

Psychoanalytic Inquiry
Vol 26 No 2 Apr-May 2006

OWEN RENIK

struggles with Ali. Power was surely the central matter about which they negotiated. Even at the beginning, when Ali suggested that Holly preceded her up the stairs to show off her legs and Holly denied it, the important issue was power, not sexual arousal. To my mind, there was a measure of truth in Ali's complaint that Holly was "a controlling monster." Ali brought a lively capacity for envy with her a priori, but certain elements of Holly's approach exacerbated Ali's envy unnecessarily. How analyst and patient found their way out of this impasse is the instructive story of Holly's successful analysis with Ali. It is a pertinent account of what Holly terms an intersubjective exchange. It is also an account of how Holly and Ali negotiated a series of emotional experiences from which Ali (and Holly as well, though that was an elective bonus) learned some crucial lessons—many of them never explicitly identified and examined.

I'm grateful to Holly for sharing the story with us, giving us the possibility of expanding our clinical awareness by interacting with her clinical experience—including what some might call her errors. We do well to remember, though, that so-called errors are part of every successful treatment. In clinical analysis, it is not the analyst's job to be right all the time; the analyst's job is to facilitate a productive learning process for the patient. Similarly, with respect to an article published in an analytic journal, it is not the author's job to be right all the time; the author's job is to stimulate a productive learning process for the reader. In my judgment, Holly can count both her analysis with Ali and the article she wrote about that analysis jobs well done.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, F. and French, T. (1946) *Psychoanalytic Therapy: Principles and Applications*. New York: Ronald Press
- Frank, K. (1997) The role of the analyst's inadvertent self-revelations. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 7:281-314.
- Weiss, J. (1998) Unconscious plan and unconscious conflict. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8:443-447.

388 Market St. Ste. 1010
San Francisco, CA 94111
Odenrik@aol.com

Affective Honesty and Compassion Come in Many Forms: Discussion of "Love (and Hate) With the Proper Stranger: Affective Honesty and Enactment," by Holly Levenkron, L.I.C.S.W.

MALCOLM OWEN SLAVIN, Ph.D.

Holly Levenkron's work with her patient, Ali, beautifully illustrates one way that a creative analyst makes superb use of her own experience to communicate and negotiate with great affective honesty. Holly's analytic style emphasizes the effective use of a particular kind of self-disclosure and a way of thinking about intersubjectivity and enactment associated with the contemporary Relational movement. Yet, it may be Holly's personal willingness to allow the analytic relationship to profoundly destabilize and influence her that most engages Ali in their work.

An imaginary analytic scenario is described with an analyst, Dr. X, who like Holly is destabilized by Ali but whose thinking about intersubjectivity and enactment emphasizes an empathic immersion in Ali's experience of the analytic relationship. In contrast to Holly, Dr. X focuses primarily on grasping and interpreting the adaptive strivings that animate Ali's differently organized subjective world.

The underlying capacity to acknowledge and use the analyst's own version of the patient's issues may also characterize analyses such as that of the

Malcolm Owen Slavin, Ph.D. is a founder, supervising analyst, and chair of the post-graduate fellowship program at the Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis (MIP). He is a Contributing Editor for *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* and is on the Editorial Board of the *International Journal for the Psychology of the Self*. His book *The Adaptive Design of the Human Psyche: Psychoanalysis, Evolutionary Biology and the Therapeutic Process* (written with Daniel Kriegman) was published by Guilford Press in 1992.

hypothetical Dr. X—in style that are more explicitly “interpretive” (less confrontative) than Holly’s work. These two contrasting approaches highlight the wide range of ways to think about intersubjectivity, enactment, and affective honesty in the analytic process.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING AND VALUABLE THINGS THAT HAS happened to me in recent years is to have the opportunity to supervise a great many analyses both at my own institute and at other training programs around the country. Observing and playing a part in so many intimate analytic relationships—so many unfolding lives—has affirmed some of my deepest beliefs about the *mutuality of influence* in a fruitful analysis, and *disconfirmed*—or called into question—many of the notions I’ve held about *how* the process of analytic influence needs to take place.

