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Psychic Structure and the Capacity to Mourn: Why Narcissists Cannot Mourn

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Abstract:

Mourning is a critical developmental process which is typically arrested in narcissistic characters. This arrest is understood in environmental terms, in relation to the narcissist's parent's inability to “*survive*” expressions of archaic aggression, and in intrapsychic terms, in relation to a pathological fusion of psychic structure that is perpetuated by splitting when parental “survival” fails, and consequently, neutralization of aggression is not achieved.

It is proposed that such pathology of psychic structure is most vividly evident in a failure to engage in intrapsychic or interpersonal dialogue. Both neutralization of aggression and the affective mourning that can unfold with such neutralization, are seen as critical factors in determining whether a process of self-integration proceeds, as opposed to the continuance of an undifferentiated self with its pathological fusions and splits. The capacity for repression, self-agency, symbolization, and sustained good object internalization are all seen as component features of such a self-integration process.

Keywords: developmental mourning, narcissism, object relations view, capacity to mourn, aggression neutralization, affective mourning, self-integration, object internalization.

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Still falls the Rain –
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss---
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to the hammer-beat
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb:
Still falls the Rain

In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and the human brain
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain
At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.
Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy on us---
On Dives and on Lazarus:
Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain---
Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side:
He bears in His Heart all wounds,---those of the light that died,
The last faint spark
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad uncomprehending dark,
The wounds of the baited bear---
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh... the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain---
Then--- O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune---
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree

Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world,---dark-smirched with pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain---
"Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee"

Still falls the Rain, Edith Louisa Sitwell, 1940 (*Fire of the Mind*, 1976).

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Edit Sitwell's poem, *Still falls the Rain*, was written during the bomb raids of World War II (Glendinning, 1981). The author uses a conscious analogy between the malignant "rain" of bombs and the chill of never-ending bleak and damp weather. When examining metaphors pertaining to the unconscious, one can sense the horror of perpetual tears that can never be spent or healed because they are externalized, split off from the internal locus of the self. Sitwell's "rain" is black with inner demons that have been externalized, but not neutralized. There is no assimilation of the demons into the self as the poem progresses, only the wish that the idealized Christ figure may ultimately triumph over the persecutory rain, and provide a haven from the storm:

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain---

"Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee" (Edith Sitwell, 1940).

Edith Sitwell's life and work both reflect the psychic structure attributes, and descriptive characteristics of a person with a narcissistic character disorder. This is evident throughout her poetic work, and her biographies: *The Sitwells* by John Pearson (1978) and *A Unicorn among Lions* by Victoria Glendinning (1981). Viewed through two major biographies, Edith Sitwell is always in battle with her critics, while also continually seeking *allies* – namely those who she sees as subordinate to her own status, patronizingly labeling them, the "troops." (Pearson, 1978, p. 403) The poet is portrayed by both her biographers as being obsessed with who is currently insulting her. Her obsessions involve a preoccupation with sustaining the regal air of a queen, while retaliating against all those that she interprets as impertinent upstarts, i.e., all those who injure and threaten both her and her image. Any literary critic who does not express total adulation and adoration of her work is immediately ranked as one of the insolent minions. These ascriptions to Sitwell's character are purely descriptive. But it is in the structural aspects within the descriptive mode of the poet's literary work that reveals both the poignant pain of self-injury, and the grandiose defense against contact designed to prevent the opening to the pain, symptomatic of the narcissistic character. Sitwell generally appears as the prophet who oversees the injured victims and the demon aggressors of her work. She is all above the self-injuries and archaic sadism of her internal world, remaining defended in the manic defense stance of the grandiose self.

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Given Sitwell's narcissistic character, we might look at the above poem as an expression not only reflective of its sole author's psyche, but as suggestive of the plight of other narcissists as well. Perhaps we can hypothesize that the poet cries tears in "Still Falls the Rain" in such an externalized form, that any organic locus of process and healing is obviated. This seemingly makes the tears perpetual, thus such rain may be seen as symbolic for the psychological state of all those encased in the prison of the narcissistic character disorder.

