The challenges to organized connections to spirituality have left us floundering in a secular universe with scarcely any impetus for believing in some system of defined purposefulness or morality. Secular society has depended on scientific proof for the scaffolding for some sense of rightness or truth, while others have attempted to maintain or revive religious notions of morality. Both have leaked into psychoanalytic theories, blocking and stagnating contact with the unknown or unborn. Blame or fault-finding need not come up here; that is the very trap we would want to avoid in seeking out the blockages to our potential sense of purposefulness.

Bion’s realization that the human mind, particularly the infantile mind, survives and grows through maternal reverie changes our concepts of the relationship of the unconscious to the conscious in the way that Copernicus changed our view of the relationship of the earth to the sun. Bion’s conceptions about dreaming the as-yet unknown helps us to make contact with emotional forces that are difficult and painful but that expand the parameters of the contribution of the unconscious as messages from the infinite.

Bion (1997) addresses this contact with the ineffable and the unknown in *Wild Thoughts*. He explains that fear of the unknown plays a significant role over the eons in deeper feelings becoming translated—better yet, transformed. He adds that our efforts can be seen as a clumsy archeological dig. A camel brush is needed, not a shovel. He suggests that wisdom lies fast asleep somewhere in the thickets, somewhere buried, not only—literally—
ly—under the mounds of the ziggurat or the site of Ur of the Chaldees or Knossos, but perhaps with the Oracle at Delphi? Is that voice in any way audible? Bion emphasizes that the full emotional impact of mental life has been profoundly aborted. Spirituality dressed in religious garb reveals profound hunger for meaning beyond the messages of the here and now presented in its limitations and horrors. Philosophy has extended a hand in the exploration of spirituality as we move through the challenges to superstition and the emergence of scientific knowledge. The grasp of the significance and functions of reverie has indeed been buried under mounds of fear and confusion. The infant’s voice and maternal dreams have remained largely unacknowledged in the human record. Two main ideas that have appeared consistently are the preparation of boys to separate from mother’s realm (and her body) and the preparation of girls to care for infants and children, to become mother. Of course, social arrangements have included matriarchal cultures, however, the power of maternity has most often been signified as questionable, weak, corrupt, and immoral. The unconscious meaning of the terror associated with the nonverbal is heard somewhat in the articulated antagonism between male and female culture, in which women’s marks disappeared underneath male-dominated culture (Campbell, 1976; Harrison, 1912).

Women, denied self-expression and the authority to create significance in permanent public marks, enunciated in oral modes within the child-rearing and domestic culture. Mothers spoke through their children not only in words but through the languages expressed from one unconscious to another. Thus, rituals, customs, and myths are laced with women’s unconscious, overtly silenced feelings and thoughts. As we pursue the roots of these bifurcations, we shall plunge into the depths of women’s internal reality and attempt to make contact with lost, encrypted, and sacrificed aspects entombed there.

We need to remember that human speech and literacy evolved only a few thousand years ago. In Shlain’s (1998) book, The Goddess versus the Alphabet, he makes the case that until the left brain developed, offering dual hemispheric functioning, literacy and abstract symbolic functioning were only potential. One might say the pull to speak and write connecting with a
more settled agricultural culture stimulated the development of the left hemisphere. Thus, we cannot read the earliest messages from the history of marks left by human culture. We would need to be in the exchange itself, to feel the heat of the emotions as we do in the session when words fail or are not able to carry the innermost affects. Shlain believed that the right-brain contributions suffered a loss of prestige at the advent of left-brain functioning. Signs and symbols developed slowly and were found at first in tools and objects for daily living. These concrete signs appear only as recently as 30,000 B.C.

A critical shift may be seen in the images placed on the walls of the French caves. These images left behind by the people of that era provide us with signs through which we can read about their civilization and daily life. The images of wild animals signify the literal and figurative aspects of their existence and the anxieties of survival. They also reveal some reflective capacity on the part of the painters about their situations and feelings. The images inside the caves suggest the beginnings of internal dialogue and the projection of this mental activity outside the mind for communication purposes and reflection.

Grotstein (1998, 2000) has recently written on the importance of autochthony as the infant’s or patient’s self-created stream of myths and narratives functioning to ward off an awareness of helplessness and to find agency in creating his or her world. These proliferating signs are available to be presented and employed by language and conscious thought within the symbolic order, but originate in an internal dialogue.

