

## Foreign Bodies

In this chapter I will describe, in much greater detail, work with the adolescent to whom I briefly referred in Chapter 10. Daniel was a patient who had remained extremely porous to parental projections and had not developed a protective 'no-entry system of defences' (cf. Chapter 9). You will remember that he was born severely premature and that his mother had given him up for lost: the doctors had told her that he would not survive.

It was necessary for a child so deprived, to establish some trust in me in the transference relationship, as a reliable container, before he could shift from controlling something inanimate, like food, or the books he 'devoured' ('always available *things*' which he never needed to wait for), and begin to develop a relationship of dependency on, rather than addiction to, another person, one who was by no means as available to his control as things inanimate.

In that he was born addicted to Valium, Daniel had had, from the very beginning, an experience of concrete foreign bodies seeping into his bloodstream. He was ten weeks premature and was born with a number of malformations, including an occlusion of his nasal tract (non-patent nostrils). You will remember that his mother had become pregnant again when he was still in the incubator. The baby was born a beautiful, normal child, Julian. Mother said that she could not look at Daniel when he was born since he was so deformed and she hated deformity.

Daniel is an attractive boy of average size whom I started seeing about four years ago, shortly after his eighteenth birthday. I shall focus mainly on a late period of treatment when I had increased his sessions from three to four per week and when the states of mind and the dynamics underlying the initial eating disorder became much clearer in the context of the transference relationship. Initially, I understood Daniel's need to control me, especially his engendering much anxiety in the countertransference with suicidal threats, as a form of omnipotence, akin to that of another very deprived child David (described in

Chapter 7), that is, as a form of primitive coercion, fulfilling a 'survival function' (Symington, 1985).

A dream of the early period of treatment conveyed, I felt, the expectation on Daniel's part, or at least his wish, to be held by me as if he were again a small infant. It was a particularly difficult time for him since his mother was probably again going to be admitted to psychiatric hospital and she was heavily projecting into him. *He dreams that I picked him up as if he were a baby and I held him very firmly.* When he told me about this dream, he said that he knew that this was how he would have liked things to be. He would, for instance, have liked me to help him to 'find some rhyme and reason' (cf. Chapter 10) in his life project. He could not make up his mind about the subject he was going to read at university. I knew him well enough to make up his mind for him.

I could not take on the role of providing the maternal early containment that he had lacked. His expectation was similar to Martin's (cf. Chapter 3) that he be given in the present what he had missed out on in the past. Daniel needed to be helped to cope with the pain of realising that what he had not had as a small child needed to be mourned and could never be obliterated by constant and always available mothering; Martin's fantasy about 'the restaurant open at all hours of the day and night' (cf. Chapter 3). The shift to the stage of treatment I am going to describe in detail in this chapter involved an extremely painful process of renunciation.

As I said in the previous chapter, at times I experienced confusion in the countertransference. I did not perceive this confusion as a wish in Daniel to break links and to make it impossible for me to think (cf. Chapter 3, 'You think, you think you are a brain box') but rather as his need to find an object that could experience the confusion and still remain able to find 'some rhyme and reason'. I attempted to detoxify his experience of being pervaded by inimical foreign bodies so that he could gradually internalise the function of an object capable of 'making emotional sense' (Bion, 1962).

In the initial period of treatment it was difficult to differentiate a legitimate need for containment from an attempt to exercise control over me, which had a deathly and paralysing quality to it. I often fluctuated between feelings of being too soft and too strict in my transference interpretations and in my attitude. Daniel had not renounced attachment to his primary object as had Louise and Martin (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2), nor had he become entrenched in 'unholy alliances' like Pekka and Ingrid (Chapters 4 and 5). There were, how-

ever, some similarities with the very deprived patient, David, described in Chapter 6: a vigorous, albeit controlling, attachment to the object.

He told me that his mother most of all valued his 'tenaciousness'. He had learned from a very early age to 'try ten times harder than anyone else'. His mother, he told me, would say proudly about him, 'My Daniel would run to that lamp-post and back for me if I asked him'. When he was still very little and spent periods of time in a children's home while mother was in psychiatric hospital, he had managed to learn to do up his shoe-laces. He felt it would please mother when she saw 'what a clever boy he was' (this was said with a touch of bitterness). His brothers just left their shoe-laces undone until someone came to help them.