The Narcissistic Character

Why do narcissistic people fear sadness so greatly? One of my narcissistic patient's comments indicated that she feared being engulfed within an endless anguish, contained by a perpetual rain of tears that would fail to reach surcease or relief. "But it doesn't do anything," she snapped at my suggestion that she might feel the need to cry with annoyance in her voice, and her back arched in resistance. "I knew you would say I need to allow myself to cry," she spat out at me, dryly and sarcastically, followed by other curses, with sharp contempt. What did she mean? Did she mean, "it doesn't *do* anything," because nobody would come to comfort her? In her sealed off antagonism, my presence, just my being with her, might possibly be comforting in itself, if she could cry while with me. I was seen as alien, as persecutory, as demanding a performance from her that she couldn't deliver. Her reaction to me was paranoid, but it also made sense if she has no internalized objects that emanated a caring response to her pain. Patients like this generally have been ignored, if not scorned when they have cried as children. So, "what good does it do, what does it get you?" The knowledge that it might bring a connection with one's inner self is rather abstract and seemingly delusional to someone who has no secure objects within the inner self, behind the paranoid schizoid barrier. Also, all those uncried tears from decades of suppressed pain creates a profound fear of opening the flood gates, of opening the Pandora's box and of the engulfing crying that has archaic maternal spider images and overtones. The fantasy of perpetual rain resonates out from an enveloping darkness, with demons graphically embedded in the psychic rain drops.

In considering the psychic structure of the narcissist, imprisoned in a sealed off pain that never yields to mournful sadness and release, we must take the demons seriously. To dismiss them as derivatives of archaic aggression, without considering their meaning in terms of the internal world of object relations, would be a mistake. Studies of such preoedipally arrested

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creative women as Emily Dickinson, Ann Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Diane Arbus and Emily Bronte, as well as Edith Sitwell, reveal malevolent demon lovers as thematic contours within both the creative work and lives of such artists (Kavaler, 1985; 1986; 1988; 1989). Sitwell writes of her demons not only in “Still Falls the Rain,” but also in her other poems, where she depicts her demon lover - her split off *internal father – mother*, as the following: the Midas, the ghost of envy, the black sun, the knight of mail, and as the malignant archaic phallus she sees in the atomic bomb mushroom cloud (Glendinning, 1981; Salter and Harper, 1956; Pearson, 1930).

How do we understand perpetuated demons that resonate in a split off internal world, a world not yet blanketed by repression? This is a world in which early relationships are viscerally felt as demonic, making abstract part-objects appear through externalization. In a narcissistic character, such as Sitwell, part-objects are archaic demons that function as alienated self-fragments.

To understand the archaic world behind demonic part-objects, we must ask how archaic aggression is transformed into neutralized aggression. We must ask how such transformation fails, resulting in a state of perpetual bereavement, or pathological mourning, characterizing psychic or developmental arrest. Like unrelenting rain, psychic arrest brings only darkness and its haunting demonic ghosts.

Parental Survival

Whether we believe that archaic aggression is predominantly instinctual, innate, or largely due to preoedipal trauma, it is the role of the mother-infant (or parent-child) interaction in modifying such aggression that becomes critical. How does the mothering parent “*survive*” infant aggression, or, as Winnicott (1969; 1971) asks, “*survive*” in the sense that parental aggression does not become a mammoth retaliatory demon that haunts the child’s mind? Is such parental survival the key to a capacity for repression to supersede splitting as a mode to deal with demons? Is such parental survival central to neutralizing aggression and to the capacity to mourn? Is such parental survival the key to creating enough pleasurable contact between parent and child so that a normal mourning process such as Mahler’s (1953) *low-keyedness*, can successfully neutralize aggression? If so, parental survival would allow the processing of structure that comes with neutralized aggression, i.e., the processing of part-object components,

