remain unchanged as all conditions were confirmed.

### **Bullet Point Presentation of Findings in Relation to the Initial Hypothesis: Hypothesis Development**

Below, standard text indicates the initial hypotheses. Bold text indicates changes made as a result of findings and carried forward. A line through the text indicates that a statement has been invalidated. Bold italics indicate that a change has occurred in the case under consideration.

### The Repetition Compulsion Defined Following Case 2

RC is defined by four descriptive criteria:

- it is unconscious; characterized on an experiential level by a lack of conscious awareness or conscious rational deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either broadly unconscious, or specifically, repressed, dissociated or ego dystonic.
- it is a repetition of a past unpleasurable experience
- it is unpleasurable because it is painful and damaging
- RC should be thought of as the unconscious repetition of a 'lived interpersonal situation'.

In relation to the last point, RC concerns the repetition of an experience, rather than of cognition, and therefore does not include the kind of repetition viewed in obsessional neurosis. Cognitive repetition is furthermore excluded under the above RC definition, since it proceeds alongside an awareness of the fact of repetition. I.e. the patient suffering from obsessional thinking is keenly aware of the repetitive nature of his/her thought.

### Hypothesis Following Case 2<sup>9</sup>

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here **have a tendency to** keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. **However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive).** The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.

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<sup>9</sup> The hypothesis development across cases is reproduced as appendix *b*

- 'Crude emotion of an infantile character', circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - 'Chronic conflict', often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
  - Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
    - Transference
    - Projection
    - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of "existing identity fragments" or "pre-existing introjective configurations" *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
    - Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.

- **It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.**

*Idealization, two forms of it, is recommended as the sought-after variable; object choice being central where 'later idealization' is observed, and the other modes (transference, projection, projective identification) required where 'primitive idealization' is seen.*

*It is noted that object nature and/or the activation of a second object relationship may undermine or curtail episodes of primitive idealization.*

- **A central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience.**
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

## CASE STUDY THREE: STOLLER'S 'A CASE OF FEMALE MASCULINITY'

### RC Identification

At the time of Stoller's writing of the case study, the patient, Mrs. G, is in her mid-thirties and has been in individual treatment with Stoller for roughly seven years. Stoller meets her for the first time fourteen years prior to this while undertaking interviews at a county hospital. Their meeting results in Mrs. G's transferral to UCLA where Stoller is Chief of the Inpatient Psychiatric Service. For the seven years following their first meeting, Mrs. G although nominally under Stoller's care is treated by other psychiatrists both as an inpatient and outpatient.

As an introduction to Mrs. G, Stoller describes her in the following terms: "*Mrs. G was a teasing, manipulating, cute, gratifying, charming, loving, insightful, dangerous, suicidal psychotic. Those who do not know her and whom she does not wish to charm find her irritating, stubborn, and malicious. Those who know her find her sad, pliant, weird, sparkling, and yearning for closeness with others...My abiding response has been to a benignly teasing, sad and lonely madwoman with reversible pathology.*" (250)

It is difficult to be precise about the frequency and duration of 'actual' treatment. This is partly down to the unorthodox nature of the treatment relationship which is perhaps justified by the severity of pathology, but also made possible by Stoller's unusual commitment to the patient. As Stoller tells it, during the first seven years of their acquaintance Mrs. G kept him "*in the background of her mind*" (p.304) and "*would stop by [his] office from time to time to say hello and would also write a letter every month or so to keep [him] up to date...*" (p.88). When Mrs. G eventually enters 'official' psychotherapy with Stoller, she only manages to keep

a few of her once weekly appointments during the first year (p. 97). Her letter writing however increases in frequency at times of psychological distress and the content becomes deeply personal. There is the suggestion that they do eventually begin to meet more regularly (p.107, 109) while Mrs. G remains an outpatient, but from when and how often is difficult to determine. Finally, following a telephone call threatening murder and suicide Stoller hospitalizes Mrs. G, saying that confinement enabled him to begin to treat her psychodynamically, which involved spending several hours each day with her (p.111-2), his undated notes recording, *"I am still continuing to see the patient every day except Sundays"* (115). Mrs. G is eventually released from this episode of hospitalization, and Stoller notes that in total she is hospitalized twelve times at UCLA (p.12). We do not learn how regularly they meet after this. It is noteworthy that throughout the period of 'official' treatment Mrs. G seems to have supplemented face-to-face meetings with telephone calls. There are periods when she calls *"regularly, at least once a day, for a few weeks"* (p.156).

The case study consists primarily of verbatim extracts based on audio recordings of psychotherapy sessions, letters written by Mrs. G, some of Stoller's clinical notes, and his theoretical and clinical assessments.

When considering Mrs. G's romantic relationships and sexual encounters an immediate complication has to do with her sexual orientation. Stoller ultimately classes her as homosexual, noting that throughout her life she nevertheless struggled to acknowledge her homosexuality, resulting in an extensive catalogue of heterosexual partners and behaviour. As he phrases it, she was *"trapped by her heterosexual impulses"* (p.278). In this respect, therapy may be viewed as a painstaking process of helping Mrs. G come to terms with her homosexuality; an aim which is eventually judged successful, for as Stoller sums up at later points in the treatment, *"Mrs. G has finally come to accept her homosexuality, and can enjoy a lasting, loving, sexual relationship with a woman"* (p.291). Mrs. G herself echoes these

sentiments, stating, “*I am a homosexual...I always knew what I was; I always knew it. But I didn’t want to believe that I was a homosexual*” (p.332-3). In relation to RC – specifically the definitional criteria of repetitive activity being both painful and damaging – Mrs. G’s sexual orientation has a bearing on how her heterosexual behaviour is understood because we might suppose that all such activity is for her inherently unsatisfying, perhaps even *painful*, and ultimately *damaging* in the sense that it reinforces repression of her homosexual tendencies. This is particularly relevant since a far greater proportion of the case study, a reflection of her life choices, centres on her relationships to men, and it is with her male object that I begin.

## **Male Relationships**

Stoller divides Mrs. G’s relations with men into five categories (p.279). I will consider three of these as the remaining two are not of a romantic or sexual nature. The first group I consider are constituted by Mrs. G’s four husbands, the second by the men Mrs. G chose to father her children, and the third by sexual encounters often with strangers (p.279).

### **Bill (4<sup>th</sup> Husband)**

#### *Object Nature*

I begin my analysis with Mrs. G’s longest standing husband, Bill. Stoller describes the marriage as an ‘empty and angry relationship’ (p.110), with Mrs. G echoing that it was an ‘unhealthy marriage’ (p.104, 300) and that by staying with Bill, she allowed herself to be ‘destroyed’ (p.163, 360). She also speaks of him ‘hurting’ and ‘killing’ her (p.214), but it should be stressed that this does not refer to physical threat or injury. As Mrs. G clarifies he was a ‘threat to her

sanity' (p.357). Mrs. G says that she spent twelve years with Bill, the marriage eventually ending in divorce (p.358). For most of that time she lives with Bill and two of her children by other men.

Mrs. G reports that Bill and her spent their first night together, after meeting that same day, in lengthy conversation and open disclosure (p.49, 359). She notes that Bill was 'strong' and a 'big man' and that she chose him because he would take care of her and felt she needed to be cared for (p.359). She describes Bill as 'serious', 'warm' and as "*someone who didn't drink or smoke or screw around or any of those things*" (p.360). In the marriage, she relies on him for stability, and as a provider for herself and the children (p. 100, 104, 163). The solidity he insures is not simply financial, but often involves him stepping in during her absence. He is for instance shown to look after the children while she is out 'every night' (p.100). He 'pays the bills' and 'cleans the house' when she is hospitalized (p.163). There are also examples of him providing comfort, Mrs. G saying that she used to ask him to just hold her and he would (p.360). As she hoped, he does therefore look after her, Mrs G confirming that "*if I hadn't had him, I would have died long ago. He kept me alive*" (p.360).

Along with the more positive aspects of the relationship, Mrs. G also relays the following. She states that Bill did not talk or listen well, and more broadly that he did not engage fully or provide sufficient emotional support (p.91, 163, 212, 300). As an illustration of what Bill was not able to engage with, we may consider the following statement by Mrs. G: "*I want to run in the street and beg someone to please, please help me. I cannot understand why no one sees me hurting so much, crying so hard and running and running*" (p.94). She also identifies a capacity for manipulation, saying that he 'played with her head from the first' (p.358) and a tendency towards punishment, noting that like her mother, he had "*a quiet, nonverbal way of accusing me and punishing me...*" (p.359). She expands on both tendencies, saying that, "*he gave me permission to behave in a certain way and then when I did, he*

*punished me for it. A million things. He would bring some guy home for me to go out with, and then if I went out with him, he would...well, he wouldn't talk to me for days at a time. Something like that, some petty shit. But whatever it was, it always freaked me out"* (p.359).

It is clear throughout the case study that Mrs. G wanted more from Bill. She for instance speaks of him 'changing' for the better and yet, is oddly unclear about what precisely this involves. She hints at a relinquishing of control and of granting her greater independence (p.100), but this feels fragmentary. Whatever its nature<sup>1</sup>, the change proves temporary, as Bill is eventually accused of not "[living] *up to his part of the bargain*" (p.184). There are instances where he is described as 'nice' and seen to be making an effort (p.127). Mrs. G describes one such occasion as follows, "*Bill and I had dinner together. He did something very unusual. He talked to me and talked to me, and he cried and a little bit of everything*" (p.187). We could guess that what Mrs. G is after, is captured in this episode of Bill talking and crying, that is greater communication and emotional involvement, but this supposition is complicated by a later clarification of what occurred during the event in question. In Mrs. G's words, "*he talked to me about the times when I get angry, and he said I'm vicious when I'm being hostile. He talked about going to bed with me, about whatever it is I do to him – I make him feel inadequate. He's afraid to go to bed with me*" (p.192). Bill then brings up the question of divorce, saying that it is perhaps time they spoke about it. This is followed by Mrs. G driving into oncoming traffic and causing an accident. She concedes that "*maybe I really didn't want to talk to Bill about it*" (p.192).

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting slip perhaps attests to the fact that Mrs G is somehow incapable of saying explicitly what she wants or needs from Bill where change is concerned. While with Stoller, in accusing Bill of misleading her she refers instead to Stoller, substituting 'you' for 'him'. Confusion ensues, and by the time her substitution is noted and the matter rectified, the question of what things he was meant to do but failed at, is lost (p.185).

*Affective State*

Mrs. G repeatedly speaks about wanting to kill Bill (p.74, 105), and there are three documented occasions when she does attempt his murder (p.176, 177, 217, 358). The desire to kill him is often in response to Bill not allowing her another child (p.74, 105, 358). As she experiences it, by denying her, he robs her of *“all those feelings, all that warmth, good...all that...I don't know what it is... I felt it once. The first time I had a baby”* (p.74). She restates the same need at a different time, *“I had this feeling inside of me about wanting something warm to hold...”* (p.101). At another time, her reason for wanting to kill him has to do with him not living up to his promises (p.184). However, as previously noted we do not have a clear understanding of how and in what he failed.

With the progression of psychotherapy Mrs. G does eventually recognise that her murderous impulses are related to feelings of rage and that she needs to find alternative ways of expressing her anger towards Bill (p.217). Although she does here acknowledge the presence of anger, she is still unclear about why she is angry and for the most part does not leave us with a proper sense of its specific character beyond the fact that it is murderous. One possibility which may go towards greater illumination is Mrs. G's hint that it involves fear. As she says, Bill *“threatens me; he's a threat to my life; he's a threat to my sanity. And he wouldn't be a threat if he were dead...”* (p.357). She expands, *“I kill because I'm terrified for my life...the only thing you can do with someone like [Bill] is to kill him”* (p.360). If there is fear and a feeling of threat, we do not learn why, although Mrs. G provides one statement worth considering, saying, *“when I think of that first night I went to Bed with Bill my intent was to fuck his lights out...He wouldn't let me”* (p.360). It is after this statement that she concludes that the only solution is killing him and men like him. What did he do to her by his refusal? My sense is that it may have something to do with exposing her by stripping her of certain defences, and this is a possibility that is explored further below.

While it remains difficult to isolate Mrs. G's affective states during destructive episodes involving Bill, we can nevertheless highlight that her behaviour speaks to an indifference or disregard. Such sentiments are again however not easily acknowledged by Mrs. G, and when they are admitted to, there is nevertheless an act of 'distancing' whereby they are for instance either attributed to Carrie (a dissociated identity discussed below), or Mrs. G enters a disordered state of mind. It is Carrie who is sexually "...*not interested in Bill...*[and who] *thinks Bill is an ass*" (p.150). Concerning her state of mind in relation to her attitude of marrying Bill, Mrs. G says that she did not know him 'fifteen minutes' before they married and finds it difficult to say why they went through with it, putting it down to 'coincidence' (p.359). She expands that it was somehow 'arranged for them' or down to a 'bet or dare' and that even while agreeing to the marriage she never pictured actually living with Bill (p.359). After further reflection, she struggles to clarify, ending with "*I don't remember...I don't know. I don't remember*" (p.359).

While noting such indifference, it is also true that Mrs. G does seem at times to value Bill and to regret her treatment of him. There is for instance the suggestion that Mrs. G had "*a terrific feeling of responsibility [towards Bill]*" (p.163). We also find that her attempt at poisoning him leaves her suicidal and that on reflection the act had 'scared the living shit' out of her (p.186). While considering divorce, she feels guilty (p.246), and again at the prospect of murdering him (p.357). I would suggest however that although these affective dispositions are seemingly present, that they are nevertheless difficult for Mrs. G to access; explosive, life-altering experiences being required to arouse them.