Some of the themes that emerge in any productive analysis—the human, existential challenges faced, the mutual quality of the struggle, the reciprocal nature of change, seem *virtually universal*. Conversely, universal notions of analytic technique—that is, prescriptive notions (mine or anyone’s) about how analysts *should* behave—usually dissolve in the face of the almost infinitely variable forms that emerge in the lived, creative realities of different analytic couples. I am not sure if, unlike Tolstoy’s “unhappy families,” failed analyses turn out to be more monotonously alike than successful ones. I am, however, increasingly confident that fruitful analyses ultimately rely on the capacity of each analytic couple to construct unique, creative solutions to their own versions of the universal, adaptive challenges of the analytic crunch (Russell, unpublished). In short, happy analyses seem to turn out to be almost endlessly, unpredictably, varied.

*Affective Honesty, Compassion, and the Patient's
Impact on the Analyst*

Holly Levenkron’s beautifully written narrative of her relationship and heartfelt, inventive work with Ali is clearly one of those creatively unfolding analyses. As such, I read it primarily as the story of how Holly experiences, grows, and communicates around several major conflicts that emerge in their relationship. Holly wrestles with what feels to her like Ali’s violation of, or misreading of, Holly’s subjectivity (her desires, her marriage, even her bodily vulnerability, and, ultimately, her mortality). Holly

does not squeeze the experience of those subjective clashes into any of the easily available technical or theoretical categories that can sometimes give us the illusion of understanding and correctly responding—at the expense of remaining painfully, intimately present with our patients. Her patient, Ali, appears to feel the deep, personal giving that this entails. Although we don’t hear its dénouement, or how the patient’s life actually changes, Ali does seem to open herself more fully to Holly and, as time goes by, to being influenced by the analytic process.

What I am describing about Holly’s approach is, in outline, the kind of responsiveness that I think Holly refers to when she speaks of “affective honesty.” I am with her in spades so far as she emphasizes and promotes this central aspect of the analyst’s struggle for self-awareness and genuineness in communicating with her patient. Indeed, as I see it, Holly paints an extraordinarily vivid picture of the universal, reciprocal, emotional opening up that, in my view, is implicitly called for by the patient in many intersubjective clashes in analytic relationships.

It is, however, a little harder for me to feel as fully in agreement with Holly when she couples her superb grasp of the importance of “affective honesty” with what can be read as (1) her tendency to equate a certain type of *confrontation* (vs. interpretation) as necessarily the most effective means to achieve it (e.g., the discussion of response to the first crisis with Ali over looking at her legs, and the conclusions); and (2) the related implication that deliberate, manifest assertions of the analyst’s subjectivity—as it differs from that of the patient (albeit, selectively, Holly makes clear)—is quite as universally a part of the enacted communications that convey the analyst’s “compassion,” and even the patient’s “impact” on the analyst.

Let me be totally clear. The elements of analytic communication—affective honesty, compassion, impact on the analyst—that Holly privileges are, as I see it, absolutely central and vital. These qualities constitute much of the universal, deep relational structure of a useful analysis—beyond, in my view, manifest differences in style and technique. Holly’s responses to Ali stylistically resemble the work of analysts like Bromberg, Davies, Ehrenberg, Hoffman, and Renik, and, in my view, seem to convey these universal human values as fully and effectively as we see (unfortunately, not commonly) in analytic work. Yet, if we read Holly as implying that various other ways of conceptualizing the intersubjective clash with Ali and responding to it would—for other analysts—necessarily be experienced as “absenting” themselves from the experience with Ali in ways that “would have lost her”, I am not sure that, as a general principle, I would fully agree.

Holly believes that any analyst working with Ali without engaging in Holly's particular kind of expressive confrontation might "lose her." So it might be useful to look at the story of Ali and Holly to envision other ways of making and sustaining an analytic relationship that may be usefully practiced by different analysts in different "analytic couples." Is there a certain range of therapeutically fruitful—yet still profoundly "affectively honest"—styles of response that are less confrontative than Holly's and the tradition she shares? Are these other relational styles embedded in slightly different views of intersubjectivity?