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which accrue from the archaic rage reactions of the paranoid schizoid position (Klein, 1935), into the whole object form, which manifests through the critical affects of loss characteristic of the depressive position (Klein, 1946). In a paper on Fairbairn's model of endopsychic structure, Rinsley (1988) points to the mixture of deficit and conflict implied in this model. Deficit is seen in the split off ego fragments and their individually linked infantile object components, with splitting being perpetuated by archaic aggression. Conflict is seen in the area of central ego and its ideal or "*good object*," an area in which neutralized aggression has promoted the neurotic level function of repression. Rinsley believes that archaic aggression disallows for the processing of repression. In other words, archaic aggression perpetuates the impingement of persecutory and intrusive demon part-objects. As Fairbairn is so well articulated, the internal demons of this archaic aggression are continually assaultive, either through relentless attack or through relentless abandoning withdrawal (Guntrip, 1969). They thus demand exorcism. The person who is psychically arrested, and therefore persecuted internally in this way, will, like the bulimic, enact in vicious cycles of swallowing and spitting up a bad object (Kavaler-Adler, 1985; 1986, on Sylvia Plath). The act of "*spitting up*" is a repetitive attempt to exorcise the internal bad parent ghost. By contrast, the "*good enough*" parent's survival allows for internalization of a "*good-enough*" parent, which modifies or neutralizes aggression. Through neutralization of aggression, repression and its higher level defenses develop, and mutual and interactive relatedness are made possible. This parental "survival" can be described in terms of containing aggression, translating the child's needs and fears which are implicit behind the aggression, into an understandable form, and ultimately, in terms of continuing to be available for responsive emotional contact. Sometimes, this involves active modes of engagement on the part of the parent, and sometimes a more receptive attunement. All this is critical to neutralizing aggression. Such "survival" is also critical to modifying splitting and its demons, so that good aspects of the parental object can be felt and sustained through internalization.

Mourning

In addition to parental survival, however, we find another critical factor, namely, the depressive position mourning process. In this mourning process, the distress of loss, induced through separation and frustration is felt with a conjunctive awareness of the good in the object. With neutralized aggression, the child retains a mental imprint of the good part of the object, and

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a conscious impression that may become preconscious or repressed. This retaining of the good object allows for mourning, and mourning in turn allows for the reception, or “taking inside,” of the good object in a sustained form, so that it can be assimilated into the self. It is this process that allows for whole object relationships.

Parental survival and mourning become interactive and complimentary aspects of internalization processed through interpersonal contact. The psychic structure built up through this interpersonal parent-child contact becomes the basis for the kind of intra-psychic structure in the child that has a capacity to process experience through mourning on an ongoing developmental basis. The inner dialogue of the structure allows tears to “do something,” but not just any tears, only tears of mournful sadness that truly come from the inner core of the self, and not from behind a barrier of masochistic aggression turned inward against the self. Masochistic crying and mournful developmental crying are profoundly different. In masochistic crying, the object is still clung to with archaic aggressive rage. In mournful crying, the object is relinquished in the external world, even if only temporarily, and is internalized, thus forming a mental representation or introjection.

The Capacity to Mourn

The interaction of infant and mother during the preoedipal stages of development are prominently featured in recent empirical infant research (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1980; Mahler, 1975; Stern, 1985; Spitz 1983; Brent & Resch, 1987; Beebe & Lachman, 1988). Yet, such observation of the external behavior between mother and infant still requires us to connect external behavior with an internal world. In our theoretical attempts to make such connections, we are faced with deciding how much any innate imprint determines a developmental unfolding with critical stages or sequences; and of hypothesizing how this affects the interactional dialogue observed in the behavior of any unique infant and mother dyad. It is only through such theorizing that we can propose the nature of the internal world or psyche, and specify psychic structure formation. Stern and Lachman translate empirical observations from their own theoretical perspectives, from an interpersonal view and from a self-psychological framework respectively. My own translations utilize the language and conceptual formulations of object relations theory originating with the British object relations theorists. Yet, the aspect of interpersonal dialogue, and the process of its internalization, remains a unilateral pivot of theoretical elaboration. I