Mother valued Daniel's academic achievements and he had always been very successful in his studies. His brother Julian, who was much taller than him and had 'the shoulders of a boxer', had never bothered with his studies. He was going to end up 'a bricky with the *Sun* (newspaper) in his back pocket'.

When he was twelve, Daniel used to jog on the spot for ten minutes every morning in order to become fitter. There was nothing he could do about his shoulders and mother kept telling him that he had 'no shoulders'. I think Daniel felt that what his brother had firmly in his pocket was the *sun*-shine of mother's smile. Daniel had gone with her to see Julian play in matches and she kept telling people, 'That is my son', when 'these great big hands lifted up in the line-out and grabbed the ball before anyone else could catch it'.

In spite of trying ten times harder than anyone else, Daniel felt that he had been fighting a losing battle. 'Those great big hands' had grabbed mother away from him. No wonder that when he read Rousseau in his philosophy classes, he chose to write an essay on 'The Rights of the First Owner'. His ownership of mother's womb had been taken up, as you will remember by Julian, when his tenancy rights had not yet expired and he was still in the incubator.

In the initial period of the treatment, I felt that holiday breaks were experienced by Daniel as cruel, and always untimely, evictions. From the beginning he had tried desperately to please me, just as he had with his mother. He realised that he found it difficult to be really sincere because he was busy trying to find out what for me would be the Daniel who could 'tie his shoe-laces', and was often telling me things that, he felt, 'would go down well'. At times he would play down the extent of his 'getting sick' as he called it, when he was still severely bulimic. Hell broke loose and his shoe-laces remained undone at the time of breaks, especially in the first year of treatment. His suicidal threats felt very

genuine and I took them seriously providing emergency cover, which was fortunately never needed. Close to holiday breaks Daniel used his mother as a 'receptacle' (cf. Chapter 8) of his suicidal ideation. I was sorry for her when I heard that Daniel had, at the time of the first Christmas break, given her a present which he himself later felt was 'a nasty thing to do': it was a volume of poems by Sylvia Plath, who Daniel knew had committed suicide. 'Not the best present for somebody who had often attempted suicide herself and, more than once, at Christmas'.

It took a long time before Daniel could experience some feelings of compassion for his very ill mother. As he had felt so painfully neglected and projected into by her, she became the carrier of feelings which he was desperately trying to exempt me from, at the time when he made a strong bid for mutual idealisation.

A very frightening dream, in fact a nightmare, made it clear that I was perceived as the one who was projecting panic and 'foreign bodies' into him. Close to a holiday break he dreamt that:

I was trying to persuade him to experience the 'thrills' of bungy jumping from a bridge. In the dream he ran away and found himself in the corridors of his primary school. He hid in a childrens' lavatory and stood on the seat hoping that his feet would not be visible through the gap (the cruel gap of my holiday?) under the door. He woke up in a cold sweat.

Holiday breaks became more tolerable for Daniel when he engaged, about one year after the beginning of treatment, in a very intense relationship with a young woman, Maria (mentioned in Chapter 10), a relationship which turned out not to be a flash-in-the-pan piece of acting out, since it still lasts after three years.

Daniel's bulimic symptoms gradually receded, but he would still at times, binge and be sick after a session, especially after the last session of the week. He would eat nothing before coming to the session, at 10 o'clock in the morning, so that he would really feel hungry when he left and would have 'something to look forward to'. After we had done some work on the striking interchangeability of time between time with me and food, the symptoms eventually disappeared. Daniel told me the 'trick didn't seem to work any longer'. He was angry with me about it and offered me a rather strained, computer-language joke, 'You are no longer jam sandwich compatible.'

A few months after Daniel met Maria, he moved out of mother's flat to live with her. He was able to tell Maria 'what a pig he used to be' only when he felt that his bulimia was a thing of the past. The bulimic

symptoms did not return but Daniel was to tell me later in treatment with an element of nostalgia, 'Before you cured me of "getting sick" [his words for bulimia] at least I knew exactly what was going to happen every day'. On another occasion he was very openly angry: what was I doing to him? 'I have spent all my life trying to avoid anything to do with relationships and thinking about food instead. It is such a bliss to feel a longing for a bar of chocolate. You have just got to walk to the corner shop and your longing is assuaged'.