Holly says that she is drawing on multiple meanings of intersubjectivity, though primarily those of Benjamin. As I see it, Holly's basic assumptions seem fundamentally compatible with Benjamin's (1990) developmental version of "intersubjectivity" in which there is a universal need to transcend the dynamic of domination/subjugation that is assumed to be intrinsic to the problem of Otherness. In contrast, Holly's intersubjective sensibility shares less with the self-psychological version of intersubjectivity of Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood (1987), in which manifest, intersubjective clashes (and the types of enactments they may entail) are seen as rooted in differing subjective worlds, frames of meaning, and types of self-organization. There is no assumption here that intersubjective clashes are derivative of a presumed universal, relational power dynamic. I'll try briefly to spell out these issues by imagining some of the ways other analysts who envision intersubjectivity differently might conceivably have responded to Ali.

Holly's Legs: Responding to What Appears to be an Envious (Coercive) Effort to "Take" From the Analyst

Starting with her depiction of her encounter with Ali on the staircase and her own complex inner process following it, Holly's work seems to me to be an excellent example of one way in which a resourceful, creative analyst makes use of destabilizing clashes between her subjectivity and that of her patient. She widens her access to her own inner experience and becomes aware of an important interactive dynamic between them. The process flows like this:

Holly feels misunderstood about Ali's implication that Holly wants to exhibit her legs, yet is unable to perform what will inevitably seem like a defensive denial, or, as she feels it, an evasion (perhaps cast in the form of

an "interpretation") of such desire. After considerable inner struggle to become more fully aware of the range of her own feelings, Holly responds to Ali in a way that communicates both her sense of Ali's larger experience of deprivation, and Holly's view that Ali believes she will "never get anything unless [she] takes it." Holly then explains that for her personally as well as, it is implied, for most people, being approached in this grabby, preemptory way will be unlikely to produce the giving response that Ali desires; rather, it will provoke from Holly and, potentially, most others in Ali's life, a reactive urge to withhold.

This communication seems to touch Ali deeply. She cries, initially feels abandoned, seems reassured by Holly's heartfelt disclaimer of any intent to reject her, and finally tells Holly how meaningful the episode was. Her response also seems to be profoundly centering for Holly. It has allowed her to show Ali something of the live, immediate, internal struggle in which Holly is engaged: that is, sensing Ali's pain and caring for her, yet feeling cut off by Ali's aggressive demands from her own acknowledged inner desire to give freely.

As I see it, this interaction—viewed in the context of their relationship and of Holly's inner experience—is a beautiful example of what Holly advocates as "affective honesty" and compassionate communication. Although she doesn't spell it out, I think Holly implies (and my own experience corroborates) that in experiencing her complex impact on the analyst in this emotional context, Ali is also moved to reflect more clearly and usefully on herself.

The Meaning of Enactment Around Envy, Hate, and Love Through a Nonrelational Lens

As I read and savor Holly's bold and thoughtful confrontation, I nevertheless find myself imagining productive interactions between Ali and other hypothetical analysts unfolding in a variety of ways. Some might sound like the confrontation around envy and coercion but actually mean something very different to Ali. Others might sound manifestly different from Holly's words and yet convey much of what I see as some of the most critical and universally applicable aspects of Holly's approach: its hard-won affective honesty, compassion, and expressive depiction of the patient's impact on the analyst.

It's easy to imagine many less relational analysts responding to Ali's comments about her legs (or the equivalent) in a fashion that initially sounds as if it were conveying some of the same content but deriving from a totally different analytic paradigm. For example, the Kleinians often focus on patients' communications that strike the analyst as intending to "coerce," a personally expressive response. Typically viewed as "projective identifications," the assumption is that such communications are often rooted in paranoid beliefs about the analyst's intentions and the patient's envious wishes to undermine analytic authority and the analytic process (Bott-Spillius, 1988; Joseph, 1989). I can envision such analysts conveying something that might even sound similar to Holly's confrontative "I wonder if you believe you'll never get anything unless you take it ... envy doesn't work that way."