### *Effect of the Relationship*

I turn now to a consideration of the impact of the relationship on Mrs. G. We saw previously that in Mrs. G's assessment, she was damaged by Bill, and that she sometimes spoke about the

impact of the relationship in terms of dying and death. She also reports feeling controlled, suffocated and unsupported emotionally. At the same time, we know that she relied on Bill for stability and security, admitting at one point that she owed her survival to him. The relationship between the two strands (the negative and positive outcomes) may be understood as one in which Mrs. G sacrifices her wellbeing and sanity in order to insure an ongoing degree of environmental stability and care both for herself and for her children (p.100, 104, 163, 360). She summarises the cost to her identity as follows, *“when I was married to Bill I really wasn’t anything, and when I left Bill I had to find out who I was”* (p.230). Although Mrs G ‘tries to be good’, Stoller notes that *“it was too much for her to be a middle-class housewife”* (p.167). We learn that with time her behaviour, in the guise of Carrie, turns ‘pretty bad’ (p.167), and Mrs. G describes what this may have involved with the following statement. *“I can remember being so frustrated at times. I would leave the house and just go and drink until I was drunk and passed out or something, or use heroine or something, you know, just anything to get away from him”* (p.358). There are also occasions where she leaves for longer periods, escaping to other cities without Bill knowing where she is (p.100, 162).

### **The Psychiatrist (2<sup>nd</sup> Father)**

Stoller records that Mrs. G gave birth to five children, and suffered one abortion (p.59). Three of her children are given up for adoption, with Mrs. G keeping and raising her second and third (both boys and both by different fathers). It is noteworthy that while Mrs. G states again and again that she was happiest when pregnant (p.4, 16, 44, 69...), this seems to have had little to do with the relevant biological father who was often out of the picture by that point. Perhaps reflecting the transient role they played in her life, there is relatively little content concerning

the fathers. By far the greatest share concerns the father of H, her second child, and it is with him that I begin.

### *Object Nature*

At sixteen a court action places Mrs. G into the custody of a psychiatrist, the condition of being under psychiatric care allowing her release from reform school. The psychiatrist is thirty at the time and soon to father H. Mrs. G describes him as a sweet and naive ‘little boy’ (p.83). She assures Stoller about his naivety, saying “*he really was – if you can imagine anyone his age, thirty, and with his education being naive – but he was*” (p.83). She elaborates, “*he was kind of a Casper Milquetoast kind of person. He wasn’t a big masculine sort of thing. He was pretty*” (76). Given her characterization of him, it is perhaps unsurprising that for the most part Mrs. G seems uninterested in the question of his accountability – the potential and on the face of it likely abuse of power and position – saying “*Either I seduced him, or he seduced me...I don’t remember...*” (p.77). She explains her position further, “*I can rationalize, I can say ‘...I was sixteen years old; I was his patient; and he was supposed to be treating me and making me better, and instead he screwed me. That was a bad thing for him to do. He was a bad man.’ That doesn’t mean a goddamn thing. He was not a bad man. If it hadn’t been pushed in his face and made available to him, I’m sure that he wouldn’t have taken advantage. He was just a kid...He wasn’t even a man...*” (p.76).

### *Affective State*

In the case study, there are two presentations of Mrs. G’s encounter with the psychiatrist. The second occurs roughly two years after the first, and it is likely that the lucidity and apparent honesty observed in it, are a response to ongoing psychotherapeutic engagement.

At the first account, Mrs. G presents the events as though she used him from the start (p.74). Under this account her actions are premeditated and her aim is to use his sperm for a child, his authority for her release, and his expert backing to ensure that she be able to keep her child in the face of her mother's rebuttals (p.74). He is therefore simply a means to an end, which Mrs G confirms with the following: *"I wasn't particularly interested in him or what he did one way or the other. My only concern was getting out of reform school; and he was the only way I could get out, so what he did was immaterial to me"* (p.75). At this time Mrs. G summarises the quality of their interpersonal interactions as follows: *"I used to lie to him a lot. I used to tell him fantastic stories* (p.75). She adds dismissively, *"He just talked to me. I can't even recall what he looks like"* (p.75).

At the second reporting there is a marked change of tone. Mrs. G now states that she was sorry for him because of his naivety and that she felt the same affection for him that she had for her little brother (p.83). She characterises their conversation very differently; as engaging and meaningful: *"we just talked about all kinds of things – you know, just like you [Stoller] and I do, only different..."* (p.84). She also retracts the above claim of premeditation where pregnancy is concerned: *"I don't think I decided him as the father of my baby until after several times I'd been to bed with him"* (p.84). Mrs. G also briefly reports in the latter stages of treatment that it was not easy for her to tell him that she was pregnant. In her words she should, *"Just tell him – don't be so chicken-shit – just tell him that [you're] pregnant"* (p.341). This is a far cry from the cold calculation she claims at the first discussion. Likewise, there is strong emotion, desperation, driving her call for him to defend her right to have a child, as she implores him to say *"that I should go home and have my baby....call my mother and tell her that I have to have this baby. Tell her that she can't take this one away from me"* (p.341). Taken as a whole she characterises their relationship as follows. *"It was just a good*

*relationship. We had something to talk about, and we felt warm together, and it was a good thing* (p.84). She adds that *“it wasn’t just a tumble in the hay for him”* (p.84).

### *Effect of the Relationship*

Mrs. G says that the relationship changed when she became pregnant, that he got ‘nasty’ (p.84). She elaborates, taking responsibility, *“I made it nasty because then I started to make demands. I wanted him to see to it that I got off probation and got out of psychiatric care and go home to Los Angeles, where I wanted to be, and got to keep my baby...”* (p.84). Stoller asks if she in fact ‘double-crossed’ him by unexpectedly ruining a ‘genuinely affectionate’ relationship. Mrs. G answers *“yes. I took something that was partially his and used it against him. The baby was just as much his as it was mine”* (p.85). She adds, *“I feel the guilt now where I didn’t then”* (p.85). Mrs. G says that she saw him less regularly after she got pregnant, and although we do not learn when they last meet, there is no indication that they see one another again after two and half months into her pregnancy. Mrs. G reflects, *“He’s afraid of me. I can see it now...I don’t hurt people that don’t hurt me. I did hurt him though, and he never hurt me...And I never saw him. Now I see him every day [in her son]”* (p.341).

Although Mrs. G takes responsibility for both the fact of a sexual relationship and the destruction of the broader relationship, there is an intermediate position which is surly justified. Mrs. G sees this at one point saying *“If he had been a man and a good psychiatrist, he wouldn’t have screwed me even if I had pushed it in his face”* (p.76).

### **Other Husbands**

There is less content pertaining to Mrs. G’s remaining three husbands. A further complication has to do with the fact that in certain instances, it is unclear what content refers to which

husband. Some of the confusion results from Mrs. G's reticence over speaking about her first husband – it being in fact unclear whether the two were married Mrs. G. saying at one point that they were (p.58) and at others that they were not (pp. 57, 106) - and the rest from a general vagueness seemingly indicative of a lack of interest.

### *Object Nature*

Mrs. G summarizes that, *“the men I married were all the same kind. They didn't drink; they didn't smoke; they didn't swear; they were all stable...”* (p.59). Husband number two, L, is however said to be an exception, Mrs. G reporting that the couple used lots of drugs together and that he was a ‘crook’ who had a history of incarceration (p.58). Mrs. G adds that in distinction to the others she never had a sexual relationship with him (p.59). She describes her third husband as wealthy, attractive and as having a nice personality, adding that she married him because he wanted her children who he had known and loved since they were born (p.56). Bill, the fourth has been discussed above.

### *Affective State*

Impulsivity in getting married, along with a voiced indifference over her choice of husband and over the fact of being married, is seen repeatedly (p.3, 4, 56). An illustration of her indifference is observed, at the time of Stoller and Mrs. G's first meeting, when she reports on her third (presented as her second while omitting the fact of a first marriage) husband leaving without any warning. When Stoller asks why he left, Mrs. G replies *“I don't know; I haven't seen him”* (p.3). When he asks how it makes her feel, she replies *“I don't know; I don't feel anything in particular”* (p.3). To his question about whether they were close she responds with *“not especially”* (p.3). In relation to this husband Mrs. G admits to needing a father for her

children (p.3), but adds that they eventually separate because *“it didn’t seem fair to me to be married to him...I wasn’t interested in him...I was crazy and I was in hospital”* (p.56).

### *Effect of the Relationship*

It is difficult to identify the effect these marriages had on Mrs. G, since so much of her behaviour goes towards insuring no impact at all. As Stoller notes she *“drifted in, and...drifted out* (p.56). Although there is little observable impact at the time of these relationships, regret and sadness do seem to be a long-term consequence of her marital choices. As Mrs. G says, in retrospect: *“if I wanted to mourn for something, I could mourn for Marriages. First there was the guy I should have married, and I didn’t marry him. I just made him screw me, and he didn’t want to, but I wanted to get pregnant and made him; and then I kicked him out. And then there was the time I got married just for something to do to amuse myself for the weekend. And then there was the time I married a nice guy and I screwed him every way but the right way. Then there was another time I should have gotten married, but I just got pregnant”* (p.57).

### **Other Fathers**

Stoller notes that Mrs. G never married any of the fathers (except for the first). We might presume that this was down to the characteristics of the object, that is, a case of object choice, but this is not borne out by the analysis. What is indicated instead is that Mrs G for some reason could not allow the relationship to continue once a man had impregnated her. As Stoller confirms *“once pregnant, she immediately ended the relationship”* (p.70). This is not true for her first pregnancy, where it is her mother who is the obstacle, Mrs. G saying: *“do you know I could have and begged to get married during my first pregnancy and she [mother] wouldn’t let me”* (p.106).

Mrs. G's first pregnancy, at fourteen or fifteen, by a neighbourhood boy is an anomaly because as she admits it was the only time she wanted to get married (p.58). Mrs. G struggles to speak about this relationship, saying that although they did get married it was annulled a few days later by her mother (p.58).

Another man, V, is a further anomaly because as Stoller tells us, Mrs. G *"has loved only two men: her father and V, with whom she lived in a loving, uncomplicated, unbrutal way for almost a year..."* (p.279). They live together for around seven months and he father's her twins, her final pregnancy (p.70). Mrs. G does not say much about him or his character, focussing instead on what it was like to be in the relationship. About this she says *"do you know that was the only time in my life that sex was real to me? Do you know that I was so wild and so full of it, it was just like my whole body exploded...And I laughed and I really laughed because I was happy, and I cried and I loved my kids..."* (p.219). Mrs G ends, *"...and then a bad thing happened"* (p.219). The bad thing which ended the relationship was an attempted murder-suicide, of her babies and herself (p.220-21). This occurs a day after she went to bed with a woman while V is away on a trip, and she tells us that she acted out of loneliness (p.221).

### *RC Identification*

In identifying repetitive relational patterns which meet the definitional criteria of RC, I will start with the question of damage and pain. Mrs. G's objects (husbands and fathers) are generally well adapted, stable and reliable. She often describes them as nice and trustworthy. They are individuals who are capable of caring for her, at least financially, and who seem to treat her well enough. By nature, they do not therefore signify obvious damage or pain. What is apparent however, is the presence of a power imbalance and some indication of this being exploited by her objects. The element of control may well be due to subtle personality features of the object, but all we have evidence for is that they held a higher socio-economic position

and sometimes wielded this power. It was observed most clearly with the psychiatrist who while characterised as nice and naïve had the power, in this instance benevolent, to insure her release from reform school and to grant her the chance of motherhood. Mrs. G herself comments on the existence of a power imbalance in connection to the father of F (the younger son who lives with her, Bill and H, the psychiatrist's son), saying *"I've always been scared...His father's a big lawyer, and his mother's very rich, and they go here and they go there. Maybe someday I'm in the hospital and he decides maybe I'm not the mother for F after all, so he's going to take him away from me..."* (p.85). The imbalance was also apparent in Bill's behaviour, with Mrs. G describing one period of their relationship as follows: *"I had no friends, radio, T.V. or phone and wasn't allowed to have money"* (p.100). Two primary, negative outcomes, of this power imbalance are highlighted in the case study; the first being a loss of identity and the second a need to escape.

The qualities of distance and detachment are defining features of Mrs. G's relationships. We can summarise and state that on a more conscious level relationships do not matter to Mrs. G; they have little value or meaning; she does not care whether they start, continue or end. If this were the whole story then Mrs. G could not easily be said to suffer from the harsh indifference which plagues her relationships. It is however clear that on a level removed from easy awareness, Mrs. G did want more and that she laments, especially at later points in the treatment, her inability to have got it. Of several of her relationships she explicitly and fondly recalls periods, usually at the beginning, when there is conversation, engagement and contact, which inevitably ends. She values these experiences and tells us that her one regret, the one thing she could mourn, is that she never found the relationship she wanted.

A final feature is the fact that her relationships all end, often prematurely and badly. This is especially visible in her inability to continue relations with the soon-to-be fathers.

Concerning the unconscious nature of her behaviour, Mrs. G does not know why she chooses her partners outside of their ability to provide, what she likes in them if anything at all, what she needs or wants from them, why they inevitably exit her life; whether she feels one way or another about most aspects of the relationship.

### **Sexual Encounters**

When considering Mrs. G's sexual behaviour and her experience of sex and sexuality broadly, it is difficult to separate out what is and is not traumatic. This problem is not unique to Mrs. G, as it arises both from the subjective nature of trauma and due to the fact that it may be repeated in a manner where pleasurable aspects of experience are fused with or incorporated into what would otherwise be intolerable. With Mrs. G there is however an unusually marked blurring in these areas. Given this difficulty, I nevertheless think it makes practical sense to separate out those experiences which do seem more 'obviously' traumatic from others which may lean, at least on the face of it, more towards some form of pleasurable or satisfying sexual engagement. I begin with the latter, and it should be kept in mind that the separation into categories is aimed foremost at facilitating data management and presentation, rather than at making objective claims about the nature of a given experience.

### *Object Nature*

We do not learn about specific men Mrs. G had consensual casual intercourse with. We know that she started extremely young, having as she puts it "*screwed all those boys*" (p.216) at thirteen. We hear that she had 'a lot' of sex (p.20), that she slept with 'hundreds of men' (p.281), and that she had "*innumerable sexual relations with men...*" (p.54). Stoller gives us a sense of the circles she ran in, saying that she had "*association with motorcycle gangs,*

*criminals, drug pushers, thieves, and corrupt policemen*” (p.54). Speaking of a period of homelessness and ongoing participation in criminal activity, Mrs G notes that she slept with many of the men in her orbit. In her words, “...*some of those men still come around for sex with me. Some of those men that I knew then. I was out fucking each man...Then I'd kick his ass out of bed and get another one...those were the good old days*” (p.68). Mrs. G seems to have become more particular in her sexual behaviours and choices over time, leading Stoller to summarise that as an adult “*Mrs. G chose not to know the man's name or where he lived; she would not attempt to explore his personality beyond checking that he was intelligent, physically clean, white, and middle class*” (p.281). These features of interchangeability and transience are mentioned at other points (p. 215, 280, 281, 338).