I do not think, as I said earlier, that Daniel had actually 'spent all his life trying to avoid anything to do with relationships'. I believe that he 'would have run to the lamp-post and back' if his mother asked him, but an iron grip of mutual control was present in that relationship.

#### Possessiveness

Daniel became increasingly aware that his current relationships, especially the one with his girlfriend, were pervaded by a spasmodic control akin to the one he previously exercised on food. He said that he knew of no other way of being with someone than 'merging with a person, which is a sort of devouring'. At times he saw his girlfriend as possessive. He said he accepted her being away 'very lightly'. He was not prepared to roll in guilt if he was not at home when she expected him to be there. On other occasions he was very much in touch with *his* possessiveness. He could not understand how Maria could put up with it: 'It must be hell to live with me. I cannot tolerate Maria liking anything I don't like. For instance, she might sit looking at a soap opera and I feel I could kill her because I hate soap operas'.

One day he became absolutely incensed when Maria was talking Spanish at home with a cousin of hers. He left the flat slamming the door. He said she was speaking a 'bloody language' which he could not understand and that she was also laughing and being cheerful. She should only be cheerful when she was with him. She had made him feel like a 'dysfunctional creep'. It was obvious that he felt incensed about my speaking a 'bloody language' which he could not understand with someone else when I escaped his control.

The possessive part of him became split off into a girl at college called Tanya. She was so clinging that people would prefer not to start talking to her because she would then complain when they went away. If somebody gave her attention but then said, 'Now I must go', she would moan: 'You never have time for me, I obviously bore you'. He criticised

Tanya fiercely and had great difficulty in the session in seeing her as a split-off part of himself. A dream came to our help.

He was in an adventure playground and there were no adults about. Children were being cruel to one another. Tanya hit him hard in the legs. He fell but managed to get up again. No-one was there to protect him.

No parents were around to protect him from the pain engendered by this extremely possessive part of him that disturbed his balance (hit him in the legs). He said, 'What a quiet life I used to have when I was just thinking about food'. Daniel felt that he had become even more possessive since I had 'made him an offer he could not refuse', and increased his sessions to four per week.

Perhaps I was also felt to be very possessive. Some light was thrown on the 'plans' he felt I had for him in a session close to the dream of Tanya. He told me that he always used to try to win mother's attention by boasting, for instance, saying that he had scored a goal in football when in fact he had not scored a goal at all. I wondered what he thought was the goal he had to score for me, what he thought was my goal, my aim in making him an offer that he could not refuse. Daniel was silent for a short while and then said that my goal was to get him to admit that he feels jealous. Again, as in the old times, he felt that I pushed (projected) this unwanted jealousy into him, rather than putting him in touch with *his own* feelings of jealousy. Daniel also felt provoked by the increase in the number of sessions because his last one was on a Thursday. He said that now the 'weekend felt like a year long'. He referred to the week as four days of bingeing and the weekend as four days of starvation. During one of these 'year-long weekends' he had felt very hungry and thought he might have to start bingeing again, but felt that he could not do it any longer. He had not done it for a long time and 'it would really be a kick in the teeth to you and to Maria'.

This greedy part of him was split off in another dream:

He dreamt that he was in a supermarket and a man was very angry with his son, a young boy, because the boy was taking loads of food off the shelf and the trolley was already full. Daniel persuaded the boy to leave the supermarket with him in order to escape his father's wrath.

The *father* was obviously experienced at the time as very persecutory. Daniel felt that the boy would be punished because of scooping food from the shelves which he could see, at this time, had something to do with what he had, in a previous session, called his 'voracious possessive-

ness'. Daniel told me that he felt that his hunger had the meaning of 'grasping for something outside'. 'If only I could have something inside I could hold onto, this would alter everything.' He also said: 'I could let go of somebody or something if I could believe that it would not disappear forever. If I could do that, a part of me which is organised and capable of pleasure could stay alive'. He also said that he had read somewhere that 'life is what happens when you are making other plans'. He referred to his 'consuming passion for making schedules', not very different from the way he was controlling his diet when he stopped bingeing.