Out of this change in brain functioning, arose a profound psychological and social shift. Shlain (1998) explained that the dominance of patriarchal culture over matriarchal culture came about not because of the northern hunters’ invasion of the southern matriarchal cultures, but from a shift inside. The right-brain sphere of mental functioning associated with mother–infant communication, and deep emotional experience, was sacrificed to the needs of left-brain tasks: attention to the domain of symbols placed in orderly structures that themselves obeyed laws of time and space. Nonlinear dream and myth structures were counterpoised to linear conscious apprehension. The different sides of mental life affect each other profoundly, and can-
not be split away from each other without distortion of experience.

Similarly, the ability to reflect on one’s mental experience and the concept of inside are not clearly represented. The boundaries that delineate a sense of self and not-self were not reflected in cultural artifacts. The cave paintings provide a semiotic framework for the negative and positive poles of the infant’s transfer-ence to mother’s postnatal presence. The cave paintings suggest the creation of a chain of signifiers that may tell the presence of bounty, and a balanced relationship with the cave mother who provides for the helpless babe, or the paintings may suggest the tensions with the real predators as well as anguished rage at living through vulnerability, intensifying phantasies of possession, and plunder of maternal bounty and potency.

The concept of lack, and the threat of the ultimate void, in the sense of the experience of abjection and failure to find meaning, gives rise to communication in the deepest emotional ways (Grotstein, 1990a, 1990b; Kristeva, 1980, 1982; Sullivan, 1991). Lacan interprets the significance of the cave paintings as placing a circle of meaning around the void. He is referring to anamorphosis, a distortion in representation that expresses something beyond the literal meaning; in other words, not mimesis, but establishing meaning to fill the void of the unknown (Sullivan, 1991). The cave art may also sign the myth of the labyrinth, the paintings the images of life, which are felt to dwell inside the caverns of mother’s body. In psychoanalytic interpretations of the myth of the labyrinth, the infant wishes to explore or repossess mother’s insides in order to regain security of attachment, to discover the origins of life, to possess the contents, and prevent the other babies or Daddy’s penis from stealing mother away, and to rehearse the odyssey of finding one’s destiny by overcoming feared obstacles and the dread of psychic responsibility (Klein, 1946, 1957). In this way, the labyrinth may be seen as a metaphor for the map of the pathways that lead to the capacity to take on the responsibility of subjectivity (Grotstein, 2000).

Bion begins to describe the process of dreaming not only in terms of managing intense overflow, but of birthing carriers of
significance that are evolving in the interface between the deep fathoms of limitless meanings and other layers of mental life that move toward the surface to mate with the artifacts of asymmetrical logic (Bion, 1967).

For Bion, the architect of the ineffable transformations in “O,” brings to awareness the vastness of the unknown and its potential power. The subject of analysis moves through concerns with frustration, couched in terms of the terror of absence or of separation, to increase his or her ability to preserve the image of the primary object, and he or she ultimately develops the capacity to have faith in its return without destroying its goodness. Part of this growth process includes an ability to transcend dependence on control of a tangible object, and to ride on the crest of faith that ultrasensual experience brings. This transition is exquisitely challenging, as it deprives the subject of material reassurance, substituting the ineffable as the means to the richness and fullness of emotional depth and truth.

Thus, Bion takes us through the experiences of myth, phantasy, and depressive concern to the ineffable, and our relationship to being (Bion, 1962, 1967; Grotstein, 1997, 2000). Being breaks through the veil of signification from simple signs to iconography and symbolization, in the sense that the experience of being comes forward as feeling and emotions, which seem not yet to have been dreamt or demystified from the conscious point of view (Grotstein, 2002; Silver, 1981). Thus, we are always struggling directly with all significations, which in a sense can only shadow the truth of the messages from the deep unconscious (Bion, 1967; Grotstein, 2000).

From this vertex we might revisit the phantasies of the mother’s body as a sanctuary and as the possessor of life interpreted or conjured as the enemy of life. Consider Bion’s revision of the nature of turbulence, from the notion that it inevitably streams from the seething cauldron of the unconscious (Freud) and from innate hatred of the sources of life, mother’s body, and the couple shaped by the currents of annihilation anxiety (Klein, 1928, 1946, 1957), to the lack of a container which then leads secondarily to chaos, meaninglessness, and fragmentation, or, alternatively, the presence of which opens the domain of human compassion and responsibility to new depths of emotional
awareness. These realizations break through the layers of constructions that are meant to contain psychic disruption and provide access to symptoms that mutilate personality functioning. Bion moving through the diluted experiences resists distraction and follows the currents of emotionality beyond the constraints of time and space and of the senses to the unknown of being. He proposes the domain of the infinite, in which galaxies of meanings and feelings exist.