#### *Nature of the Traumatising Object*

Mrs. G asks rhetorically, “*do you know how many men have screwed me since I was six years old?*” (p.20). Stoller later qualifies that she suffered ‘numerous traumatic seductions’ in childhood (p.123), with Mrs G reporting being repeatedly fondled at six or seven (p.20, 268). She gives a detailed account of anal rape by a stranger at around the age of ten (p.129). Speaking about this, she discloses prior experience of vaginal penetration, although not the particulars (p.133). Stoller summarises that for three years before the occasion of anal rape “...*she had been having sexual experiences, ranging from being fondled to intercourse, with older boys and adult men*” (p.135). He reiterates that “*a grandfather, two uncles, and several strangers had already had intercourse with her by the time she was eight...*” (p.278). Of the uncles, outside of this statement by Stoller, there is no supporting mention of childhood molestation. What is recorded is that one ‘slept with her’ when she was around thirteen (p.241, 243), and that the other later ‘screwed her’ at eighteen to as Mrs. G says “*prove to me that I wasn't homosexual*” (p.243). Mrs. G also participated in two pornographic films (p.54), Stoller

describing how at age eleven or twelve she was groomed for her role with pornographic material (p.278).

### *Affective State*

Mrs. G equates men, and specifically the fact of possessing a penis with strength, invulnerability, independence and competence (p.13, 19, 26, 38, 46, 47, 64, 280). She speaks about the penis in glowing terms, saying that when she sees a particularly beautiful *erect* example, she wishes it could be hers (p.24). As she puts it, “*a penis means strength...what’s a bigger word than strength? What’s the biggest word you can think of that means strength? That’s what an erect penis means to me*” (p.24).

While often idealizing and coveting the penis, at other times Mrs. G swings towards denigration (p.19, 24). She notes in passing for instance that “*a penis is nothing*” [and has no value beyond] *shooting sperm into somebody to make them have a baby*” (p.19). On a more personal note she says that she hates it for what it does to her and that actually it is repulsive (p.24). She saves her most dismissive diatribe for the non-erect penis, saying “*...what does it look like? Nothing – just a piece of flesh – nothing. How can a man look masculine with a nonerect penis? It’s funny-looking. It doesn’t do a thing for me. A piece of wet spaghetti. A wilted flower. A penis is wrinkled. Have you ever seen a tomato worm...*” (p.24). The denigration of the penis also extends to men more broadly often taking the form of treating them as interchangeable (215, 280, 281, 338).

When considering the nature of Mrs. G’s affective engagement with sex and the male sexual object an immediate complication arises from Mrs. G’s long-standing delusional belief, that she herself has an internal ever-erect penis (p.16, 18, 26, 38, 46, 47). The possession of a penis is relevant under this heading because it impacts Mrs. G’s affective experience of having sex with a man where this involves penetration. Mrs. G knows rationally, while conversing

with Stoller, that at times of being penetrated that is what occurs. In these exchanges with Stoller her first obstacle with respect to reality testing is therefore getting her penis out of the way. Mrs. G solves this dilemma by noting that her penis travels between her stomach, pelvis and vagina, and that during penetration it *probably* moves into her pelvic region (p.16, 18). Mrs. G's recognition of the standard mechanics involved in penetration oscillates, and perhaps reflects the fact that it is incompatible with her experience where reality-based physical sensations during penetration are detached from awareness. In her own words, *"The only time I ever remember feeling my vagina is when I give birth to a baby. When I'm sitting here thinking about having intercourse, I think about the penis. I don't think about a man putting his prick in my vagina. I think about having a penis, and I try to...I'm sitting here thinking about [it]... I do not feel my vagina. I don't think about that"* (p.18). Given this, it is initially surprising that Mrs. G nevertheless reports climaxing easily and seemingly enjoys the moment of orgasm (p.18, 278). As we will see however it is probable that it is precisely because she possesses a penis that she is able to find some satisfaction in sex, rather than in spite of it.

At a late point in treatment, Mrs. G questions her motives, and specifically the place of pleasure, in relation to sex with men. In her words, *"I was thinking about all the men I screwed, and you know it wasn't something I wanted to do – it was something I had to do. I don't understand that, why I had to do that"* (p.57-8). At an earlier point in the treatment, Mrs. G gives us insight into what sex would feel like, with an awareness of being penetrated and without her penis. Here, following Stoller's scepticism, she puts the existence of her penis to the test by having intercourse with a man who was *"just somebody...hanging around"* (p.18). Before intercourse she feels inside herself, testing for her penis, and finds nothing, *"no penis"* (p.18). The outcome during sex, in Mrs. G's words, is that *"I got scared...I thought he was killing me, because I felt his penis in me, and I felt like I was going to choke to death or he was stabbing me or something..."* (p.18). Mrs. G continues, *"I wanted him to get up. To get out of*

*me. It hurt. It was terrible...*” (p.19). This is the experience that Mrs. G’s penis protects her from, but there are ‘side-effects’. Stoller describes her usual experience of sex as akin to a duel (p.16) with Mrs. G in agreement, and elaborating at another point that each time she had sex with a man she proved the ‘better man’, and would then discard the loser, replacing him with another candidate (p.16). In Stollers words, Mrs. G’s “*purpose has been to outscrew the strangers, and she has invariably succeeded*” (p.279). At one point Mrs. G identifies rage as an underlying motivator in her sexual exploits. In her words, “*men that I’ve screwed – I can’t even think of their names. I was killing them...I was killing them...Jesus Christ, that’s so awful, just so awful*” (p.215).

The delusion of a penis is seemingly a defensive move that shifts the experience of sex from one of terror and vulnerability, to that of mastery and victory. With the shift Mrs. G maintains the ability to climax, although not the feelings of potential intimacy which could proceed it.

At a late point in treatment, Mrs. G sums up what used to motivate her sexual exploits “*...it wasn’t necessarily something that I wanted to do or needed...yeah, I needed to do it...go out and pick up a man in a bar and go to bed with him, not because I was feeling excited or anything else, but it was kind of a compulsive thing...and I don’t know what stopped it, but I don’t do it any more*” (p.265).

#### *Affective State Directed at the Traumatizing Object*

One of the barriers to understanding Mrs. G’s affective response to the traumatizing object is a marked absence of statements about her emotions in relation to abuse and to the abuser. For the most part Mrs. G struggles to even know that what happened was bad or wrong. This does however change in the latter parts of treatment, where Mrs. G says the following. “*Those men...They always say, ‘We’re not going to hurt you.’...What did they do? ...they hurt me*

*because I was a girl...remember that man...he took me in that room and he hurt me...Liars! Pricks! There isn't one man in the whole world who wouldn't hurt you if he had the opportunity...I needed...the pain, but I didn't need the lies" (p.338).*

#### *Effect of the Sexual Encounter*

As is the case with sexual abuse, Mrs. G struggles to know when a sexual encounter is harmful or bad for her. As she says about her sexual exploits at thirteen, "...*nobody ever told me it was a bad thing to do to screw boys...*" (p.216). She repeats this again "*nobody ever told me about that. About screwing boys...I never knew you're not supposed to do that...*" (p.257). In the late stages of treatment, she can see that she "...*was exposing [herself] to all sorts of dangerous situations*" (p.325).

One likely outcome of Mrs. G's sexual exploits, given her pattern of treating men as interchangeable (p.215, 280, 281, 338), is that she cannot know men as individuals; she cannot sustain a position where negative and positive characteristics live side-by-side and go towards making up the whole of a specific individual. As she says, "*I really don't even know what a man is; I just really never knew a man. I had all these ideas about what a man was...*" (p.280).

#### *Effect of the Traumatizing Encounter*

As stated, Mrs. G was anally raped by a stranger at around the age of ten. The case study goes into detail about the life-long impact it had on her, with one outcome being "*a chronic delusion with which she lived so continuously that it came to be felt as simply a part of herself*" (p.126). The recollection of the rape – Mrs. G having repressed it – is prompted by a rectal examination due to symptoms of spontaneous rectal bleeding, during a period of hospitalization as an inpatient. The initial threat of the examination pushes Mrs. G into psychosis with the actual examination leaving her in a state of extreme emotional distress. At first, she struggles to know

why she is affected so strongly, feeling only that what happened (the examination) was bad (p.128). She then describes what is in fact a reoccurring experience more fully, saying “*sometimes I think things are bad. I don’t know why I think they’re bad, but when I think something’s bad, I vomit and I get scared and I feel shaky inside...I don’t know why...I don’t want anyone to touch my rectum*” (p.128). In dialogue with Stoller, Mrs. G eventually associates to the rape where in her words “*a man at the park...did something to my rectum...he made it bleed*” (p.129). In terms of the identifiable impact upon Mrs. G, we find that one ongoing consequence has been that often before intercourse with men, there is a moment where she expects a repeat experience of anal rape (p.131). She also speaks of always ‘feeling dirty’ and finally of what proves to be a long-standing delusional belief about brain injury and impairment (p.132). Concerning the latter, Mrs. G believes that she was contaminated by her rapist’s sperm, which travelled up into her brain and caused it to rot. In her words, “*Sperm. Little tiny bugs that can get up into your brain. Like worms. It’s rotting in there...worms in my head...flies eating my brain*” (p.132). Mrs G describes the state of her brain, “*I know it’s rotted. I don’t have a picture of it – I know it’s rotted! I just know that...It smells, and it’s rotten...*” (p.132). She reports the impact, “*I can’t read right, you know; I can’t retain what I read very well, and I try...Maybe it [brain] is getting smaller in size*” (p.132).

Furthermore, Stoller highlights a predisposition towards sexual compliancy in Mrs. G, summarizing that she put men’s needs before her own, cooperating and encouraging in what often amounted to her own abuse (p.130, 135, 243, 278, 279). Mrs. G confirms this inclination and her confusion over it, saying, “*I’m thinking about a time when I was six or seven years old and there was this guy. He didn’t screw me though; he just fondled me, but I went back. See, if it hadn’t been me, I wouldn’t have gone near him again; but I went back. Why would I do that*” (p.20). The closest Mrs. G herself comes to an answer for why she repeatedly ‘goes back’ is perhaps found in the epilogue. Here she writes, “*Someday I’ll tell...about the pain that makes*

*me hurt myself; it makes me go out and fuck dirty old men and...It's just a strange pain; it's like a migraine headache...And sometimes I scream and scream, but it doesn't help...But if I hurt myself or if I let somebody hurt me or if somebody is good to me, or, you know, if somebody shows me that they love me, then the pain goes away for a little while; but it always comes back" (p.343).*

### *RC Identification*

In beginning with Mrs. G's consensual encounters, we can note that she is aware of the unconscious and compulsive nature of her sexual exploits. She states that it was not desire or pleasure which motivated her but some urge which she cannot properly define. The urge compels Mrs. G towards sex, but once in the act, a distortion of reality is required to negate feelings of vulnerability and terror. The outcome is the maintenance of a hallucinatory delusion, that of possessing a penis, and an inability to experience penetration along with the intimacy contingent upon it. Sex is seemingly defined as competition, with Mrs. G being uninterested in the individuality of her faceless 'opponents'. One consequence which she acknowledges, is an inability to understand or know men. Another, is her admission that she repeatedly exposed herself to danger and that her promiscuity, especially when young, was likely damaging.

Some of the recorded consequences of sexual abuse are an ongoing reliance on repression as a defensive measure, periodic psychological reliving of traumatic experience cued by associative sensory stimulation, longstanding integrated delusional beliefs, and poor self-image. Of particular relevance to RC, is the observation that Mrs. G facilitated her own abuse both through a marked compliancy and due to her tendency to 'go back'. As with her less obviously traumatic sexual encounters, Mrs. G struggles to identify why she did this – i.e., she was driven by an unconscious impulse.

## Female Relationships

### *Object Nature*

Stoller tells us that Mrs. G's first genital homosexual experiences occurred around age eleven or twelve (p.275). Continuing with her history, we learn that at fifteen while in juvenile hall, Mrs. G was part of a microculture defined by paring off and mock marriage ceremonies between girls. At this point in her life she could not tolerate her body being touched by a female and although she had sex it was not felt to be as important as the relationship (p.275-6). Stoller says that by her early twenties Mrs. G had had over twenty homosexual affairs (p.54) and that a regular, although simultaneously denied, homosexual life began in earnest from this point (p.276). Stoller summarises her object preferences; *"she wished her partner to be a feminine woman younger than herself. The girl had to be ripe, that is, transmitting a sense – even if unaware of it – of wanting sexual relations, of wanting to be loved, and to have children. She would have long hair, feminine dress and demeanor, softness and delicacy, and apparently exclusively heterosexual interests; it was essential...that not the slightest hint of homosexuality appear in the girl's behaviour..."* (p.276). The requirement of an absence of homosexual indicators and of motherhood are confirmed at other points (p.250, 290). Stoller notes that some of her preferences changed in response to therapeutic progression, allowing Mrs. G to eventually for instance have sexual encounters with women who were mothers (p.297).

The nature of the sexual act – what Mrs. G was capable of, and found pleasurable – is another area that changed with the progression of therapy. Mrs. G seems to have had an ongoing intolerance for being touched sexually (p.140, 249, 276-8, 285, 299, 332). Initially her focus is on the other; taking pleasure in the other's body and beauty and insuring their gratification (p.250,276-7, 291, 294, 298). In line with this she would characteristically delay the moment

of her own orgasm until the other was satisfied, while placing the most importance on the non-erotic embraces that followed sex (p.250, 277-8, 298, 299). Speaking of Mrs. G's sexual development, Stoller tells us that "*only late in the treatment did she recognise how exciting it was for a woman to caress her, especially her breasts and genitals*" (p.277). Mrs. G reports on a sexual encounter late in the treatment which was uncomplicated and enjoyable, saying that perhaps it was possible because she "*felt stronger and more capable of being more receptive*" (p.301).