To be sure, my imagined Kleinian analyst will virtually never follow up the confrontation with a heartfelt assurance like Holly's "I will give it to you if I want to—you just have to let me do it in my own time." While Holly seems to believe she can, in fact, provide some of the love Ali desires, Kleinian views of the dynamics of envy and coercive projective identification would probably interpret Holly's promise to give "in my own time" as failing to identify Ali's entrapment in core, pathological convictions about the destructiveness of her own desires and the belief that the analyst must want to deprive and punish her for them. Encouraging the patient to believe that by modifying her overt behavior—her demandingness—she can fit the analyst's preconditions for giving love, might be seen as reinforcing Ali's belief that, in fact, the analyst does hate her (at least the greedy part of her) and cannot tolerate her rage. In Kleinian terms, the enactment might be seen as an unwitting repetition of a coercive, parental, developmental interaction. In this scenario, Ali remains stuck with a split, paranoid vision of the analyst as either a teasing, depriving Other, or an omnipotent provider of an illusory forgiveness and acceptance. Fully experiencing the world—the breast—as a giving as well as a depriving object and experiencing oneself as genuinely worthy of love cannot come from Holly's candid expression of the conditionality of her love. It can only emerge from the patient's inner confrontation with her own fantasized destructiveness.

To address the destructive side of envy, Kleinian theory both minimizes the power of the analyst's emotional response as an important new, transformative, human reality and at the same time privileges the analyst's theoretical/technical frame as an objective representation of the patient's inner

truth. Holly, on the other hand, is not constrained by a theoretical context that defines the intersubjective analytic relationship (and the powerful, mutual feelings of love and hate in it) as somehow *less real*—or less therapeutically significant—than a presumed set of unconscious fantasies within Ali's mind. In addressing what she, like the Kleinians, sees as the central destructiveness/self-destructiveness in Ali's demanding envy, Holly is less concerned with the possibility that she is engaged in a new form of coercion, a new form of unwitting "pathological enactment." Holly does not conceive of their enactment as a repetition of something omnipotent and old but, rather, as the analyst's creative use of her own emotional responsiveness as the vehicle by which both participants will initially move on to negotiate new meanings.

Perhaps we could narrate Holly's version of the enactment as follows: Initially, Holly suffered Ali's aggressive characterization of her needing to draw Ali's gaze to her legs as a violation of Holly's subjective sense of her own motives as well as a demand for her love. Holly then struggled to find a way for her own subjectivity to "survive" what she experienced as Ali's misconstruals of her identity by recognizing something more basic in her experience: the conflict over giving and withdrawing that Holly feels stirred in her, and the way this conflict seems to provoke a painful inhibition of her own positive responsiveness. Holly then created her own vehicle for expressing her psychological survival in the form of a confrontation that communicates both her love and her hate for Ali as well as her view of their conflict is a clash of interpersonal strategies for negotiating affective responses. Holly then communicates from her "recentered" vantage point with a new offer: greater responsiveness from Holly (and, potentially, the world at large) in exchange for a shift by Ali towards a less aggressive negotiating strategy.

Holly's ultimate response to Ali emerged from a complex, inner process of internal and interpersonal conflict, a loss of stability and clarity, and, eventually, a recentering around issues in the analytic relationship that had initially destabilized and deeply confused her. I think Holly's capacity to suffer through a period of personal exploration to arrive at a way of understanding and communicating creatively with Ali is at the heart of what is effective in her work. I think, too, that her capacity to arrive at her exceptional affective honesty is somewhat separable from (a) Holly's particular strategy for finding the Other as well as (b) her distinctive form of expressing her Otherness through candid confrontation and negotiated giving. To make clearer what I mean by suggesting that the key elements of what we

see in Holly's process are somewhat separable from the particular content and style of Holly's response, consider how still another analyst might respond in a manifestly very different way to Ali's comments about her wanting her to see Holly's legs.