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believe that this theoretical pivot can be seen across diverse theories, stemming back to Freud at the time when structural theory first emerged as a new theoretical gestalt. For Freud, observations of oedipal level family interactions lead to the necessary theorizing about psychic structure. Freud developed a theory of triadic structure (Id, Ego, Super Ego), which was related to a proposed development unfolding along the instinctual lines of oral, anal, phallic, and oedipal stages. By contrast, for Margaret Mahler, a proposed symbiotic phase of development became a prominent feature of a theory that views internal psychic structure as forming only as separation proceeds, and differentiated self and object image representations are formed. This is followed by degrees of integrating consolidation. Melanie Klein's theory also proposes a developmental sequence in which degrees of differentiation proceed along with integration, but rather than differentiation proceeding and prompting integration, differentiation becomes dependent on an effective process of integration that stems from the internal mourning, and from the related reparative interpersonal interactions of the depressive position. Instead of the triadic dialogue of Freud, or the internalized dyadic dialogue of Mahler, Klein's theory proposes a dialogue within the internal world, which takes place between an internal object and the person who is containing it, the latter figuratively "*speaking*" with the internal object at an unconscious level.

Despite the differences in all these developmental theories, there is one common denominator, and that is the common denominator of an internal dialogue of proposed psychic structures or personas that generally re-articulates a child-parent interaction. For Freud, the superego parent speaks with the id child through the ego. For Mahler, the parent's "*object representation*" speaks with the child "*self-representation*," and this is similar to Winnicott's inference about psychic structure (Winnicott, 1958). For Klein, the parent "*internal object*" speaks to the "*child*" in the adult through unconscious "*Phantasy*" (Kleinian spelling). Also, each theorist implies that internal dialogue is both the cause and the result of progressive degrees of psychic integration. For Klein, such dialogue only comes about at the depressive position where persecution lessens. For Mahler, it comes about following symbiosis. For Freud, it comes about with the establishing of a secure super ego at latency. Yet, for all three theorists, without such internal dialogue, externalized reenactments are consequential, prohibiting internal integration. Without integration proceeding, compulsive externalization is perpetuated.

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Psychic Structure and the Mourning Process

George Pollock (1975), of the Chicago School of Psychoanalysis, also relates dialogue to psychic structure when he suggests that it is the dialogue between two internal structures that is responsible for the dynamics of the mourning process and its ongoing developmental results, i.e., differentiation and integration. He proposes an ego processing a “self” through the affects of loss, disillusionment, etc., as constituting a mourning process that is fundamental to all psychic change and growth. Apparently he is assigning the “ego” a higher level of consciousness than the self, and this might be likened to an internalized parent in the form of an “ego,” and an infant “self” that is ever in infancy with fresh experience. Yet, in any case, he is proposing an internal or intrapsychic dialogue as providing the conditions for the affective mourning process to proceed and to promote structural change. I am suggesting that if there is no internal dialogue between his internal persona structures, no mourning process can successfully occur.