### *Affective State*

In distinction to her idealized assessment of men, Mrs. G maintains an ongoing perception of women as disgusting, vulnerable, weak and innately dishonest (p.45, 64, 229). While experiencing such aversion, she at the same time admits to wanting to get close to women. In her words, "*I like to go to bed with girls. Because I like to touch them and I like to hold them and things like that*" (p.285). Mrs. G likens her need to an addiction: "*I had to do it. I couldn't help doing it...I have to do that thing because it gives me strength to go on for more days...It's like being addicted, like when you use heroin and you take a fix and you go along and you're O.K.; and sometimes you're better than O.K.: you feel real good...*" (p.254). It is however unclear what specifically it is about the encounter that is desired; that has the power to replenish and strengthen. She admits to a degree of sexual excitement in phantasy (p.39) but with the qualification that what is foremost in her mind during sex is always giving pleasure (p.295), and that it is only after this that she receives her reward – cuddling, holding, embracing. She describes sexual encounters with women thus, "*I get kind of frantic. It's not sexual stimulation; it's kind of a...like I want to hurry up and have it over with, and yet I want her to enjoy it so much that when she's through she's going to give herself to me – she's not going to give herself to me when we're having sexual relations, she's receiving...and when that's done, then I get to*

*have her for myself...I think about being...warm and being tight...no...being closer... ” (p.298).*

Mrs. G confirms, *“The best part comes after she has had the orgasm and wants to hold me close...” (p.299).*

Strong emotional reactions which generate violence or vomiting are another feature of Mrs. G’s sexual encounter with women (p.250, 288, 297, 298-9, 301). Mrs. G gives a detailed example of one occasion in which she allowed herself to be touched; another experiment precipitated by treatment. She says, *“I did let her touch me...and then I got so angry I almost killed her. I wanted to kill her. I just wanted to smash her. So I beat the shit out of her and left her there. I don’t even know if she got home” (p.288).* Mrs. G explains that the experience of being touched made her furious and sick to her stomach, and that what added to her anger was knowing that she liked it (p.288-9). Of vomiting, Mrs. G describes throwing up on women, and in private on her way home following sex (p.297-8, 301). Mrs. G notes a further aspect of her treatment of women, saying *“I like to hurt them – not physically” (p.285).* She gives the example of T, who was overly conscious of her weight and who Mrs. G would put-down by telling her that she would look better if she *“weren’t so goddamned fat” (p.286).*

Mrs. G admits to being frightened by women; both in day-to-day interpersonal encounters and in sexual ones (p.25, 26, 47, 292, 298, 301). Concerning the latter, her fear seems to centre on the feelings they evoke, and on the fact that having such feelings defines her as homosexual. As she says, *“what I was doing and what I was feeling was so frightening to me... I think one of the biggest things that kept me from being a homosexual was my children. I never wanted my children to know that I had homosexual feelings” (p.292).* It is here that Mrs. G’s penis again comes to the rescue; its possession defining her desire as heterosexual (p.277, 285-7). As an example, she speaks about needing her penis to protect against feelings while with a nurse who she was fond of, imagining that if her penis were not there to create the illusion of a heterosexual encounter the nurse would be *“very appalled and very disgusted”*

(p.25). In daily interpersonal interaction with women Mrs. G again needs her penis, here to fend off feelings of uncertainty and inferiority (p.26, 47, 277).

### *Effect of Sexual Encounters and Short-lived Relationships*

We saw above that sex with women fulfilled a need in Mrs. G, leaving her revitalized, sometimes happier, and generally more able to cope. It was also shown that violence and vomiting were an outcome. These negative components occur at the point of termination of her sexual engagements and relationships, and if there is one constant it is that Mrs. G invariably leaves (p.267, 277, 288, 293-4, 299, 300). She describes what it could be like for her following sex; the urge to escape, *"I didn't want to be in that room, and I didn't want to have anything to do with the whole situation. And I was sick and I wanted to get out of there. I told her to get away from me. She just wanted more. So I shoved her...and then I hit her. In the face..."* (p.288). Commenting on the reoccurring flight from intimate relations with women, Stoller tells Mrs. G, *"Every time you had a homosexual relation with a woman, you moved out the next day. You ran away, moved to another town"* (p.293). Mrs. G embroiders, saying, *"...running away is kind of like holding up a gas station and not staying at the scene of the crime but removing yourself as fast and as far away as possible. Going to bed and leaving a woman is just about the same thing"* (p.299). At a late point in treatment Mrs. G reflects on the damage she did to herself, saying, *"being crazy after being with a woman spoiled all the good things...all the warmth and good feeling was spoiled. It really wasn't necessary to do that. I wonder why I thought it was necessary"* (p.300). Stoller tells us that the 'craziness' Mrs. G mentions sometimes took more extreme forms than those already addressed, resulting in murderous-suicidal psychological states and attempts (p.135-6, 271, 277).

Stoller believes that Mrs. G used marriage as a flight from homosexuality (294). There is some support from Mrs. G for this conclusion, although it is confined to a single statement.

Mrs. G tells us that after she lived with a woman for eight months she had to leave because of feeling dependant. She then confirms “*that’s why I married Bill...[and] I married my previous husband because my mother accused me of being homosexual*” (p.294).

### *RC Identification*

As with men, there are limits set on Mrs. G’s ability to engage fully in sexual intimacy with women. She biases the other’s sexual pleasure and satisfaction over her own, delaying her orgasm and denying her partner the means to reciprocate – touch. Mrs. G in a sense thereby bypasses the sexual act, at least in terms of its capacity to affect her as the recipient of pleasure, her objective being the non-erotic physical intimacy which follows. Mrs. G knows that by providing satisfaction to the other she is able to earn her objective in a sort of trade, but she does not question the fact of her own sexual gratification being omitted in the transaction; the issue is not consciously reflected on. She also struggles to define what she gets from these non-erotic embraces, commenting only on a feeling of warmth and closeness. Along with the qualification that sexual desire is not a central impetus, she likens her need to an addiction and therefore as being beyond her control; compulsive in nature.

Mrs. G’s sexual encounters result in nausea, vomiting and violence. Alongside this, there is a desperate need to escape and invariably the realised flight. Mrs. G does not understand why these responses repeatedly occur, but they are painful, and she knows destructive.

### **Question of Mrs. G’s Sexuality**

Could it be, as Stoller seems very much to conclude, that much of Mrs. G’s behaviour is straightforwardly explainable by her inability to accept her homosexuality (p.225, 249-50, 271, 278, 291, 294)? I have two objections to this argument. Firstly, where Mrs. G is concerned I

am not convinced by the aptness of the designate homosexual, in the absolutist sense, and secondly even if it is justified, this does not mean that all her behaviour is thereby explainable by recourse to her sexuality. Concerning the first objection, to my mind, there is nothing in the case study which justifies the term homosexual over for instance that of bisexual. As Mrs. G says *"I'm somebody who sometimes likes women and sometimes doesn't; who sometimes likes men and sometimes doesn't..."* (p.25). At other points it is true that Mrs. G does confirm her homosexuality (p.262, 332-3). My reticence over accepting these statements as conclusive, results from the suspicion that it is more Stoller's voice that we hear at such moments than Mrs. G's. Stoller expends a great amount of time and effort trying to convince Mrs. G that she is rightly described as homosexual, exclusively homosexual, and there is for me a strong suspicion that in the end he simply batters her into submission (39, 285-7, 289-91, 294). In the epilogue, where Mrs. G reflects on the treatment and therapeutic relationship she makes the following condemnation, *"I think there were times that you pushed me into craziness that wasn't necessary, and I suffered a lot because of that. God! When we were discussing homosexuality, for instance, and you would make me say things that you knew would upset me...but you insisted on my saying it...I think maybe I could have been spared that...It was never necessary to sit in that chair and say "I am a homosexual"..."* (p.332). Mrs. G now comments on my second objection saying that although Stoller may have been right about her being homosexual, he was mistaken to conclude that her pathology necessarily resulted from that fact. As an example, she says that perhaps instead of forcing her to state her sexuality, they could have proceeded differently, *"I think we could have maybe started out by discussing my body. Since I've been a little girl...I always thought mine was different. Just like not being able to stand having my breasts touched. I thought my breasts were different, and I didn't want anybody to touch them to find out"* (p.332).

## The Search for Necessary Conditions

I begin with an analysis of Mrs. G's relationship to both her parents, and then consider how the features identified there, manifest in her relationships.

### Father

One of the defining features of Mrs. G and her father's relationship is his absence (p.9, 10, 25, 145, 147, 195, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 345). Being a career soldier, he was often away for extended periods, sometimes for years at a time (p.9, 234). Mrs. G admits however, that even when work permitted greater contact with the family, her father could not tolerate more than a few days at a time (p.195, 234). A tour in Korea leaves him with what we assume must be post-traumatic stress disorder, propelling him into alcoholism and periodic psychiatric hospitalizations (p.233, 236, 237). Mrs. G's parents eventually divorce when she is fifteen, and her father later remarries, having a child with his new wife (p.10, 236). Mrs. G sums up the aforementioned, *"I went to bed and when I got up he was gone and I didn't see him again for almost five years. He had gone to Korea, been wounded, taken prisoner, returned, divorced and remarried and I was never told...The next time I saw him he had a new wife and a baby girl, was drunk ¾ of the time..."* (p.236). It is possible to picture his eventual suicide, at least from a certain perspective as his greatest and final abandonment of her. As Stoller says to Mrs. G *"From your point of view as a little girl and as his daughter and as somebody who was just aching for him all your life, what he did was: he abandoned you..."* (p.239). She replies, *"permanently...I always asked him to take me with him, and he never could"* (p.239). Another important feature of their relationship, the other side of the coin so to speak, is that when Mrs. G's father was present he could be warm, attentive, engaging, entertaining and loving (p.25, 67, 186, 195, 234, 236, 241, 244). Stoller adds the qualification that *"perhaps his lovingness*

would not have been so complete if it had not been intermittent... ” (p.195). He is probably right, but for Mrs. G it was nevertheless sadly the fullest experience of love she had. In her words, *“I really don’t have as much of my mother as I had of my father. Although my father was never there...when I had him there, I had all of him”* (p.246).

In identifying the intrapsychic dynamics, and ultimately the object relational components, which operate in Mrs. G’s romantic relationships, we start with an assessment of how she dealt with the contradiction and confusion of her father’s intermittent love. When Stoller first meets Mrs. G she tells him that she had only seen her father twice in the last four years. He asks if she misses him and she replies, *“no, I don’t miss anybody”* (p.10). This is an aspect of Mrs. G’s adaptive response to the aforementioned contradiction; denial and repression are employed to maintain the belief that her father’s absences did not and do not affect her (p.244). It is most clearly illustrated in relation to his death, with Stoller confirming that Mrs. G had not fully acknowledged her father’s death and the finality of his absence; she had not grieved (p.97, 212, 215, 237, 239, 240). In Mrs. G’s words, *“I think he is dead. I went to the funeral. Yet I find myself waiting for him...”* (p.97). And, at another point when Stoller pushes her she replies, *“why should I grieve for him? ...I don’t feel a thing”* (p.239). An additional, and perhaps more prominent defence mechanism is idealization (p.67, 233, 236, 237, 238, 240, 241, 242, 258), with some of the more noticeable ‘fabrications’ being Mrs. G’s description of her father as entrepreneurial, a hero, protective, dependable, honest and as wanting to be with his children. We also find that Mrs. G repeatedly defends him, saying that he was nice and not a bad man (p.9, 10, 67, 235, 258).

*The Denied Relationship*

I turn now to a delineation of the portions of experience which are negated by these defences. I.e., what is it that is made unconscious; what parts of herself and of her experience of the other are repressed and potentially split-off? Concerning her experience of self, we see as therapy progresses that what Mrs. G denies and represses is her suffering (p.147, 238, 239, 345), neediness (p.237, 238, 239, 240) and yearning (p.235, 237, 238, 239, 344), along with her confusion (p.97, 195, 234, 242), sense of betrayal (p.25, 195, 234, 236, 237, 242, 244, 344, 351) and anger (p.25, 145, 147, 215, 238, 239, 344). These are expressed in one lament to Stoller where she says that her father promised *“he would come and get me...But he never did...All the times he promised to get me – over and over again he did that to me – and over and over again I believed him...he was a liar. He lied all the time (p.238-9)*. We could say that broadly it is the experience of being helpless or powerless that is removed from memory and awareness (p.145, 238, 345). Where idealization and the obstruction of her father’s ‘true’ nature is concerned, we see that what is denied along with certain of his characteristics (p.195, 233, 238, 240, 244) is most importantly his unreliability (p.109, 238, 239) and his lack of care (p.145, 344, 345, 238, 240, 244). As Mrs. G sums up, again an acknowledgement that occurs with the progression of treatment, *“I did love my father. But he was a bastard...with his trips and wandering away. He didn’t care...He didn’t care” (p.25)*. She later adds, *“He wasn’t dependable. He was a stupid ass...and he never cared anything about his kids...He didn’t give a shit for any of us” (p.238)*. Mrs. G at one point confirms her ongoing reliance on idealization, commenting on the reason why she needed it and expressing resistance over relinquishing it. After being pressed by Stoller to reflect honestly about her father she exclaims, *“why do you want me to say these things? I don’t want to say them. I need my father to be what he was. I always needed him. I didn’t have anybody else...And now you’re trying to take that away from me...It doesn’t make any difference what my father was. No, it doesn’t. He could have been the*

*biggest son-of-a-bitch in the world, and it doesn't make any difference*" (p.240). As an outcome of treatment Mrs. G eventually seems to arrive at a position of integration; she is able to see her father in a realistic manner while nevertheless retaining her love for him. She now describes him thus, "*A simpleminded, silly, drunken son-of-a-bitch, that's what my father was. Whom I loved very much*" (p.244).