*Affective Honesty, Confrontation, and Interpretation in an
Alternative Intersubjective Context*

Imagine this time an analyst who, like Holly, feels that her subjectivity is misread by Ali and who senses, as well, the aggressive quality in Ali's effort to coerce her into admitting to seductive intent by showing her legs. Suppose this analyst finds herself initially angry, confused, and inhibited. Then, in contrast to Holly's move towards understanding their intersubjective conflict as rooted in Ali's counterproductive negotiating strategy, this other analyst moves into her initial turmoil, perhaps her own deepened "depressive anxiety," in a way that wrenches her away from her own subjective center—away even from the intensity, with which she bristles at Ali's characterization of her erotic narcissism. In the course of this, "analyst X," we'll call her, realizes that there may be fundamental and radical differences in how she and Ali have been organizing the whole experience of their struggle.

A different set of meanings emerge: What is being "enacted" between Ali and analyst X is seen as actually initiated by a striving on Ali's part to communicate an elemental need to establish and affirm the realness, aliveness, and nonexploitativeness of the connection between them. Ali's "desire to be the object of Holly's desire" (a need that Holly identifies but does not stress) is seen by analyst X as an attempt to find the erotic response that Ali sorely missed with her father but to find it through a feisty self-assertion rather than by becoming the overprotective caretaker of the other—the price mother had imposed for her love. Analyst X slowly realizes that, in her mother's aggressive demand for merger, it was Ali who felt coerced to have the feelings mother needed from her, quite like analyst X felt coerced to have and acknowledge exactly the feelings that Ali needed her to have.

"Look, Ali," says this hypothetical analyst, "maybe you're actually sensing something in me when you say I wanted you to look at my legs, something that goes beyond what I'm aware of. But, as I think about it, it feels to me that maybe what you're getting at is how much you want to feel that what I feel for you is real and that I really welcome your passion in seeing

me and your feeling for me. My desire would be something powerful that draws me to you in a way that you could never feel from your father. That visceral attraction sometimes feels like *the* thing, the only thing that you can trust will hold me or anyone in a way that can be relied on, over time, no matter what." And somewhere, some time in all this the analyst adds, "when you challenge me in your feisty way to admit it, you don't have to worry about playing once again the good girl who needs to take care of mom." At some point, later—perhaps in the third crisis that Holly describes as revolving around their separations—analyst X adds that, "Sometimes it seems like you feel that the only way we can bear the pain of our separations and stay connected through them is if—as your mother required—the emotions we feel are identical."

For analyst X, attributing these new meanings serves to recognize not only Ali's subjective world but, significantly, to reframe the analyst's self-experience as well. The analyst has understood their differences, their intersubjective clash, in a way that first of all alleviates her sense that her own awareness of her desires needs to be complete and without self-deception. Beyond that, she feels much less the need to provide Ali with responses that, like Holly, analyst X knows that she cannot provide. In her way, she's trying to survive the challenge to her subjectivity through decentering temporarily from it. She does not leave her subjectivity but rather finds in herself—through the act of decentering—a version of the patient's subjectivity (and a reciprocal version of her own) that, in a different way from Holly, she too brings to the negotiating table as an "offer" for Ali.

I hope it is amply clear that I do not offer this alternative as a better response but merely to illustrate how a different intersubjective process might, in its own way, convey the analyst's compassionate struggle and express the patient's impact on her. Apart from what we may judge to be its correctness, or its complex connection to Ali's history, many of us would think of analyst X's response as more "interpretive" than enactive. At least some aspects of her approach are interpretations rooted in analyst X's emotional acceptance of Ali's otherness and her recognition of her patient's distinct, subjective frame of meaning.

Would analyst X be communicating with affective honesty? She might be—since I've imagined her, like Holly, able to let the power of the intersubjective process jostle her loose from her own subjective world and, with her theory as a rough guide, able to recreate her new subjective vantage point. But only, I think, if we imagine analyst X venturing her interpretations in the spirit of showing the patient her (the analyst's) own mind at

work—showing the patient, as Winnicott (1950) put it ironically, the limits of the analyst's own understanding.