Other theorists have also implied, through their attempts to describe the psychic structure of the narcissistic personality disorder, that internal psychic structural dialogue is necessary for mourning and its developmental consequences. In his book on *Narcissism and Character Transformation*, the Jungian analyst Nathan Schwartz-Salant (1982), as well as George Pollack of the self-psychology school, speaks of an “ego” and a “self,” describing that these two structures seem fused in the narcissist’s pathological state. The Jungian ego is a psychic structure that must disengage from a more adaptive and undifferentiated form of character “*persona*” to become “*a carrier of personal identity*” (Schwartz-Salant, 1982, p. 70). In normal development, it minors the more innate soul-like “*self*,” but they are not fused together as they are within the narcissist. James Masterson also refers to this fusion, as he adopts Margaret Mahler’s theory and integrates it with object relations. He writes of a fusion between the “*self*” and the “*object*” in the narcissistic character which precludes differentiated self and object representations. He speaks of the failure in deflation of the infantile grandiose self, proposing such failure at the time of the practicing period for the child who ends up with the narcissistic form of developmental arrest. This failure of deflation can then be seen to lead to a lack of self and object differentiation during rapprochement, with a consequent failure of differentiated internalizations. Thus, psychic structure personas are not created and cannot engage in dialogue. Only in treatment, according to Masterson, can the primal fusion become unfused. This depends on the ability of the narcissistic

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patient to go through a painful primitive form of mourning that Masterson refers to as an “*abandonment depression*.” This can only be done with the support of the therapist, who provides an external dialogue, where the internal dialogue is lacking. In this way, a painful form of developmental mourning can proceed and pave the way for the normal developmental mourning process to continue throughout life. Although Masterson only deals with the critical separation-individuation phases of preoedipal development, and does not refer to any further developmental mourning process, the consolidation of differentiated self and other representations through rage, loss, and grief allows for the resumption of an internal dialogue that, according to George Pollack’s view, as well as my own, leads to developmental mourning. Such differentiation into dialoguing psychic structure personas seems to be necessary for the capacity to mourn without an external other (such as the therapist), to occur. Thus, for example, it would be necessary to be able to mourn through the creative process. Otto Kernberg (1975) also attributes fusion rather than differentiated internal dialogue, to the narcissistic character. He speaks of a pathological grandiose self being formed through what he actually refers to as a “*re-fusion*” of self, idealized object and idealized self. Although he, unlike Masterson, who draws on Mahler’s theory of primary symbiosis, speaks of “*re-fusion*” and not of a primary primitive fusion, the theoretical psychodynamic point is essentially the same. Whichever comes first, the chicken of primary symbiosis, or the egg of symbiotic fusion following frustration, the perpetual psychodynamics of the narcissistic character are the same for both Masterson and Kernberg. Since Kernberg draws on Kleinian theory, he seems to acknowledge mourning of tolerated guilt, grief, and loss, as essential to the cure of narcissistic character, and he refers to the failure on a capacity to mourn in discussing his cases of narcissistic patients. Yet, Kernberg credits the interpretation of primitive aggression (or envy) as being the main contribution of the analyst to promoting such mourning. He de-emphasizes the interpersonal environment as a container for the mourning process to take place, although he refers to interpretative interventions that promote affect experience as providing a containing function (Kernberg, 1989). In contrast to Kernberg, I believe that the entire interpersonal environment must be emphasized. Interpretive avenues to contact are one aspect of this environment. Since a fusion of intrapsychic structure prohibits narcissistic patients from mourning on their own, the presence of another feeling human being must be emphasized to provide the kind of “*going-on-being*” referred to by

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Winnicott (1965). The kind of interpretive work referred to by Kernberg can only be successful when done in an atmosphere of interpersonal holding or containment.