### *Identification*

Before considering how these dynamics might operate in Mrs. G's romantic relationships a final area to note is her probable identification with her father (p.9-10, 66-7, 206, 235, 239). Mrs. G's mother repeatedly accuses her of being like him. As Mrs. G reports, "*my mother says he's crazy...and I am just like him...it used to bother me a whole lot because my mother would go around...saying he was a skunk, and he did this and he did that, and you are exactly like him...*" (p.235). Mrs. G admits that they were similar in their appearance and behaviour, highlighting drinking and lying (p.10, 239). It is also clear that Mrs. G both approved of her father's criminal activity and mirrored him in committing similar acts (p.66-7). Although we have no way of determining whether these similarities are down to identification rather than for instance inheritance, it is likely, given Mrs. G's idealization of her father, that identification did contribute. It is certainly a conclusion which Stoller supports (235). As we will see, it also allows us to make sense of the differing intra and intersubjective dynamics which occur between Mrs. G and her father and between her and her partners.

### *Manifestations in Relationships*

I now consider how the above relates to Mrs. G's romantic relationships. In summary, we saw that the experience, and by implication the object relationship, which is repressed involves an ego fragment or self-image that suffers over, needs, yearns for, is angry at, feels confused and

betrayed by an unreliable and uncaring object. In general terms it is a relationship between a needy self and a rejecting object. This relational dynamic is observed in Mrs. G's romantic relationships, but more often the converse is true, which is anticipated given the defence mechanisms she was shown to employ – the fact of repression, denial, idealization and identification. I will discuss the first dynamic below, but for now note that the second has previously been established in relation to Mrs. G's male objects. In these relationships and encounters what Mrs. G repeatedly experiences and expresses is indifference. We may conclude that she therefore adopts the father's position, that of the rejecting object, perhaps partly as a direct result of identifying with him.

In her casual sexual encounters, idealization is however observed – echoing her feelings towards her father – but it is restricted to part-object relating or to an abstract sense of the object. Its focal point is the penis and what it represents – strength, vitality, etc. Mrs. G is here able to want, need, yearn and desire. She idealizes men from a 'distance', but this quickly shifts to denigration during interpersonal contact. It seems to break down when she gets close, especially when they show 'weakness', for instance that signified by a non-erect penis. Then too, Mrs. G 'wins', is 'victorious' during sex. Idealization initially places Mrs. G in a position akin to that of the repressed object relationship, where there is the threat of being pathetic/weak/helpless in relation to what she desires. Her response is identification, as she did with her father. The delusional possession of a penis is a defensive move that shifts the experience of sex from one of vulnerability, to that of mastery and victory. This reading allows us to better understand Mrs. G's murderous response to Bill not allowing her to 'fuck his lights out' on their first night together (p.360).

## Mother

The central dynamics of the maternal relationship are less easily identified and isolated than those of the paternal, there being greater ambivalence, contradiction and complexity in the former. As a starting point, Mrs. G summarises that the relationship between her mother and her was not good (p.5, 333), and that the two of them could never ‘connect’ (p.53). As she puts it, they “*weren’t on the same wave length*” (p.333). She adds that her mother could not really ‘get her’ nor did she understand or empathise with much of her behaviour and psychological turmoil (p.4, 229, 252). Elaborating, she says her mother was distant (p.266); that she never spoke to her or had time for her (p.248, 267, 351). In her words, “*my mother was cold, only not cold like I am, but unresponding*” (263). And, “*If I was upset or hurt or confused or any of those things, I couldn’t go to my mother because my mother was too distant...*” (p.266). Mrs. G concedes that some of her mother’s reserve may have been because she was frightened and overwhelmed by her (p.21, 253, 255, 256, 257, 264, 334). She also however believes that her mother simply did not like her (p.10, 221, 251, 257, 339), noting that from the first she wanted a boy (p.81, 196, 227, 229, 253, 260, 265). She reports too that her mother was often punishing, and both verbally and physically violent (p.38, 173, 221, 255, 335, 339, 351, 355). One of Mrs. G’s statements does however cast doubt on the charge of physical violence. She is musing about the possibility that she needed discipline in order to learn right from wrong, and says of her mother, “*you know, she never hit me, never once did she ever hit me; and maybe I would have understood better. But she always said, ‘What have I done to deserve this?’ or ‘What did I do wrong to make you like this?’ And I didn’t know*” (p.257). Additionally, Mrs. G blames her mother for abandoning her to relatives and multiple institutional settings. These include – either as a direct result of her mother’s actions or through neglect – reform school (p.123, 253, 256, 337, 340), jail (251, 340), a psychiatric hospital (p.5, 253, 256, 260, 340), and periodic stays with her grandmother during childhood (p.256). Commenting on the last, Mrs. G says,

*“she did it over and over and over again. God! Sending me there. If I was bad, I got sent there. If I was good, I got sent home. It was like...your badness will last for three months and then you may go home. Or your badness may last for six months, and then you may go home...I never knew what I did that was so bad...”* (p.336). Finally, the allegation which troubles Mrs. G most, is the belief that her mother got in the way of her own attempts to be a mother. Mrs. G claims that she coveted and tried to steal her children (74, 88, 91, 106, 221, 336, 337), made her give up children to adoption (p.74, 78, 337, 342), gave permission for her eventual sterilization (p.71, 258) and attempted to feminize her infant son (p.79, 80, 342).

### *Object Choice*

Certain dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship are echoed more prominently in the phenomenology of Mrs. G’s romantic encounters with men than they are in those with women, while of other dynamics, the converse is true. I will begin with the male relationships and sexual encounters, where it is immediately apparent that there is a great deal of shared phenomenology between spousal and maternal relationships.

We could lift many of Mrs. G’s grievances about her mother, near word for word and they would fit those outlined in the section on her husbands. The key ones are that the respective relationships were bad, and that her mother and husbands, especially Bill, were cold, unempathetic, distant and unapproachable. Additionally, there is a ‘poorness of fit’ and an inability to understand or get each other. Along with these features, Bill, like the mother is described as punishing. Mrs. G summarises that her mother did not love her as well as she should have. In her words to Stoller, *“she always gave me just enough, just enough to make me hungry and to want more...have you ever been to the dog races and seen the electric rabbit? I always felt like that dog chasing the rabbit...I never could quite catch up to it”* (p.333).

There is also the further matter of an entrenched power imbalance. Mrs. G's mother, along with the husbands and fathers are figures who to varying degrees provide stability and security. This role was documented for the husbands and fathers, and Mrs. G informs us, shared by her mother (p.21, 127, 251, 252, 255, 265, 266). It is captured in the following report on a conversation between Mrs. G and her mother; *"my mother was talking about all the times my father left her with five kids, and she had to go out and earn a living and buy clothes and provide food and be strong..."* (p.21). Mrs. G gives specific examples, *"...when I got arrested for checks she bailed me out of jail. And when I had illegitimate babies, she paid for my prenatal care and took care of the babies. And my car caught fire the other day...and she's paying to have it fixed. There isn't anything she wouldn't do for me..."* (p.255). Mrs. G immediately however amends, *"She drives me out of my mind. She makes me pay for it"* (p.255). This outcome was another shown to be characteristic of her marriages, and we may picture the wider context as one of a power imbalance, resulting in a loss of identity. As Mrs. G reflects, *"I wonder if my mother ever thought of me as a person...I've gotten the impression that at different times in my life she thought of me as different things...I just wonder if she ever wanted any part of me...or if she just did her duty"* (p.229). The same accusation is levelled at Bill, with Mrs. G reflecting, *"when I was married to Bill I really wasn't anything...I had to find out who I was"* (p.230). The loss of identity suffered by Mrs. G is related both to the presence of a power imbalance and to the 'poorness of fit' described above. Mrs. G chooses husbands and fathers who do not allow her to be 'herself' and do not understand her well enough due to differences in respective life experiences. As Stoller puts it, although Mrs. G tried to be 'good', *"it was too much for her to be a middle-class housewife..."* (p.167). Mrs. G highlights an inability to disagree with, or defend herself against her mother which speaks to both the loss of identity and the power imbalance (p.51, 58, 254, 255, 263, 266, 340, 356). In her words, *"I have got to do what my mother tells me to do, and it just tears me up. That's not*

*sad, it's scary*" (p.58). When she does eventually develop the capacity and courage to go against her mother, she says of one encounter where she openly disagreed, *"I was so relieved; but I was so scared. And that happens to me every day, every single day. I can't get away from her...I can't do anything without her..."* (p.255). We saw previously that Mrs. G suffered the same loss of autonomy in relation to Bill.

Mrs. G here chooses a certain type of object – object choice is the mode of repetition and of externalization. The experience which is repeated in these relationships is one of never being able to be 'with' the object; she cannot get what she needs from the other, be seen for who she is, and furthermore loses the self to the other.

### *Projective Identification*

The nature of Mrs. G's objects does not however account for or explain these relational dynamics in full. There is the further matter of Mrs. G's culpability, both where distance is concerned, but especially in some of the more actively hurtful or punishing behaviours observed. We saw for instance with Bill that his distance was in part a reaction to Mrs. G's behaviour and treatment of him. The same was shown to be true of her mother. Mrs. G summarises a conversation between her and her mother which takes place twelve years after Stoller and she first meet, confirming the former point; *"[my mother] was telling me that six months ago she couldn't talk to me...she was afraid to talk to me...she's not afraid of me any more"* (p.21). Mrs. G admits that the change in their relationship was down to her 'handling things differently', 'being more mature', and 'doing her best' (p.263). She therefore concedes that her behaviour contributed to her mother's inaccessibility. Concerning accusations of aggression and mistreatment, in both the case of Bill and her mother, Mrs. G admits that she provoked hostility. In her words, regarding Bill, *"maybe he hurts me because I hurt him; in fact, I know that's true..."* (p.218). Of her mother: *"maybe that's why she put me in hospital*

*and put me in reform school and sent me to my grandmother and things like that, so I wouldn't hurt her"* (p.256). There is an anecdote that seems to capture what Mrs G is conceding. While summarizing a history of numerous road accidents, she reports the following: *"Bill had just really fixed the bike up, painted the tank, put a new headlight on it and a new front fender and had it just beautiful. And he said, 'O.K. Now you can't ride it. Every time you get on it, something happens.'* And I said, *'Bill, just let me ride it around the block once'; and he said, 'No, it's beautiful now. You can't ride it.'* And I said, *'Just let me ride it around the block. Nothing will happen.'* So I went around the street, and it ran in front of a car, and the bike was demolished" (p.61). In summary, Mrs. G provokes both distance and hostility. The same active provocation applies to her relationships with the fathers. As Stoller tells us, *"...once pregnant, she ended the relationship with the man, nastily so that he would be hurt and degraded"* (p.281). In turning to the psychiatrist for instance, if the two different accounts are considered, Mrs. G's first account can be seen as an act of 'undoing', going hand in hand with the active destruction of the relationship. In this version she treats him with what she believes is deserved indifference and disdain. Although some of this may be justified given the power imbalance, Mrs. G nevertheless, as with Bill and the motorcycle, betrays his trust and dismantles everything good outlined in the second account. The outcome is that he turns nasty and disappears from her life.

We conclude therefore that in addition to object choice as a mode of externalization, Mrs. G also employs projective identification. given the understanding of projective identification outlined in the literature review and included in the hypothesis the two modes may be said to entail each other. Mrs. G rouses 'existing identity fragments' or 'pre-existing introjective configurations' in her objects.

### *Transference*

We may question the reality of Mrs. G's claims of a loss of 'voice' and autonomy in relation to the husbands and fathers. There are for instance multiple illustrations of Bill's knowledge, of Mrs. G and of what occurs between them, being negated; disregarded by her and suppressed by him (p.100, 101, 145, 162). As Mrs G confirms, "...*I just ignored what Bill knew*" (p.101). And again, "*I just ignored him, per usual...*" (p.100) In respect of self-imposed censorship, she states, "...*that was just the kind of person he was...he knew...but he didn't say anything*" (p.162). As a further example, "*to this day Bill has never once asked me what I do when I'm out all night*" (p.100). I would suspect therefore that a degree of Mrs. G's experience of being silenced and controlled is down to transference.

Another point of overlap between Bill and Mrs. G's mother is that both are targets for her murderous impulses (Bill: p.74, 105, 176, 177, 184, 217, 357, 358, 360; Mrs. G's mother: p.215, 340, 352, 355, 356). Through therapy Mrs G arrives at the admission, that while she often wished Bill dead, he did not deserve that outcome (p.218). Of Bill she says, "*he's never done anything to me that's been that bad...*" (p.218). A similar statement is made about her mother, "*My mother never did anything bad to me...I think the worst thing my mother did was she wouldn't let me have my father*" (p.242). The last point about her father is important, because I believe that much of Mrs. G's treatment of her mother and of her husbands involves displacement. What I am suggesting is that Mrs. G displaced much of the hurt, resentment, anger and ultimately aggression which she should have directed at her father onto her mother and later onto Bill. She chose the parent/partner who remained, who would not leave; the parent/partner who she could afford to mistreat. It may be that Mrs. G's mother was aware of this tactic, if not of all its components than certainly of her daughter's manifest inability to chastise her father, for she repeatedly implores her to both turn on her father and to hold him accountable (p.21, 196, 244, 258). Mrs. G steadfastly refused, explaining, "*The only thing that*

*I can think of that she ever told me to do that I couldn't do...there's only one thing that she ever told me to do that I couldn't do, and that was to dislike my father. I wasn't able to do that, and I think she knows that I feel bad about that" (p.258).*

### *Expressions of the Denied Relationship*

I return now to the dynamic mentioned above; the identification of a relational dynamic between a needy self and a rejecting object. We have just seen that a portion of Mrs. G's experience – where her mother, her husbands and the fathers of her children are concerned – can be attributed to object nature, but that much of that experience is also of her own making; a consequence of projective identification and transference. As argued, I would suggest that the source of some of these vicissitudes originates with the father. Perhaps for instance the feelings of abandonment, the perception that the other has no time for her and especially a quota of aggression and anger. In this sense we observe a self-perpetuated reexperiencing of elements of the denied object relationship. It is however far from a comprehensive reliving, and for that we must turn to her relationships with women.