He knew he *had* to plan the schedule of his days very carefully, and he resented the one day in the week when I was seeing him at a different time because it threw the schedule into chaos, two sessions were so close to one another and then there was a long gap.

Daniel had become aware by this time, that his preoccupation with his diet had only changed its target, but 'food doesn't mind if you keep it under control', while he felt it 'couldn't be fun' for me to deal with somebody so controlling.

He was to quote a poem about a butterfly saying that a butterfly, when caught in a net, loses its beauty. Daniel tried to understand the origin of his 'spasmodic control'. Could it have something to do with the fact that he never knew where he was with his mother? 'She had fits of rage and happiness that hit you like a thunderbolt from minute to minute'. He felt that I could not possibly imagine how controlling *she* could be.

For a short time, in between changes of flats, he went to live at mother's flat with his girlfriend. Mother 'took it on herself' to wash and iron Maria's clothes. She also 'took it on herself' to throw away some of Maria's underwear, which she thought was no good any longer, as well as some of Daniel's clothes which she did not like. 'I have to like my clothes, not my mother.' Daniel resented his mother buying clothes for him all the time. This was her way of keeping 'remote control' on him after he had left home. He resented her 'patronage', felt that she was buying things for him in order to 'own a part of me' (my offer of a fourth session?). If Maria bought him a new pair of jeans, mother had to buy him a better pair of jeans. 'It could be lucrative if it weren't so scary!'

Daniel said that he hated being controlled but that he knew that he was himself a 'control freak', just like his mother. It was 'frightening to see all these things she had shoved into him'. He used to think it was

only the 'food problem', but now he felt he was perhaps 'just like her in so many other ways'.

### Foreign Bodies from a Distance

Daniel became particularly aware of his tendency to enter into someone else's shoes (enter into projective identification) when his youngest brother Tommy began to develop a very familiar eating disorder. There was a great risk at this time of his trying to become 'me' by taking on a therapeutic role in order to intercept mother's projections into his brother. Daniel felt that what had happened to him was happening all over again. He knew 'the story inside our'. Mother had phoned him in tears saying, 'Daniel what shall I do'. She said that Tommy was now bingeing and vomiting, 'Just like you used to do' and that a friend of hers had told her that she reminded her of the song called 'My Life is a Circle'.

Daniel had tried to make light of things, telling his mother that if she did not give too much importance to what Tommy was doing and didn't bother too much with what he was eating, things would improve. Then he added, 'It is true that her life is a circle. It is happening all over again'. Tommy had started, just like Daniel, by becoming frightened of being too fat. He went swimming, he went to the gym, he exercised a great deal, looked at himself in the mirror and said that he was ugly. When Daniel spoke with him, he realised that Tommy had gone through a period of near-anorexia, just like he did. Mother had not been so worried at the time. Daniel remembered how she carefully planned his diet when he had gone down to 41 kilos and how she kept telling him that he should not become too fat. Daniel's mother said that people only become anorexic because of the influence of mass media. 'She should listen to *herself*, when she talks about people, she only comments on their appearance and whether they are fat or thin, never on their character. Mother really hated fat people and would die before she allowed Tommy to become fat.' Mother had told Daniel again on the telephone and in tears, that she had stopped buying biscuits and sweets and all the sort of things Tommy could binge on. Daniel felt like shouting at her, 'If you want to help Tommy just look at yourself. You only peck at food. You are frightened of it'.