Edith Sitwell as the Narcissistic Character Who Can't Mourn

The previous discussion confirms the need for internal structure dialogue to allow mourning to proceed without an external object providing ongoing affective contact. It is no surprise that Edith Sitwell's inability to mourn is revealed to parallel her inability to write dialogue in her literary work. Edith Sitwell's chief biographer, Victoria Glendinning (1981), writes that Sitwell could never write dialogue in her literary work, neither in her prose nor in her poetry. Instead, what is seen in her poems, in particular, are split fragments of self-victims and masculine-paternal object demons. Both the self and object themes are fused and fragmented. Part-object preoedipal demon lover themes are seen in her literary work, along with occasional references to the demon lover idealized image counterparts, e.g., the beleaguered Christ. Instead of interactive beings of equal status as whole objects, sadomasochistic themes of sadistic abuse and indifference prevail. No mutuality is seen. The poem "Still Falls the Rain" is one such exposition in which the part-object demons of the split off internal world are seen, in the midst of an endless stream of external tears that symbolize the perpetual bereavement of pathological mourning. This perpetual and thus pathological mourning, does not evolve from the internal nuclear locus of the self, but rather originates from a split off enactment. With no true mourning, the traumatized core of the self remains sealed off, and object relations remain split off within the internal world. Tears that do not come organically from within do not heal. They do not emanate from an aware aliveness of the object in its responsive and "good" interactive form.

In Edith Sitwell's biographies, readers can see the early interpersonal relationships that lie behind the poet's developmental arrest in intrapsychic dialogue and its corresponding arrest in mourning and creative work dialogue. The biographers, Glendinning (1981) and Pearson (1978), both report a continual rejection of this female poet by both of her parents. Unavailability, emotional abuse, and critical failures in basic empathy are reported by both these biographers, and by the biographical memoirs of Edith Sitwell's brother, Osbert (*Left Hand, Right Hand*, 1977) as well as by Edith Sitwell herself (see *Taken Care Of*, 1965).

The Therapist as a Transitional Object

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When an external transitional object is provided by the therapist, mourning can begin to occur by those traumatically arrested in a pathological mourning state. However, this requires that the therapist survive, that she/he remain open to contact, and that she/he responsively interact, as the preoedipal mother failed to do. Part of such survival also means confronting and interpreting object relations reenactments so that such acting out can be converted to alive affect, and thus unto contractual relations in the present, as mourning proceeds. Survival also means setting limits to provide the structure which will allow this to occur. When the therapist, as the transitional object, does not survive in this way, a reparative “abandonment depression” mourning process cannot emerge.

When such a transitional stage object, and its holding environment structure (Modell, 1977) are not available to allow such a process to take place, any preoedipally arrested person, and particularly a narcissistic character, cannot convert the splitting and devaluation which is symptomatic of pathological mourning, into a normal developmental mourning process. They need the dialogue with the object to sustain awareness of the good aspects of the object, and to allow tolerance of the painful aspects of guilt and loss that are often felt as devastating regret. Since such characters have not securely internalized a whole object, they need an external object acting as a transitional object, to allow the dialogue leading to mourning.

Normal Developmental Mourning

As Margaret Mahler (1975) commented about infants in her seminal study of mother-child interaction, the capacity to tolerate feeling the effect of sadness requires a strong ego. With sufficient or “good enough” object contact during all the preoedipal phases, and particularly during the critical phases of separation- individuation, a child will generally develop a capacity to tolerate sadness, all constitutional factors being equal. What results is a form of normal developmental mourning during the period of separation that Mahler denotes as “*low keyedness*.” Although aggressive aspects of this mourning definitely appear also, as when tantrums and whimpering demands accompany the conflict of being more independent of one’s mother, the ability to tolerate sadness allows self-isolating aggression to turn into an open receptivity to object internalization, culminating in both self and internal world integration. Such normal developmental mourning, during the separation period, can then lead to later states of developmental mourning, as seen during the oedipal period (Loewald, 1962) and adolescence

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(Jacobson, 1964) and even later throughout middle and old age. Generally, assimilating loss leads to change within and beyond these critical developmental stages. Nonetheless if the preoedipal stage of mourning is not reached, incremental stages of mourning during these later developmental stages will not transpire.