Still More Meanings of Enactment and Interpretation

Is analyst X enacting something? Some might say that she is, in effect, communicating through a powerful enactment but an enactment in a very different sense from Holly's. Enactment here might be seen as the *needed enactment* of a developmental scenario in which Ali experiences the recognition of something that has always pervaded her quest for an erotic response as well as for an Other who does not need her, subjectivity either to coincide with or to clash with, Ali's. Therapeutic enactment in this alternative view of intersubjectivity—one that is closer to Stolorow and Atwood's (1987) than it is to Benjamin's (1990)—is in a sense still central. Rightly or wrongly, this view differs from what I believe is, by and large, the message of Holly's narrative: that it is in the confrontation of the inevitable clash of subjectivities that we find the therapeutically more useful conflictual enactments.

Neither the interpretative elements of analyst X's response nor the form of enactment of the needed relationship are derived from the classical wish/defense paradigm, nor do they confront directly the conflicting aspects of the subjectivities of analyst and patient. Rather, the interpretations delineate what are possibly deeper strivings that have been regularly frustrated—strivings for a reliable affective signal, an erotic signal, from the object as well as strivings for a freedom from coercion into mirrored or merged emotions with the Other. All of these strivings may, in a sense, be relatively accessible to Ali's experience but so regularly dressed in her feisty and preemptory demands that they are easily missed by others, as well as by Ali herself.

Ironically, if some "interpretive" understandings such as these are simultaneously personally expressive, so too what is so personally expressive in Holly's more obviously confrontative enactment also becomes "interpretative" in that it, too, is an effort to understand Ali's behavior in light of a larger framework of meaning. In the first of the three intersubjective clashes with Ali that are discussed, Holly conveys to Ali a view of how the interpersonal world universally works much better when we don't try to control it; and, more specifically, how Ali's violation of this norm reduces her chances of getting the world to respond as she wishes. In the third criti-

cal moment, the theme of mortality is introduced by Ali's fears for Holly's health and links up in multiple ways with Holly's personal experiences of loss. What Holly conveys to Ali—though rooted in references to the enacted experience of their relationship—is, again, quite interpretive. Holly confronts the real conflicts between their subjectivities—in this case Ali's implicit expectation that they must be merged in their reactions to separation in order to bear its pain. Yet Holly couples this with a broad, interpretive understanding of how Ali has never been helped by her parents to learn to deal with the inevitable elements of separation and loss as aspects of all attachments.

Observing the interpretive elements in Holly's form of personal expressiveness and the potential for personal expressiveness—affective honesty as well as affective hiding—in different interpretive communications, nudges me toward a view that emphasizes the meaning of the underlying intersubjective message, rather than the manifest form (whether interpretation, confrontation, or enactment) in which the message is delivered. Because the manifest form of the message (i.e., interpretation) is privileged in more traditional analytic views (views that often seem oblivious to inherent performative, enactive meanings), it seems to me that we need to be careful not to compound the problem by valorizing "noninterpretive" vehicles of communication as somehow radically different from interpretive and cognitive messages. In emphasizing interactive (procedural, implicit) communication, we can miss the often profoundly interpretive elements within enactments that take an outwardly personal, expressive form.

Affective Honesty, Impact on the Analyst, and Compassion

As I see it, the core problem that Holly addresses throughout her article is how analysts can best make use of (make into usable self knowledge for their patients) the intersubjective clashes that analysts experience in the analytic relationship, especially those clashes that seem most directly to challenge aspects (sometimes dissociated aspects) of the analyst's own identity. More specifically, Holly addresses how this can be done in a way that the patient experiences as having an impact on the analyst and as affectively honest and compassionate. If I look at my own work and extend that work with data from the (sometimes strikingly) different, yet often strikingly successful, work of my long-term supervisees, I continually see patients like Ali asking us to try to go somewhere—emotionally, imaginatively, eth-

ically—beyond where, in virtually any other human relationship, we are ready to go. The analytic frame, theory, and technique certainly serve us and protect us—to a degree—but in a way that I think actually also puts us in greater emotional jeopardy. Sometimes we must simply tolerate and suffer more—or quite differently—than we do in any other of life's relational contexts.