In some detail, Daniel reported an outing with his brother when they had gone to the cinema, to see *Shine*. Daniel had cried looking at the film because he felt that he was himself just as trapped and imprisoned as the main character, only he was not a talented musician. He had 'no

marketable skills'. Tommy had not noticed that Daniel was crying. Daniel had done his best to be cheerful. Tommy wanted to go to McDonald's and he had made the mistake of agreeing. Tommy had binged on junk food and when Daniel took him back home he had obviously gone to the toilet to be sick. Mother was aware of it. She was crying profusely saying, 'What do I do to my children?' Daniel felt that she was really only sorry for herself and that she was unable to be sorry for anyone else. They could hear that Tommy was in the kitchen bingeing on something and then he came into the living room and asked mother whether he could have a cup of tea. Mother shouted at him, just as she used to shout at Daniel, that if Tommy went on like that she was going to kill herself. Daniel was crying in the session when he told me about these events and he said that he really felt that he was not up to the task, that during the weekend he had somehow 'tried to be me'. 'Mind you', he added, 'If I have to become someone else because I am not as yet sure who Daniel is, I could do a lot worse than becoming you, much better than becoming Yvonne' (when he wanted to keep a distance from his mother he, at times, called her by her first name).

I spoke rather lightly about his 'becoming me' perhaps in order not to miss me as he had probably felt it might have been helpful to have a session at the weekend, when he was confronted with such an upheaval. Daniel regained some good humour and said with a half laugh, 'You have really got to start worrying when I begin to speak with a foreign accent'.

### A Better Couple-Mixed Feelings

Daniel was very resentful of his girlfriend's attitude towards his mother. Maria, he said, 'did not mince her words'. She would say that Daniel's mother was completely crazy and the most irresponsible person she had ever met; she should never have been allowed to have children (perhaps irresponsible people like me, who kept taking holidays, should not be allowed to treat patients). She could not bear his mother's vulgar laughter; her talking in a 'garrulous' way with a thick northern accent, especially when she did not have an axe to grind.

According to Maria, Daniel should stop meddling with the affairs of his family. When Tommy was developing his bulimia and Daniel was asked to perform some sort of protective role, she was frightened that he might get sucked back into a vortex at the time. 'She feels that it is dangerous for me and that you should tell me to keep away from Jakarta Road' (the street where mother and Tommy lived). Daniel said, with a

mixture of envy and admiration, that Maria had certainly had a much better deal as far as her parents were concerned. He had met Maria's parents when he had spent a holiday with them. He had felt very welcome and had appreciated the fact that they tried hard to speak English most of the time in order not to make him feel excluded. Maria's mother had resumed her studies and had taken a new degree in her forties. Maria's father was a very educated man, a doctor. No wonder Maria always managed to keep her head above water, he said. She's got parents she could talk with if she was in trouble ('Well, now I have got you') and they seemed to have so much to give, probably because they give so much to one another.

I felt that this remark conveyed a deep insight into the real meaning of 'love-making' as *making*, producing something called love which can then be given to the children. He could experience admiration but he also bitterly resented having had parents so different from Maria's and always feeling at risk of going on 'automatic pilot' and becoming like one or the other of them, if not both.

There were some grounds to his anxiety because, in my clinical experience, I have often observed that the fate of foreign bodies frequently takes the path of an identification. A patient may indeed end up by identifying with an internal object perceived as a foreign body that he dreads or even, at times, hates.

Daniel started reminiscing about the good parent figures whom he had come across in his life, for instance, an aunt and uncle of his who had 'a real family', a family where they had regular meal times. There had never been such a thing in his family. He could not even remember Sunday lunches. Mother made a point, on occasion, of cooking a Christmas dinner, or 'her version of a Christmas dinner', but Christmas was often such an awful day as father would be out at the pub and come home drunk.

There had been important teachers in his school life. He remembered very vividly one from his primary school, Mr Richards, who could be both firm and gentle. There was a teacher in his secondary school who obviously taught English because he liked his subject. In this teacher's lessons, Daniel could just stay with one paragraph and not feel that he had to 'devour ten books'. He could savour his reading and he remembered feeling 'a warm glow inside' when he could savour literature instead of bingeing on reading. He spoke about this teacher as 'having a big imposing presence' and being quite firm with students who didn't do their work properly. He remembered in particular, a spoiled middle-class boy who dressed down and had his nose pierced in order to

pretend that he was working-class and never did any work. He did not get away with any nonsense with the teacher who had 'the big imposing presence'.

The perception of a better couple stirred up mixed feelings in Daniel when it came to be anchored to the transference relationship. An event contributed to the welling up of tremendous rage in Daniel.