Pathological Mourning and the Failure to Use the Creative Process to Mourn

The narcissist gets re-fueled by the audience mirroring admiration, which in turn inflates the infant grandiose self, a grandiose self that becomes pathological when arrested in the adult. Such inflation, generally based more on image than on contact, is quick to empty. Its addictive nature reveals that no mourning and interaction process occurs as nothing internalizes and lasts. The sealed off self cannot mourn, and an internal world without differentiated structural dialogue cannot provide the “*working through*” process entailed in mourning. If differentiated psychic structure is needed for mourning, it certainly makes sense that a preoedipally arrested woman, such as Edith Sitwell, could not successfully mourn and repair herself through the use of the creative process. A stage of perpetual bereavement can be seen as craving an object that one never could fully, or even moderately, have.

The borderline or schizoid character, like the narcissist, illustrates undifferentiated self and object incorporations. Such incorporations exist in a diffused form. Since the ego is built up through developmental identifications, the blocking of such a process by the sealing off of the inner self will result in split off incorporations inhibiting the internal world, rather than integrated internalizations. Therefore, the ego is diffused and fragmented. Consequently, through reenactments with external objects, we can observe in borderline characters all kinds of self and other fusions, with both the self and the object components forming diffuse mixtures. They are mixtures, not integrations. Good and bad self and object components, libidinal and aggressive drive components, and gender related masculine and female attributes, are all jumbled.

Guntrip (1969) has referred to libidinal and antilibidinal interactions that correspond to sadomasochistic scenes between internal abusive parents and victimized children. He infers this from the external reenactments of his patients. Yet, my own clinical experience supports the descriptions of Kernberg (1975), who, when examining his clinical experience with borderline patients, determines that dramatic abuse reenactments can exist side by side with self and other

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idealized fusions, or with the imprints of fragmented interactions formed from early interpersonal experiences of the past. These fragments of interactions have been preserved and distorted. With borderline patients they are distorted into extreme angelic or demonic form, since whole self and object elaboration has not been developmentally reached.

These fragmented interactions, in which self and object are partially fused, cannot contribute to differentiated ego and self-structure sufficient to process mourning. This is even truer because with such preoedipal personalities, the affect opened up for mourning would be particularly potent in its archaic form. It is this archaic potency, due to preoedipal trauma, which makes James Masterson's use of the term "abandonment depression" (1976; 1981) particularly apt to describe such affect. Since mother-child bonding has been traumatically disrupted during the critical stages of self-formation referred to in Margaret Mahler's schema of "*separation-individuation*," the archaic affect has an overwhelming potency akin to traumatic parental abandonment. Thus, the normal developmental flow towards mourning is disrupted. This aborted mourning reflects Melanie Klein's descriptions of schizoid and manic defense. Splitting processes are seen, as are accompanying projective- identifications, which employ the split off self and object components. Manic warding off, often seen in a grandiose position of paranoid rage, in which the subject presents himself from above—i.e., about the injuries or shame and guilt laden aspects of the self—prevents affect contact required for mourning.

In my earlier papers (Kavaler-Adler, 1985; 1986; 1989), as well as in *The Compulsion to Create* (1993), I propose that in the creative preoedipal personality, this aborted mourning can be seen in the dynamics of the characterization, while plot is seen in the creative process form; for writers, their literature, whether in poetry or novel form, reveals this aborted mourning. If the object that is potentially processed by the ego is that of the father or a masculine derivative of the father, as it often is for reactive women, aborted mourning may be reflected in the angelically idealized or demonically devalued form of the father characterization. Thus, the demon lover theme, often seen in literary work, can actually reflect both the failure of the mourning process, and the failure of its aspects of self-reparation and self-integration. The father characterization can reflect the aborted state of self-development, because the self and father-object would mutually fail to be processed through a differentiated ego. Therefore, preoedipally arrested writers, who have not been able to psychically process mourning, as shown through their failure

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to process mourning through creative work, illustrate this failure – through repeated themes of male muses and archaic aggressive demons. These muses and demons can be seen to display father-mother personality fusions of an alternatively idealized or villanized form. These become the perseverated inhabitants of the internal world of the pathological mourning state, a world symbolically depicted in Edith Sitwell's poem "Still Falls the Rain."

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