### **Women**

I turn now to Mrs. G's sexual encounters with women, and note that a defining feature, which is central also with her mother, is an oscillation and conflict between disgust and desirability, or relatedly between violent rejection and intimacy. We saw previously, that Mrs. G maintains an entrenched perception of women as disgusting, vulnerable, weak and innately dishonest. This aversion was echoed in acts of uncontrollable vomiting and violence, which terminated in flights of escape. At the same time Mrs. G admits to a deep-seated need to get close to women, which she likens to an addiction. One of the central forms this 'closeness' takes, is the non-

erotic embraces following sex, which Mrs. G. describes with the words 'warm and tight'. These perceptions, responses and desires are repeated in relation to her mother (p.95, 218, 259, 344). After Stoller challenges Mrs. G's classification of women as weak and vulnerable, inviting her to be more feminine, her immediate association is to her own mother. She replies in horror, "*do you want me to be like my mother*" (p.17)? The association is again expressed in the following, "*...women are so disgusting, they just...they cry and...You know, my mother is a good example of a disgusting woman...There's no honesty in women*" (p.45). We find too that Mrs. G's vomiting started with her mother, during childhood. She reports "*...every time my mother would come near me I'd vomit on her...that's when it started, when I started puking on my mother*" (p.38). She confirms that it happened again, during treatment with Stoller; "*When I saw her Tuesday, I threw up all over her. I am sure it gave her fond memories*" (p.95). There are few illustrations of Mrs. G being physically violent towards her mother, although there are as previously indicated homicidal urges, and in one case she cuts her mother with a razorblade (p.351-356). On the side of desirability and intimacy, Mrs. G's need for women was described as compulsive and this is seemingly true of her need for her mother too. She described it with the analogy of dog racing, likening her unsatisfied need to that of dogs chasing an electric rabbit. She embroiders saying her mother *gave [her] just enough, just enough to make [her] hungry and to want more*" (p.333). We find too, as with women, that one of Mrs. G's strongest yearnings is to sleep alongside and be held by her mother. We learn from Mrs. G that, at thirty-four years old, the time of writing, she often spent the night at her mother's apartment and shared her bed (p.265). She says that before this, she slept with her mother 'off and on' until she married Bill, and that what she most got from it was comfort (p.266). The words 'warm and tight', her description of the feeling she gets from post-coital embraces, are echoed in one early experience with her mother. Mrs. G presents a recollected experience, in the first-person present tense, of her yearning to be held by her mother. She reports the following, "*mama, can*

*I sleep with you tonight? ...I'm excited...Hold me close, Mama...I'll just put my face on her breast. If I could just...If I could just get inside of her...It's wet and warm inside...so I'll make it wet and warm" (p.351). She urinates in the bed and on her mother, inciting fury. As she says, "now she's angry again. Oh, God, I always make her angry. Just when it's going well, I make her angry" (p.351). We here too then see a repetition of an attack on, and a destruction of, the desired object. The following statement about how she spoiled her encounters with women can therefore equally be said to apply to her mother: "being crazy after being with a woman spoiled all the good things...all the warmth and good feeling was spoiled. It really wasn't necessary to do that. I wonder why I thought it was necessary" (p.300).*

#### *Return of the Denied Relationship*

Mrs. G's conflict between desirability and disgust, or intimacy and violent rejection, seems to centre on the issue of association and identification. If she gets too close to her female objects, her mother included, she fears being 'contaminated', 'consumed' and ultimately identified with them. Women therefore signal a return to the repressed configuration, placing her in position of vulnerability and weakness, a state she finds both terrifying and disgusting. Hence the frantic need to flee, underpinned by overwhelming emotional responses generating nausea, vomiting and violence. We can add that her inability to receive physical affection and sexual stimulation act to safeguard against this experience. The shift from a position of neediness and vulnerability to one of aggression and rejection, amounts ultimately to a shift in identification – from mother to father.

### **A Note on Abuse and Repetition**

Elements of the experience Mrs. G represses include suffering, confusion, a sense of betrayal, the experience of being helpless and powerless, along with anger over this. I have noted that these occurred in relation to her father but would reason that the same responses would likely be experienced over instances of abuse, particularly the occasions of sexual abuse Mrs. G suffered. What I am arguing for is the notion presented in the literature review, that of internal objects existing as complex composite structures, where experience of newly encountered objects is superimposed and partly fused with that of previous encounters. In short, I would reason that aspects of the experiences of abuse are superimposed on those which relate to the father, and furthermore that Mrs. G's defensive strategies are a response to both; likewise, an instance of defensive strategies being fused with each other.

### **Negation of Affect**

Finally, I would highlight an additional factor that no doubt assists in the denial of the repressed object relationship, that of a blanket negation of affect. At the best of times it is difficult to get a sense of Mrs. G's emotional states. In respect of the content provided, this is because Mrs. G generally offers accounts of her behaviour, rather than a sense of the feelings which may underlie them. As an illustration, she acknowledges that she can be "*...a very capable, vindictive, thoroughly nasty bitch if [Bill] pushes [her]*" (p.105) but says little about the emotion which may precipitate such behaviour. On a psychological level, such omissions can in the first instance be put down to a general deadening or negation of affect. Stoller speaks of the pervasive and persistent 'denial or repression of feeling' (p.29, 65), saying that for years he "*...despaired of getting her to know that she did feel...*" (p.65). He elaborates on her direct affective experience saying that she had "*no word for the feeling she had to avoid; it was not*

*sensed as fear, anxiety, sadness, grief, rage, guilt, or any other painful affect for which we have labels. She has never been able to put it more clearly than to say that she was driven to...behaviour to end the 'excited sensation inside' ..."* (p.66). The matter is further complicated by fugue states and dissociative trends which at times approach pathology indicative of dissociative identity disorder. It is startling however that even when Stoller and Mrs. G meticulously retrace the steps of an event, that purportedly occurred under the dominance of a split off personality named Carrie, little evidence of emotional states is found. The event in question is Mrs. G's burning of the garage and the psychotherapeutic 'retracing' may be understood as an attempt by Stoller to retrospectively reincorporate Mrs. G into the event. He gets Mrs. G to tentatively acknowledge that the aim of the act, previously omitted in her account, was to destroy Bill's *"prized political material. All his books"* (p144). Stoller next suggests that she acted out of anger, but we are left with a sense of words being put into her mouth, and Mrs. G continues by retracting both the suggested aim (hurting Bill) and the supposed affective motivation (anger). In her words, *"I don't really know. I don't have a feeling for it"* (p.144). Later in the treatment, during a period where Carrie 'takes over' we hear that 'she' acted out of a desire to be rid of Bill and that his inability to listen necessitated a 'powerful signal', but even here there is little in the way of affective disclosure (p.162).

### **Consolidation and the Derived Hypothesis Following Analysis**

In the case of Mrs. G a repressed object relationship was identified which has its roots in the paternal relationship. What is split off and denied of her experience of self, is her suffering, neediness, yearning, along with her confusion, sense of betrayal and anger; broadly, the experience of being helpless or powerless. Of her experience of her father, it is fundamentally his unreliability and his lack of care. To achieve this outcome, in addition to the defence

mechanisms of repression and denial, Mrs. G was also shown to employ idealization and identification. It was furthermore suggested that later experiences of abuse would have been fused with or superimposed upon the elements which make up the ego or self-image component.

Four types of romantic/sexual relationship were analysed. These were her husbands, her relationships with the fathers of her children, her casual sexual encounters and her relations with women. The phenomenology observed in the first two types, her longer-term relationships with men, was the same outside of the fact that she did not stay with the fathers once pregnant. The central dynamic observed in these relationships was that although Mrs. G experienced these men as rejecting – a portion of this being grounded in reality (object choice) – much of this was yet of her creation (PI and transference), she additionally being shown to repeatedly reject *them*. In the rejection we see the manifestation of the above-mentioned identification with the father.

In her casual sexual encounters with men, it was seen that while Mrs. G treated them as interchangeable (a form of denigration), part-object idealization was also a feature, centred on the penis and on what it signifies for her – the qualities of strength, invulnerability, independence and competence. It was argued that being faced by these traits, replicates the experience of the denied relationship, and that to counter this, identification is again employed, this time resulting in Mrs. G's delusional belief that she has an ever-erect penis. Armed thus, Mrs. G sexually competes, bests and discards her 'opponent'. By doing so, she moves from a position of victim to perpetrator. To illustrate the impact, she has on her male sexual partners, we can recall Bill's statement as reported by Mrs. G, "*...he talked to me about the times when I get angry, and he said I'm vicious when I'm being hostile. He talked about going to bed with me, about whatever it is I do to him – I make him feel inadequate. He's afraid to go to bed with me*" (p.192). As suggested above, it is again likely that experiences of sexual abuse would have

been fused with the elements which make up the ego or self-image component. For an illustration of this point we can turn to the experiment where Mrs. G gives up the delusion of a penis and experiences penetration without that protection. In her words, *“I got scared...I thought he was killing me, because I felt his penis in me, and I felt like I was going to choke to death or he was stabbing me or something...”* (p.18).

Turning to Mrs. G's relations with women we observed a conflict, between on the one hand a desire to get close, perhaps even assimilate, and on the other a dread of being consumed and identified with them. Identification, for Mrs. G here amounts to an unqualified classification as vulnerable, weak and disgusting; her perception of women. It is worth highlighting that, in her sexual exploits with both men and women, although Mrs. G begins from different positions, initially part-idealizing men and denigrating women, schematically the encounters mirror each other at the point of the shift in relational dynamics from victim to perpetrator. The vulnerable position, though not present with women initially, is eventually also evoked with them, and it is here that the same shift occurs with both, that of overturning/negating the experience. With men she does this through 'winning', or denigrating them, with women through vomiting, violence, rejection and flight. Both furthermore, seem to be underpinned by a swing in identification; from her mother and the feminine to her father and the masculine.

One central finding of the above is a consideration of the place of denigration, which has a far more eclipsing presence than it did in either of the previous cases. Mrs. G does not idealize her partners (husbands and fathers). What is observed instead is indifference and denigration. This finding challenges the hypothesis about two forms of idealization determining the mode of externalization. Her denigration of her partners (husbands and fathers) primarily takes the form of indifference but also 'pictures' them as distant and hostile. On a conscious level her relationships do not matter; they have little value or meaning; she does not

care whether they start, continue or end. Projective identification and transference are the modes of externalization chiefly employed to achieve these ends. Her denigration of women is down to transference and projection. For Mrs. G sexual enjoyment is tantamount to identification and therefore places her in the position of a needy, disgusting, vulnerable, weak and dishonest self. To avoid this, she repeatedly destroys (a second stage of denigration) and flees from the object. Taking both her relationships to men and women into account we can summarise and state that Mrs. G employs denigration, via the mechanisms of transference, projection and projective identification to rid herself of the experience she suffered with her father. Idealization does not play a part, but because it did in the other cases the reformulated hypothesis reads as follows: 'Idealization and denigration are central in reinforcing repression of unconscious object relationships. We can say that the modes of externalization often aim at or are used to 'manufacture' one or the other.

The inclusion, in the hypothesis, of repetition being a defensive adaptation was again confirmed. This was most clearly seen in relation to men where what was repeated was Mrs. G's undermining or curtailment of primitive idealization by identifying with the idealized object (penis and men in the abstract) and competing with them. The second repetition happened with women and centres on the shift from neediness and vulnerability to aggression and rejection. The third occurs in her ongoing rejection of her partners which is underpinned by her paternal identification.

Outside of the above amendments, the RC definition and initial hypotheses remain unchanged as all conditions were confirmed.

## **Bullet Point Presentation of Findings in Relation to the Initial Hypothesis: Hypothesis Development**

Below, standard text indicates the initial hypotheses. Bold text indicates changes made as a result of findings and carried forward. A line through the text indicates that a statement has been invalidated. Bold italics indicate that a change has occurred in the case under consideration.

### **The Repetition Compulsion Defined Following Case 3**

RC is defined by four descriptive criteria:

- it is unconscious; characterized on an experiential level by a lack of conscious awareness or conscious rational deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either broadly unconscious, or specifically, repressed, dissociated or ego dystonic.
- it is a repetition of a past unpleasurable experience
- it is unpleasurable because it is painful and damaging
- RC should be thought of as the unconscious repetition of a 'lived interpersonal situation'.

In relation to the last point, RC concerns the repetition of an experience, rather than of cognition, and therefore does not include the kind of repetition viewed in obsessional neurosis. Cognitive repetition is furthermore excluded under the above RC definition, since it proceeds alongside an awareness of the fact of repetition. I.e. the patient suffering from obsessional thinking is keenly aware of the repetitive nature of his/her thought.

### **Hypothesis Following Case 3<sup>2</sup>**

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here **have a tendency to** keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. **However, contamination of affective**

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<sup>2</sup> The hypothesis development across cases is reproduced as appendix *b*

valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive). The following may be observed by implication:

- The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
  - Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
    - Transference
    - Projection
    - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
    - Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or

better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.

- ~~It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization (transference, projection, projective identification, object choice) will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.~~ *Idealization and denigration are central in reinforcing repression of unconscious object relationships. We can say that the modes of externalization often aim at or are used to ‘manufacture’ one or the other. This finding is in line with another, which states that RC is a repetition of a defensive adaptation rather than of a primary experience.*

~~Idealization, two forms of it, is recommended as the sought after variable; object choice being central where ‘later idealization’ is observed, and the other modes required where ‘primitive idealization’ is seen.~~

*In the case of idealization, we can note additionally that object choice allows for ‘later idealization’, and that the other modes are required for ‘primitive idealization’.*

**It is noted that object nature and/or a defensive adaptation to trauma or loss and/or the activation of a second object relationship may undermine or curtail episodes of primitive idealization. It is suggested that primitive idealization is inherently unstable and therefore that only later idealization indefinitely protects from knowledge of negative aspects of object nature.**

- **A central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience.**
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.

- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

## DISCUSSION

Ruti (2010) writes that RC “*shapes the subject's destiny independently of its wilful efforts either to develop a character or to arrive at particular existential outcomes....Repetition compulsions...unfailingly guide the subject to specific goals, hopes, and modes of meeting the world at the expense of others, thereby ushering it onto a trajectory of distinctive 'fate', 'fortune', or 'destiny'*” (p.1114). There are two relevant aspects to this description. The first concerns an absence of agency; the inability to wilfully steer life in a chosen direction. The second implies a ‘foreign’ agency; as Ruti puts it, an ‘other’ which is distinct from conscious experience – hidden from its apprehension, resistant to its dictates and often opposed to its aims. In broad terms, this research has attempted to explore this paradox and to identify an agency that is complex enough to bring about outcomes described as fate, fortune or destiny; an agency that is for instance more than simplistically purposive, habitual or reactive.

Orlandini (2004) notes that one of the major controversies raised by the literature on RC is whether it describes “*...a broad range of dysfunctional repetitive behaviours, or only the repetition of severe traumatic experiences*” (p.525). To contextualize my research, I want to highlight the presence of a core RC account that exists in the literature, which can be termed the trauma model. Van der Kolk & van der Hart (1991) state that the failure to organize traumatic experience on a linguistic level “*...leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioural reenactments, nightmares and flashbacks*” (p.443). The experiential elements under consideration could therefore be said to consist of images, sensations and motoric action. One observation on the nature of motoric reenactment that I would like to highlight is the absence of an intersubjective dimension. In outlining Janet's understanding of the distinction between traumatic memory and normal memory Van der Kolk & van der Hart (1991) observe that traumatic memory (here memory as behavioural re-

enactment) *“has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody: it is a solitary activity”* (p.431). They continue with the statement that *“traumatic memory is produced by the mechanism which Janet called restitutio ad integrum. When one element of a traumatic experience is evoked [by an internal or external stimulus], all other elements follow automatically”* (p.431). In other words, the type of repetitive activity under consideration has little intersubjective dimension beyond an initial receptivity to the environment as cueing or triggering device.

In considering the dynamics of the identified elements, Ogden (1983) points out that mental representations cannot themselves think, respond, perceive or feel; psychological activities which are required for the attribution of dynamism. I am highlighting the perhaps obvious idea that mental representations cannot directly generate repetitive behaviour. Such behaviour in this context is reliant on the individual's response to representations of traumatic experience. As Sandler (1962) puts it, *“the representational world is never an active agent – it is rather a set of indications which guides the ego to appropriate adaptive or defensive activity”* (p.136). Although I cannot here offer insight into the form of subsymbolic 'memory' I suspect that it is characterized by an equivalent absence of agency. I think the same is fairly self-evident where sensations are concerned. Motoric enactment does however imply activity and therefore potentially agency, but here I would stress that the type of activity as noted lacks an intersubjective dimension.

Within this framework, repetition amounts largely to 'automated repetition', with the account describing habitual affective and behavioural stances that lack an intersubjective dimension beyond treating the other as response inducing stimulus. Returning to Ruti's description, above, automated repetition certainly concerns an absence of agency, and although it also includes behaviour which is felt to be beyond the conscious control of the individual, something which could be seen as a 'foreign agency', it is one which lacks the complexity to

bring about outcomes described as fate, fortune or destiny. Such outcomes necessitate an agency which is more than just habitual and reactive.

I am in agreement with Inderbitzin & Levy (1998) who are willing to concede that in certain rare cases a biologically based stereotyped repetitiveness can occur, but believe that “...*the vast majority of repetitions acquire meaning and are dynamically motivated*” (p.50). My feeling therefore has been, that although a trauma account has validity and applicability, there is a danger if it is accepted as the ‘whole story’. It is noteworthy that in instances of severe trauma one can still generally identify content concerned with the relational. Mollon for instance writes that “*broadly speaking [sources of psychological pain]...are concerned either with sufferings related to love attachments (and the wish for love) or with narcissism – the image, evaluation and experience of self*” (2002:3). My belief is that underlying mechanisms in RC concern innate attachment processes and their frustration during experiences of loss and trauma. I feel that the reason why Freud had difficulty in accounting for RC, is because it indicated the shift that Fairbairn (1941) would make, that from drive theory to object relations. It showed that object relations function on a fundamental level as a motivator of behaviour.

## **Findings**

I would suggest that a key finding of the research is the statement that a central aspect of that which is repeated in RC, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience. This was not predicted in the literature review and therefore not included in the initial hypotheses. In considering the vicissitudes undergone by lived experience, due to processes of internalization, many authors (for instance Klein, 1930; Fairbairn, 1955; Ogden, 1983; Mitchell, 1981; Kernberg, 1984) do note that the products of internalization – what exists

internally in the form of an object relationship – will not be identical to what was experienced in reality. Given this assertion, it does follow, that what is externalized as repetition, would differ from any supposed initial experience. At question then, is the manner in which it differs, and what my research indicates, is that one way it diverges is that externalization takes the form of a defensive adaptation.

It is worth recalling, that in each of the three case studies, the adaptation centres on aggression directed at the ‘wrong’ object; a substitute object that is undeserving. On a more abstract level, these attacks seem to have some relation to idealization and denigration. In Ernst’s case, attacking a substitute protects against denigrating the ‘ideal object’, and in Henry’s, against tarnishing the highly elevated and idealized object – a distinction that is captured by Kernberg’s (1975) notion of ‘later idealization’ and ‘primitive idealization’. For Mrs. G, attacks seemed to centre on a need to escape potential *self*-denigration. In her casual sexual encounters with men, they functioned to undermine a form of part-object ‘primitive idealization’, and thereby, in relation, elevate her. With women she fled a mirror image of herself as pathetic. With her partners, she ensured that she was never on the ‘wrong’ side of rejection and abandonment.

We can add further that the four defensive procedures (transference, projection, projective identification and object choice) are implicated in these acts of idealization and denigration. In short, they are the components which go to making up the defensive adaptation, and manufacture the outcome of idealization or denigration.

Having identified the various elements of a dynamic intra and interpersonal situation, we are now faced with a question about how the parts relate to each other. For instance, what comes first, the defence mechanism or the aim of idealization or denigration? Depending on our answer here, a further question would be, how are the mechanisms related to each other? Do they act in consort, to produce a joint but singular outcome, or are we faced with a certain

randomness of aim, where each act with an individual innate motivation? To my thinking, the research seems to indicate a middle ground – between the conceptualization of a singular directive, and multiple individual aims – in so far as, what gives form or direction, to the entities involved, is the intrenchment of a specific adaptation. It is the adaptation that is repeated, and that provides constancy of outcome.

To spell my thinking out, yes there may for instance have been a conscious need, at one point, to denigrate a given object in order to protect another, or a view of the self, but I would reason that defence mechanisms eventually develop ‘a life of their own’. For example, a reliance on projection would have cumulative and holistic impacts for the psyche as a whole. Projection may require a certain shackling of one’s ability for self-reflection, and a cumulative impoverishment in that area, would in turn strengthen one’s capacity for, and perhaps reliance on projection. In this sense, a specific adaptation configuration, can be said to self-perpetuate its functioning.

It could be argued that a variable which may impact on entrenched configuration, changing up the defence mechanisms at play, is external reality, specifically in relation to object choice and PI where the nature of objects is relevant. A further element might be maturation in respect of for instance self-knowledge and self-development. This is territory that Russel (2006) covers, with the statement that “*the repetition compulsion contains the history of our losses, and the quest for a new relationship*” (p.620). For him, RC, by attaching itself to a real external object, introduces the possibility of change – of relating in a different and non-repetitive manner to an object that must differ in some respects from past ones. RC is here understood as partly a new and personal creation, that combines a past traumatic experience with whatever current capacities the person has for healing and change. Although I have no doubt, that ‘hopeful’ repetitions of this kind do occur, I would add a note of caution, perhaps about their frequency, or simply about the complications involved. What the case

studies seem to indicate, again is the entrenchment of a given adaptation, and I would reason further that the defence mechanisms by their nature, resist nullification, and change to the configuration as a whole. As an illustration, what transference for instance, precisely does, is negate the possibility of 'seeing' the object for what it is. Under its domination, the introduction of a new and different object is largely immaterial. Considering object choice, as I have defined it, it again by nature, *seeks* after repetition.

## **Causality in the Existing Literature**

I now return to the claim made in the introduction, that an object relations conceptualization of RC, the one hypothesised in this work, will be able to account for multiple causal explanations in the existing literature on RC.

### *Expressions of Aggression*

Inderbitzin & Levy (1998) believe that "...*the vast majority of repetitions acquire meaning and are dynamically motivated*" (p.50). They suggest further, that many considerations of the role of trauma and its effects on mental functioning have failed to highlight the role of anger and aggression directed at the self or other, and emphasise that PTSD patients repeatedly enact roles of victim or victimizer. 'Re-experiences' of trauma that take the form of repetitive behaviour provide an aggressive outlet for the frustration and pain generated by traumatic experience. "*The trauma appears to take on an instinct-like role that really belongs to the aggression created by the trauma*" (p.41). Hidden aggressive aims and gratifications are thus seen by the authors as the central motivation behind re-experiences of trauma. Two forms of repetition

which would closely resemble the form of the initial trauma are instances of self-directed aggression and those that are based on identification with the aggressor. The authors also however include repetitions which are more adapted to the context of the individual's ongoing inter and intra-personal relations. Some examples include “...*punishment of perpetrators by inducing guilt, demand for reparation, expression of entitlement, exploitation of others...*, [etc.]” (p.41).

It is immediately apparent, that the object relations RC framework, will have little difficulty accommodating this conceptualization. The framework sits comfortably with the statement that repetitions acquire meaning and are dynamically motivated. This was an element of the initial hypotheses and recurrently confirmed in the case studies. Accounting for the role of anger and aggression, directed at the self or other, was likewise repeatedly encountered. On a theoretical level it is explainable for instance by recourse to the activation of a split-off antilibidinal ego fragment, defences against the apprehension of a disowned self-image, identification with a rejecting object, and/or could involve the workings of any of the four defence mechanisms.

#### *Biased Assessments of the Environment*

Morehead (2002) grounds his account of RC in biological theory by viewing repetition as an instance of evolutionary adaptation to comparatively stable ancestral social environments. He argues that children were/are configured to take their early environment as indicative of future circumstances. Stability of patterns of object relations across the life-span, maximises chances of survival and reproduction because it qualifies as an instance of adaptation, given social homogeneity. RC represents a “*mismatch between ancestral and modern social environments*” (p.248), in so far as repetition becomes maladaptive only when adult social environments differ markedly from childhood ones, specifically if they are more benign. Morehead argues that

relational templates developed during childhood are compromise arrangements which balance the needs and wishes of the child against the particularities of social reality. They do not reflect ideal relationships but attempts to adapt to surrounding environments. It follows that negative patterns of relating would remain adaptive if conditions which brought them about remain stable. Absenting such stability, the inherited predisposition for repetition becomes maladaptive. The mechanisms involved in RC here consist of a disparity between relational templates and the environment they are meant to represent/predict.

Again, the object relations RC framework accommodates these insights, since Morehead is simply proposing that evolutionary adaptation may have contributed to the rigidity or fixed nature of internal object relations; that there may have been a payoff given social homogeneity across the lifespan. If we think for instance of Mrs. G, she needed to idealize her father in order to preserve the relationship and quota of care and love she did receive. This response to her surroundings, would have continued to be adaptable, if the relationship had remained a central one throughout her lifespan.

### *Compromise Formation*

Kubie (1941) argues, essentially that RC results from frustration of a demand. Here, a lived experience, the response of the other particularly in early childhood, is fundamental in terms of disallowing gratification or expression of frustration. Punishments, displeasure or counter-threats instil fear of retaliation, while an empathic gentle obstruction produces fear of losing the other's love. Both may produce guilt and anger/hate and secondary guilt over the violent feelings. Kubie asks about the fate of repetitive needs which are blocked in this way, and writes that “*clearly a state of internal conflict has been created which can no longer be discharged adequately in any way*” (p.31). The only option is a compromise formation where disguised

and often unconscious substitutive discharge is balanced against the prospect of overt displeasure. *“The repetition of one act thus becomes to the child the only safe and permissible expression of several things at once: original yearning; anger at the frustration; guilt both for yearning and the rage; fear both of retaliation and of its own resentments. It becomes the only possible compromise expression of all that the child feels...”* (p.31). The total conflict, drawing on multiple sources of energy, is thus expressed in the repetitive act which makes it irresistible as a reflection of self and therefore uncontrollable. Kubie expands, saying that *“...every neurotic symptom expresses several antithetical and irreconcilable purposes”* (p.32). If one of the paired aims – for instance considering the pair of submission and defiance – are curtailed then the other is expressed in isolation, which is unendurable since both are required as an expression of the underlying conflict. There is therefore seldom *“...an adequate dynamic or 'economic' cause for stopping”* (p.32). RC as he describes it, proceeds in this same manner, drawing on multiple aspects of a conflict which thus perpetuate its repetition. So long as the underlying need remains, neurotic behaviour by its nature can never bring satiation.

Kubie’s thesis on the frustration of demand, covers the same ground as Fairbairn on compensation and protection of existing relationships in early childhood. What is missing is the proposal of internalization and structure formation, but the outcome of compromise is equivalent, as is the statement that repetition involves the expression of all that the individual feels. The difference between the two formulations, is that Fairbairn has outlined the mode by which, *all that the individual feels*, is carried forward.

### *Analgesia Attainment*

Orlandini (2004) conceives of RC as *“...made of (1) a painful and impossible desire and (2) a familiar kind of relief – analgesia by re-victimization”* (p.537). Emphasis is placed on the

particular situation and specific emotional state present prior to repetitious behaviour. At such times there is the possibility or desire for overcoming a frustrating relational pattern; a need which is simultaneously experienced as an impossibility due to past experience. There is a conflict between the conviction of rejection and the desire for acceptance. The conviction is so strong that the only possible course is to destroy the pain inducing desire by 'deadening' it and so producing a state of analgesia. In one sense the harmful behaviour inflicted through re-victimization is directly related to a lowering of the ability to desire some more positive alternative. The reality of the event makes evident that in relationships this and not a better alternative just is what happens.