Mother was unwell and unfit to take care of her cleaning jobs (she had always worked as a cleaner). She had asked Daniel and Maria if they might wish to earn some extra money by taking care of the cleaning of a house in north-west London, where she generally used to work. The house was not far from the Tavistock Clinic. Daniel and Maria had accepted the offer as they were very short of money on their grant. They got the keys of this 'elegant house, not luxurious, but really tasteful'. It was 'full of books and classical music compact discs'. It belonged to a professional couple. The husband worked at home. He was a journalist, a tall, grey-haired, handsome man, 'educated and affluent'. Daniel imagined that this could be just the sort of husband I might have. He observed that there were a number of pictures of the couple's children one of them was a graduation picture. Daniel was sure that it was 'graduation in some some prestigious university'.

Daniel felt provoked, as if I had deliberately goaded him by allowing him to have access to my home premises. I was again perceived as a *projecting* object. At this time Daniel noticed *for the first time* on the blackboard on the ground floor at the Tavistock that my name and the number of my room were next to two seminars, one on a Wednesday and one on a Thursday. One of the seminars took place only a quarter of an hour after the end of one of his sessions. 'How marginal' he was, how quickly I could forget about him and turn my mind to a seminar. He was sure that I had favourites amongst my students. Just like a teacher, whom he did not remember very fondly, who divided the students amongst the 'talents' and 'the others'. He was lucky because he happened to be one of 'the talents'. He was sure I had my favourites amongst my students and amongst my patients and he did not feel that he was one of the 'talents' – even if, at times, he did believe that I accepted him unconditionally, not because of the progress he made.

The image of the grey-haired, educated, affluent journalist merged with that of some politicians whom Daniel had heard delivering 'glib speeches' on television. Tony Blair was talking about a new era. There was going to be no 'new era' for Daniel. 'One should just become like one of them (the politicians) in order to have what they have got, the things so many people go without because others have got them.' The

reference to what he felt I was giving to others: my partner, my favourites, the 'talents', my children attending prestigious universities when he has 'to go without', was very transparent.

At this time Daniel had a dream which left little doubt about his murderous feelings towards a hated couple. The dream took place close to a holiday break.

Daniel dreamt that he had murdered the couple and he thought they were probably foreign tourists. He had murdered them on the shore of a cold barren island. Two policemen had got hold of him and he was sure they were going to beat him.

He woke up very frightened and got into a frenzy of tidying up. He felt that the bedroom was terribly messy while there were only Maria's and his clothes on the floor.

As I tried to understand the possible meaning of the 'foreign couple', Daniel associated the 'bloody mess' in the dream with a programme he had seen recently on television about present-day xenophobia in Germany. I was sure the xenophobia had, at this stage, something to do with my being foreign. (This attribute had been perceived by Daniel at other times as reassuring, since it meant that he could never really feel that he 'was me', that he could 'merge' with me.) The most violent feelings were directed, I felt, towards that unbearable 'foreign body' in my life, the 'third one' (Britton, 1989). A new and, hopefully, less toxic version of the dreaded 'foreign bodies'.

As I tried to explore the meaning of the dream, I wandered about the barren island. Why 'barren'? Daniel remembered he had countless times read two poems by Sylvia Plath: *The Barren Woman* and *The Pregnant Woman*. It was clear that murderous rage was also related to the grievance mentioned earlier in the paper, the hated pregnant mother-woman, who should have remained 'barren' and respected Daniel's 'rights of the first owner' to her womb, while instead, she had become pregnant with Julian when he, Daniel, was still in the incubator.

Talking about the 'bloody' mess in the dream, Daniel also remembered the 'bloody' mess in his parents' flat when father used to beat mother and she had more than once to be admitted to casualty. He said that if he could have dreams of this sort, he obviously had something ferocious and violent, something like his father, in himself. Daniel felt that 'he was not fit for human consumption'. He was unable for a time to make love to Maria because he feared he could be violent to her, that there was 'a beast' in him. He was furious with Maria when he got into

one of his 'savage moods' and she would just find him 'cute'. I wondered whether he felt that I was perhaps going to find him 'cute' when he went about murdering couples on the shore of a 'barren island', and when he let me know about his 'xenophobia'. Daniel said, 'yes', he did not think that I really knew 'what a savage' I had on my couch. I would only know what a beast he could be if I had observed him bingeing. How he could 'demolish food' in such a way that not surprisingly he felt he had immediately to make himself sick.