Whether this comes in the form of a set of crunch-like crises like those of Holly and Ali or simply in the form of subtle, long-term shifts in the building of a relationship, my sense is that analysts are usually called on to revisit their own basic versions of certain core, human existential issues. I am not talking about the analyst's issues in the sense of fixed countertransference problems within the analyst's psyche. Rather, I am referring to a more intersubjective phenomenon: to relate deeply to a given patient, like Ali, many tensions within the analyst may have to be reopened, despite the fact that the analyst may well have resolved those tensions quite sufficiently to function well in the rest of the analyst's life. In one form or another we end up feeling compelled to produce, or share, or bear some view of ourselves—some response—that the patient seems desperately to need.

Ali needs to feel she is desired in a particular way by Holly; she rages at her own idealized view of Holly's life and calls for Holly to experience their identities as merged in the mortal dread of not surviving their separation. But, to maintain her hold on her separate reality (her Otherness)—indeed to extract what in these moments her Otherness she may actually offer to her patient—Holly knows that there is something about Ali's reality, about at least the form in which Ali's needs are expressed, that she *cannot* accept. In its present form, there is something she feels she must *refuse*.

If Holly doesn't find a visible, expressible way to join Ali's reality, there is a sense in which she may abandon her. Yet, it *seems* that to join her Holly must violate her own needs, indeed sometimes whole tracts of her subjective reality and her privacy. Often it can seem as though joining her implies violating the analytic role and the frame itself.

Most analysts will, like Holly, sometimes experience such intersubjective clashes as tormenting, mind-bending, emotional double binds. Theories and favored technical styles—whether they are manifestly confrontative, interpretive, or empathic—are desperately needed at these times to hold and contain analyst and patient while they try to work on the conflict and paradox that pervades these experiences. Yet, while legitimating and sustaining us through these challenges, our theories ultimately can't ob-

secure the fact that those very interactions that may feel coercive may well entail the vital human need to see who we are and what kind of potentially "new" experience our patients can have with us (Aron, 1996; Slavin and Kriegman, 1998).

Patients like Ali can be seen as using a wide range of human interactive capacities (learned relational tactics, projections, role inductions) as ways of compelling us as analysts to experience *ourselves* more fully and, if we are capable, to confront and struggle with real tensions within ourselves. Analysts may reciprocate by opening the *analyst's own versions* of the same human dilemmas (around what is real, love and hate, risk and attachment, mortality, despair) that prove overwhelming for the patient and are, for all of us, ongoing, lifelong human adaptive challenges with which we never cease to grapple (Slavin, 2003, 2005).

Therapeutic Action and the Enactment of Developmental Conflicts

As I see it, this kind of intersubjective negotiation is closely akin to what goes on around key developmental challenges and transitions between parents and children. We know that parents inevitably struggle with (and often defend against struggling with) the reopening of their own inner working solutions to the very issues currently facing their children. The personal reality of this mutual challenge for the analyst and patient is what replicates the intersubjective context—the interactive conditions in the family—in which the patient's less adaptive solutions were shaped.

I think we *become* usable transference versions of parents when in some measure we have, like Holly (or, in a very different manifest style, like my imagined analyst X), allowed ourselves to become a bit lost in our versions of precisely those developmental challenges where our patients' earlier experiences with parental figures in the family failed them. Throughout the crises in this analysis—around whether Holly needed Ali to desire and admire her, around the tensions over Ali's envious idealizations, and around the mortal anxiety over their separations—Ali seemed enabled to revisit and perhaps revise old conclusions about love and identity through a relational process that entailed the analyst's willingness to reopen, revisit, and *suffer anew* something *old* in herself. In the context of this reliving, Holly seemed to rediscover her own genuine, personal conditions for feeling (and not feeling) love, as well as re-recognize the mix-

ture of hate and poignant loss that love inevitably entails. What seemed key was Holly's signaling her willingness to create a more level playing field—a field of two fellow sufferers, each dealing with their own limits, sadness, and hope, bringing to bear their differing strengths and roles to grapple reciprocally with the same human dilemmas. I think of what they did as a type of mutually induced opening up and experiencing of the patient's own struggles in the altered context of a strong and competent Other—an Other who is, nevertheless, able to allow herself to be similarly engaged and open to developmental change.