The vicissitudes described by Orlandini are the same as those presented by Fairbairn, but as with Kubie, what is missing is an account of internalization and of structure formation. To emphasise the point, it can be recalled that Fairbairn's term for the antilibidinal ego is the 'internal saboteur', and that one of its propensities, is the maintenance of repression, via aggressive attacks on the libidinal ego. The outcome is a smothering of desire, need, longing, hope.

#### *Affect as a prime motivator*

The role of affect in the mechanisms of RC is given a prominent position by many authors in the field. Orlandini (2004) focuses on analgesia attainment in response to a painful and seemingly impossible desire. Van der Kolk (2007) provides an account of arousal dysregulation – the loss of ability to differentiate, identify and regulate affect – as a customary response to trauma and a cause of RC. Zulueta (1993), Shabad (1993) and Interbitzin & Levy (1998) speak of anger and of exporting pain outwards during the role shift from victim to aggressor. Wilson & Malatesta (1989) highlight the role of affectivity in primal repetition. The authors are speaking about the dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, and attempts to smother

it or to pass it on to another.

Of particular interest is Russel's (2006) account of RC concerning the inseparable nature of affect and motivation. For him affects are object-seeking, and because they aim at, or wish for some specific external thing, they provide inbuilt intentionality. Kernberg (2009) supports this view in a paper on the death drive, saying that "*affects are primary motivational systems [inciting] movement toward other objects or away from them*" (p.1009-10). In this sense it is enough that individuals simply feel something in relation to another, without necessarily supposing an alternative motivation in bringing about repetitive experiences. The types of affect present as motivational vectors encountered in the literature are sexual desire (Armstrong-Perlman, 1991), yearning (Orlandini, 2004), attachment needs (van der Kolk, 2007), aversion (Kubie, 1941) and aggression (Kubie, 1941; Zulueta, 1993; Shabad, 1993; Interbitzin & Levy). Conceiving of affect as the primary motivator in RC activity removes the need of a supervenient motivational aim towards restitution (Lipin, 1963; Cohen 1980; Bibring, 1943; Russel, 2006). One supposes instead that while in the grips of RC activity individuals are simply feeling something in the same way that they felt it in the past (at the sight of initial trauma).

Although the literature suggests that affect plays a central role in precipitating RC activity, it is largely silent concerning an account of how affects are 'carried forward'; the fact that they are as Kernberg (2009) notes usually embedded in mental representations. Kernberg describes this as "*a cognitive organization of the context in which affects emerge*" (p.1010). This is important because it goes towards understanding why one affect and not another is present in a given repetitive situation. It explores the question posed by Wilson & Malatesta (1989), "*Is the seeking-after-repetition one of affective contours? Cognitive or form similarities? Smell or pheromone recognition? Behaviour? Critical moments? Modes of need gratification? Feelings*

*for another; feelings induced by another; thought or fantasies about, wishes for, or physical sensations induced by another? To clarify what is meant by the phrase 'repeat a relationship'"* (p.268).

For Kernberg (2009) the embedded nature of affect points to the primacy of object relations, and this is precisely what I am proposing with the object relations RC framework. The pre-eminence given to the role of affect as motivation, tallies well with the view of activated split-off ego fragments, that are attached to their objects with a singular ferocity.

#### *Other accounts*

Some accounts resist assimilation to an object relations framework because the language and concepts they employ are simply not comparable. Examples are van der Kolk (2007) on traumatic repetition; Lipin (1963) and Cohen (1980), with a focus on the abnormal registration of traumatic memory; Bibring (1943) on 'working-off' mechanisms of the ego. Other accounts, echo specific aspects of the object relations RC framework. Zulueta (1993) and Shabad (1993) for instance work with the notion of a role shift from victim to perpetrator, and Lipin (1963) distinguishes between patterns of RC that involve mechanisms akin to transference and projective identification.

### **Limitations of the Method and Findings**

Cressey (1950, in Robinson, 1951) notes that practical certainty of outcomes, may be attained after a small number of cases has been examined, but the discovery of a single negative case disproves the explanation and requires a re-formulation. Cressey seems to be suggesting that it

is possible to reach a point of *practical* certainty that would allow for something akin to a truth claim. An immediate question here would be how do we decide on, that is quantify or measure, that which *counts* as practical? For my part, having analysed three case studies, I have little doubt that the hypothesis would have continued to develop with further cases. If there is a point of saturation, of practical certainty, then I do not feel it was reached. This would be a problem, if I were aiming at a version of a final statement in the positivist sense. As outlined in the methodology section, I instead see the research findings as amounting to a ‘living theory’, which will change with further research. Relatedly, as stated in the methodology section, generalization is a matter of theoretical generalization, that is generalization to a theory.

I would say that the most serious limitation of the research has to do with the use of pre-existing self-reports as data. Self-reports, by their nature, cannot be independently verified and so attempting to account for potential bias or even deception is a notorious ask, if not a tenuous proposal at best. Given the nature of the area explored, it is however difficult to see how this issue could be surmounted. A factor that is more amendable to a change, is author bias in respect of the use of *pre-existing* data. Conducting my own interviews would have provided me with an opportunity to monitor and minimise interviewer bias. I felt however, that this would be at the cost of losing the context of therapeutic engagement, and therefore the intersubjective processes and vicissitudes, which seldom occur with as much clarity, outside of such engagement. Audio recordings of therapy sessions would have been the next best thing, but as addressed in the methodology section, practical issues prohibited this.

## CONCLUSION

I will begin with an observation about the RC object relations model. The model is a synthesis between a largely Fairbairnian object relations framework, and the construct of RC, defined along fairly general lines. RC, as noted previously, is sometimes represented in object relations writing, and object relations theory is used at times to explicate RC activity. Although often stimulating and helpful, neither application has, however, been applied in a systematic manner, hence my decision to develop and outline a synthesis between the two. Highlighting the role of defence mechanisms, as part of an explicit conceptualization of the vicissitudes involved, is a key element of the synthesis, and one I arrived at gradually while reflecting on the detail that ‘somehow’ internal object relationships needed to get ‘outside’ if they were identified as the underlying cause of RC.

In this research project, the model was verified, tested and altered in relation to empirical observation. In terms of the broader utility of the model, I would suggest that it stands as a viable alternative to the trauma paradigm, which I consider to be the dominant, because most thoroughly developed, conceptualization of RC in the literature. It is also able to assimilate many alternative, existing, theoretical causal explanations of RC. I feel that my findings, which broadly amount to a defence of the RC object relations model, and specifically to its presentation in the form of a causal hypothesis, follow logically and coherently from the analysis procedure. I have provided a visible trail concerning how the findings were derived, and I have also discussed why the method of analysis was chosen over other methods, how it was implemented, and indicated some of the shortcomings of employing it.

Reflecting on the suitability of the research method, in relation to the area of interest, I would suggest that the complexity of RC as a construct, introduces too many variables for the

application to be ideal. One outcome, of the need to account for a multiplicity of variables, was that the analysis of each case became extremely time consuming. Time constraints, and a word count restriction, meant that I could not include further cases, which I think would have benefited the research. A more serious concern had to do with the practicalities of accounting for, and presenting all variables of interest. In short, on reflection, I do not believe I gave every variable, let us say entity, line of reason or series of occurrences, the full attention deserved, nor do I feel that they were integrated, one with the other, to my satisfaction. I would suspect that the method could be applied to far more straightforward phenomena, with greater ease, producing surer research outcomes. As an example, focussing on one of the defence mechanisms, let us say projective identification, as the sole area of research, would have introduced fewer variables into the analysis and allowed for the analysis of more cases.

On a personal note, my aim in focussing on RC was partly about highlighting the fact of repetition, its immutability. Russel (2006), while noting this quality, nevertheless theorizes that RC is always a new and personal creation that combines a past traumatic experience with whatever current capacities the person has for healing and change. For him, *“the repetition compulsion contains the history of our losses, and the quest for a new relationship”* (p.620). Over recent years, while being enclosed in the topic, I developed a growing feeling of suffocation and monotony with it. I think the nature of the topic, lends itself to these feelings, in so far as it emphasises an absence of hope, a lack of agency, a quality of the unavoidable and catastrophic; in short, it speaks of repetition, endlessly. These feelings have culminated in a sense that although the concept may have legitimacy and utility, it is possibly reductionist nevertheless. I feel that it leaves out too much in the areas of change, development, dynamism and hope. I think that Russel’s inclusion of hopeful outcomes in RC, are worthy of further exploration and research.

## Appendix *a*

### The Repetition Compulsion Defined

RC is defined by four descriptive criteria:

- it is *unconscious*; characterized on an experiential level by a lack of conscious awareness or conscious rational deliberate agency. It is described, or aspects of its functioning are described, as being either broadly unconscious, or specifically, repressed, dissociated or ego dystonic.
- it is a *repetition* of a past unpleasurable experience
- it is *unpleasurable* because it is painful and damaging
- RC should be thought of as the unconscious repetition of a '*lived interpersonal situation*'.

In relation to the last point, RC concerns the repetition of an experience, rather than of cognition, and therefore does not include the kind of repetition viewed in obsessional neurosis. Cognitive repetition is furthermore excluded under the above RC definition, since it proceeds alongside an awareness of the fact of repetition. I.e. the patient suffering from obsessional thinking is keenly aware of the repetitive nature of his/her thought.

## Appendix *b*

Below, standard text indicates the initial hypotheses. Bold text indicates changes made as a result of findings and carried forward. A line through the text indicates that a statement has been invalidated. Bold italics indicate that a change has occurred in the case under consideration.

### Initial Hypothesis

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. We therefore infer the presence of ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive). The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).

- Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
  - Transference
  - Projection
  - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
  - Object Choice: desire is here centred on a specific object choice, often imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better. A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is desired is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

### **Hypothesis Following Case 1**

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here *have a tendency to* keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. *However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive).* The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
- Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
  - Transference
  - Projection
  - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel

or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*

- Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
- *It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.*
- *RC is a repetition of the defensive adaptation to a past unpleasurable experience, rather than a repetition of the supposed primary experience itself.*
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

### **Hypothesis Following Case 2**

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting

mechanisms here **have a tendency to** keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. **However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive).** The following may be observed by implication:

- The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
  - Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
    - Transference
    - Projection
    - Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the

reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*

- Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
- **It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.**

*Idealization, two forms of it, is recommended as the sought-after variable; object choice being central where ‘later idealization’ is observed, and the other modes (transference, projection, projective identification) required where ‘primitive idealization’ is seen.*

*It is noted that object nature and/or the activation of a second object relationship may undermine or curtail episodes of primitive idealization.*

- **RC is a repetition of the defensive adaptation to a past unpleasurable experience, rather than a repetition of the supposed primary experience itself.**
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

### Hypothesis Following Case 3

Dynamically, RC will occur as an outcome of the externalization of a repressed internal object relationship. In accordance with the literature review, this statement entails the following:

- The dynamic causes of RC ultimately result from endopsychic make-up, where internalization is seen as a form of forgetting/repression and, splitting as a method of dealing with ambivalence. Splitting mechanisms here **have a tendency to** keep object relationships defined by a positive affective valence (libidinous) and those by a negative valence (aggressive) apart. **However, contamination of affective valences may be observed and we do not necessarily in each instance find ego fragments attached to internal objects, with a singular ferocity or uncontaminated affective valence (either purely libidinal or aggressive).** The following may be observed by implication:
  - The dynamics of overwhelming unmanageable affect, along with attempts to smother it or to pass it on to another.
  - ‘Crude emotion of an infantile character’, circumscribed by an inability to enter ambivalent formations.
  - ‘Chronic conflict’, often manifested as seemingly direct conflictual relations between love and hatred.
- Externalization may be pictured either in terms of the activation of a split-off ego fragment or as centred on the defensive measures employed to impede apprehension of a repressed internal object relationship (an object-image/representation, a self-image/representation and a related affective component linking the two).
- Externalization is achieved through various psychological defensive procedures, effecting perception and behaviour, including
  - Transference
  - Projection

- Projective Identification: PI is understood as both an intra and interpersonal event. In the first, it involves the projection of unacceptable or intolerable aspects of the self onto an object (an intrapsychic event properly involving the displacement of aspects of the self-representation onto an object-representation). A second step, beyond projection and beyond the intrapsychic, comprises of additional pressure, manipulation or influence designed to induce the object of the projection to feel or experience the projection. Finally, inducement or the degree of inducement will depend on the reactivation or reinforcement of “existing identity fragments” or “pre-existing introjective configurations” *in the object, and belonging to the object.*
- Object Choice: desire, **want or need** is here centred on a specific object choice. The object may be imbued with compelling fantasy representations, such as a belief in something longed for, needed or better, **but equally it may be chosen in line with an undefined want or need.** A basic assumption is that an individual remains unaware of the fact of repetition, and that what is chosen is simultaneously and ultimately unwanted and unintended. In other words, the object is unconsciously chosen because of certain harmful qualities or capacities.
- ~~It is posited that a variable, which decides between the modes of externalization (transference, projection, projective identification, object choice) will be identifiable in relation to the broader symptomatic picture, and that this variable is one which will act to reinforce repression of an unconscious object relationship.~~ *Idealization and denigration are central in reinforcing repression of unconscious object relationships. We can say that the modes of externalization often aim at or are used to ‘manufacture’ one or the other. This finding is in line with another, which states that RC is a repetition of a defensive adaptation rather than of a primary experience.*

~~Idealization, two forms of it, is recommended as the sought-after variable; object choice being central where ‘later idealization’ is observed, and the other modes required where ‘primitive idealization’ is seen.~~

*In the case of idealization, we can note additionally that object choice allows for ‘later idealization’, and that the other modes are required for ‘primitive idealization’.*

**It is noted that object nature *and/or a defensive adaptation to trauma or loss* and/or the activation of a second object relationship may undermine or curtail episodes of primitive idealization. *It is suggested that primitive idealization is inherently unstable and therefore that only later idealization indefinitely protects from knowledge of negative aspects of object nature.***

- **A central aspect of that which is repeated, is the defensive adaptation, to a past unpleasurable experience.**
- We expect evidence of processes of internalization; incorporation, introjection and identification.
- RC may be mediated by broad processes and modes of functioning, such as ego and superego participation. Repetitive activity is therefore a holistic affair including numerous aspects of the individual.

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