This was the first time Daniel so openly associated his bulimia with a ferocious attack (perhaps breaking and entering into an impervious object?). He was not far from seeing that it could be a ferocious attack on mother's body, or the inside of mother's body, probably represented by the supermarket in the dream previously quoted.

#### Projections of Jealousy and Abandonment

There was unfortunately, during an analytic break, some acting out of Daniel's Oedipal jealousy. He became infatuated with a girl at college and left around a diary in which he said that he felt attracted to this girl, Caroline. Maria had read the diary and had cried profusely. Daniel resented most of all that, in spite of feeling so hurt, she would have him back. She should have told him, 'Go away then. If you have got someone else on your mind, I don't want you'. Daniel felt that Maria accepted him unconditionally even if he hurt her. She reminded him of his mother who would always have his father back, no matter how violent he had been with her.

He decided that he should leave Maria because he didn't want her to be the victim of the savage in him. It took him a time, once we resumed work, to realise that he had been savage in projecting all the jealousy and the feelings of abandonment he was perceiving in the transference relationship, into Maria. His abandonment of her was not very dissimilar to something we had spoken about just before the holiday. He had told me that he intended to drop the subject taught by someone who was going to take an inordinately long break to go to his country of origin in Latin America. The 'schedule' was going to be messed up. Lessons at different times, a different teacher. I had spoken about some veiled threat of wanting to 'drop' our subject, our work, because of my forever going away and again messing up his 'schedule'.

Fortunately Maria did not take Daniel's threats of abandonment 'lying on her back' in the way that Daniel felt his mother had always accepted his father's obnoxious behaviour. Maria had told Daniel at the

height of a rage: 'You can leave me and I'll be in a state for a while, but I will recover and get on with my life, while if you leave me you are going to be a wreck and remain a wreck for the rest of your life'. She also said: 'You feel you can do anything to me because at times I have said that I need you, but you never have the courage to say that you need anybody. That's why you are in the mess you are in'.

Daniel began to feel some genuine remorse about the feelings of abandonment he had inflicted on Maria. *It was true* that he had always tried to keep aloof. He remembered having mocked a friend of his who had been crying for three days, some years back, when his girlfriend left him. Daniel had told him that one should never let people know how much you like them.

He seemed to feel that once I had reached my 'goal' and he had let me know that analysis was important for him, I would say 'mission accomplished' and I would drop him. He said that he was not frightened any longer to use the words, 'I need you'. He said he knew he needed his sessions. At times he felt that he simply put his head down and made a dash for the next session. That's what made holiday breaks and weekends so difficult. His trouble was that when he needed something or somebody he wished to have them always available and he would like 'things to last forever'.

Once Daniel stopped projecting jealousy into Maria he at times experienced intense jealousy and envy in the transference relationship. On one occasion he told me that he had followed some teenage girls as they were coming out of a 'prestigious school' very close to the Tavistock. He had walked so close to them that he could hear what they were talking about. At first he was very derogatory, saying that they were just chatting and giggling like geese and what they seemed to be talking about was how early or how late they were allowed to return home. We knew from the time of his visit to the house in north-west London that he was certain in his mind that my children, the children who had been fathered by my attractive grey-haired, educated and affluent husband, had certainly attended prestigious schools and were probably now attending prestigious universities. He could see that his 'jaundiced eavesdropping' on the girls chatting had something to do with my privileged children.

The issue of being given a time to return home brought us back in touch with a subject that had emerged on previous occasions, for instance when he told me that there was never a meal time in his family. Indeed, he said, there was also never a time set for him to get back home. He would be playing in the street and all the children would be called

back home for supper but he could stay out until well after dark, nobody would bother. Only occasionally, when father decided to stop drinking, generally for a week at the most, he would become extremely strict and set a bedtime for his children at 7.30 pm in the middle of the summer. Daniel remembered having to go to bed and hearing children still playing outside in the long summer evenings.