Analysts may discover their own inner sense of limits, sadness, and hope (a deepened experience by the analyst of depressive anxiety) in different ways. Some, like Holly, will achieve this affective honesty in a way that finds its integrity in expressing itself through selective self-disclosure and confrontation (and, I think, *implicit* interpretation) of what the analyst views as a coercive, driven, false intimacy, and merged mirroring. Other analysts—like my imagined, hypothetical analyst X—will emerge from this deepened depressive anxiety, if you will, through a radical re-experiencing of the patient's needs and a reframed definition of the patient's subjective strivings that, itself, conveys the deep impact the patient has had on the analyst. The meanings of intersubjective conflict between analyst and patient are re-envisioned in terms of the patient's underlying developmental strivings and are, in a sense, *manifested* as interpretations.

I clearly sense that Holly (and I would hope my, imagined analyst X) emerged from this treatment with a clearer, sense of her own perceptions, the validity of her own needs, and a deeper appreciation of both her own agency and mortality. She has arrived here by courageously allowing some of Ali's vigorous intersubjective probes to destabilize her and by wholeheartedly engaging in a mutual process of renegotiating aspects of herself to help Ali find the sources of her own growth.

Although we sometimes speak of a kind of healing of the analyst that goes on when we engage in this way, I think Searles (1975) classic discussion of the patient as "therapist to the therapist" construed this process far too narrowly. While the impact on the analyst may be seen as constituting a therapeutic act, it is perhaps better understood as encompassing an important source of potential adult developmental growth (Levinson, 1976) that may come from a deep, personal engagement in our work. It is this growth, this process of risk and change, and impact out of which Holly's creative work with Ali has crystallized that generates the particular form of affective honesty and compassion we see shining from Holly's work.

REFERENCES

- Aron, L. (1996). *A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Benjamin, J. (1990). Recognition and destruction: An outline of intersubjectivity. In: *Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis*, eds. N. J. Skolnick & S. C. Warshaw, Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, pp. 43–60.
- Bot-Spillius, E. (1988). *Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Joseph, B. (1989). *Psychic Equilibrium and Psychic Change*. London: Tavistock/Routledge.
- Levinson, D. (1976). *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York: Ballantine.
- Russell, P. Crises of emotional growth [a.k.a. the theory of the crunch] (unpublished manuscript).
- Searles, H.F. (1975). The patient as therapist to his analyst. In: *Tactics and Techniques in Psychoanalytic Theory. Volume II: Countertransference*, ed. P. Giovacchini. New York: Aronson, pp. 95–151.
- Slavin, M. (2003). How We Struggle To Become "New Objects": Discussion of Jody Messler Davies' "Whose Bad Objects Are These Anyway? Repetition and Our Elusive Love Affair with Evil." IARPP Conference, Toronto, Canada, January, 2003.
- _____ (2005). Afterword to Chapter, "Why the analyst needs to change; toward a theory of conflict, negotiation and mutual influence in the therapeutic relationship." In: *Relational Psychoanalysis II*, eds. L. Aron. & A. Harris. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, pp. 75–119.
- _____ & Kriegman, D. (1998). Why the analyst needs to change; toward a theory of conflict, negotiation and mutual influence in the therapeutic relationship. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8:247–284.
- Stolorow, R., Brandchaft, B., & Atwood, G. (1987). *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Inter-subjective Approach*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1950). *Hate in the countertransference. Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books. 1975.

112 Lakeview Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
malstavin@aol.com