It was true he envied children who had parents who could set bedtimes and mealtimes. He was sure that was the way Maria had been brought up. He was in touch with his wish for the presence of a reliable paternal function, by contrast with his natural father. But he could also see that this was the same 'function' that brought about the end of sessions after exactly 50 minutes, which gave him firm holiday dates and firm session times and which established that he was not free to choose at what time of the day he could come to see me. He became keenly aware at this time of the conflict between the need for a reliable parental couple and the ambivalent feeling that this engendered. Such feelings were very clearly expressed in a dream such as the one of the murder on the shore of the barren island.

As Daniel gradually became aware that I was both someone he valued and someone whom he could passionately hate, he became more able to preserve contact with me in between sessions and also during breaks. He said that he did not feel any longer that he 'totally lost touch with me'. I think I was more 'together' in his mind and he often used this word when he said that whatever happened I always seemed to 'keep my cool'. I was at times so 'infuriatingly together'.

#### Some Shift in the Direction of the Depressive Position

At a time not far from a recent summer holiday break, Daniel came to his session saying that he had really made an effort not to be 'self-centred like his mother' and to help his girlfriend because she was in a state. She had not passed an exam for which she had worked very hard and she felt very upset indeed. Maria had taken out her rage on Daniel. She had accused him of being self-centred saying that she felt so neglected. She was screaming and crying and Daniel felt that she was really trying to say 'all the most hurtful things'. She had said for instance, 'You can go to your sessions and let things out - you have got someone you can talk-to. In the past you used to stuff yourself and throw up and now you can go and throw up all your troubles at the Tavistock'. Daniel had felt very tempted to deliver a little speech to Maria saying that his sessions had nothing to do with throwing up, but with his attempt to become a

better person. Instead of saying so, he had tried to 'be a better person'. He had tried to 'keep his cool' and he was surprised because he had actually managed to 'feel together'.

He had told Maria that she could take the exam again and it was not the end of the world. He remembered how many times he had come to a session feeling that it was 'big drama', and by the time the session ended, it didn't feel any longer like the end of the world, it just felt like the end of the session. Daniel thought that he had perhaps felt so 'together' because Maria was 'in bits', but she had been grateful to him and told him, in the evening, that he had really been helpful 'for a change'. They had gone out for a Chinese meal and they had a lovely evening and a lovely night – lovely night was said with an element of innuendo.

Maria soon regained her good humour and Daniel told me on one occasion that she had helped him to make fun of himself and of his need for tidiness by imitating his voice: 'Oh – don't you know what those wardrobes are for – always leaving your things around'. Daniel said he had become aware of the fact that he had a tendency to assign roles to people just as his mother used to do. He had decided he was going to be the tidy one and Maria the messy one. He was now trying not to get into 'frenzies of tidying up' and was surprised to see that Maria was actually perfectly capable of taking on the task herself and she was not so messy after all. She was just not a 'control freak'.

I tried to figure out in what respect Daniel might have also implemented a role assignment within our relationship. As we were approaching a holiday break, I said that I felt that, although we both knew holiday breaks were worth thinking about, he seemed to have assigned to me the role of talking about them in advance, as if he felt that that was, perhaps, part of my 'script'. Daniel said I really had a point there and told me it was strange that I should mention that because, in the morning, he had been thinking that before the break started, we should 'draw the map of the minefield together'. It was true that he always left that job to me. 'Maybe', he said, and the joke felt a little strained, he could try to learn my lines and to be my understudy. Then he added: 'I know I need to make a joke of it because it *is* important'. There was still a risk that when the holiday started he might make a dash for the first book on the reading list for next year at college or get himself again into some 'passion for schedules'. Yes – he knew it was because he was so obviously completely out of control of my schedule, of my coming and going.

I will conclude this chapter with a verse Daniel quoted, reminiscing

about the time when he felt he would never miss anybody because there was 'plenty of food in the supermarkets and the libraries were full of books'. He was aware that something had changed in him from that time, because a verse he had read some days previously had left a really deep impression on him.

The verse was: 'What you really love remains, the rest is dross'.