I want to focus on Bion’s theory of “O,” as it carries possibilities of great depth, the universal and transcendent. I believe that signification processes originate in the prenatal experiences but also in the hard and soft wiring of the brain/mind. Millions of years of silence without the artifacts that indicate the qualities and shape of existence within the groups that occupied that time and place what we have called prehistory render interpretation of lived life impossible and leave us in the dark or excluded from our ancestors’ feelings and thoughts. I have been inspired and helped by Demasio (2003), Jaynes (1976), Schore (2002), and Shlain (1998) who focus on the importance of the emotions and feelings in the work of the brain and mind. Demasio and Schore emphasize the close intermixture of neurobiology and the formation of mental structures of communication and meaning. Shlain and Jaynes are interested in the ways that emotional meaning appears in symbols and signs or earlier forms. Prehistory leaves us in awe of what we are not told. Jaynes and Shlain suggest that we can infer backward how Homo sapiens put together their universe but very little about their feelings. Jaynes (1976) also proposes that humans did not move directly to intersubjective communication and language but instead heard right-brain messages inside their mind, much like an oracle, superego, and or dream voice.

Fear of the infinitity of emotions has dominated psychoanalytic thinking. Lies that hide and deny truthful experience have co-opted the searchlight of psychoanalytic archeology. The fervent conviction that the other logic characteristic of the unconscious (instincts, drives, primary process, and primitive phantasies) comprises the devils that we must battle to protect humanity and civilization clings to our beliefs about freeing humanity from evil and disease.
In fact, the demonization of the forces of the underground closes down contact with aspects of ultimate truth. I think that “wild thoughts” are the messengers carrying feelings that are not diminished by the various layers of thoughts that we have filling our minds and, of course, by the mind that banishes the capacity to bear any thoughts at all. Wild thoughts come to us from the infinite, beyond the limits of the third dimension. They present expansive ideas or psychoanalytic objects, though they are feared as disrupting mental processes.

THE MATERNAL PRESENCE

In disparate cultures over the millennia, the woman’s body has been coded as a critical signifier of death as well as life (Campbell, 1976; Klein, 1928, 1946, 1975). Women’s bodies are described as parts, which are circumscribed, separated from personhood, sexualized, and denigrated in the effort to mask the powerful dread of the loss of the primary object. I am suggesting that women’s subjectivity and speech are deeply affected by a chain of signifiers buried in the unconscious that attempt to disguise, avoid, and mend the holes in the skin by attributing the fear of the hole to women and the designation of wholeness to men. The hole as described in the clinical and theoretical work of Anzieu (1989), Grotstein (1990a, 1990b), Kristeva (1980), and Tustin (1981) is the wound, deficit, and scar tissue stemming from problematic attachment, including the ineffectiveness of maternal reverie.

We must ask how these biases are transmitted to the female subject and how they constrain women’s utterances, particularly those which stem from their innermost core. Recently the subject is described as originating at the infant’s dawning awareness that his or her incipient mind is active and relays experience that originates within him- or herself (Alvarez, 1992; Fonagy; 1997; Ogden, 1994; Schore, 1994, 2002). Awareness of one’s being and subjectivity—the subject defined here as the one who collects and organizes the data of personal existence—depends at once on the mothering one’s supplemental capacities to nurture the infant’s fragile and inexperienced mind.

Women find themselves believing that they are not able to
speak powerfully inside themselves and to the external society in which they find themselves embedded. Within the internal reality of the women subjects with whom I have worked analytically, powerful inhibitions undermine their belief in the power and authenticity of their thoughts and feelings. I want to caution the reader and myself to keep in mind the analogous difficulties in men. They too “speak,” feel, and think from false premises. However, in this analysis I wish to focus on the internal world of women. Much of the difference has to do not only with the fear of “mother’s” powers, projectively identified as weakness, stupidity, and evil, but also with the processes of pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing. Women’s superego development and autochthonous interpretations of psychic reality are dominated by the failure of the family, culture, and the individual mind to “contain” the nameless dreads of the centuries before. Andre Green (1997) has called our attention to the presence of the Dead Mother. Green hypothesizes that the depressed or withdrawn mother becomes a dead object for the infant. He explains that the dead mother complex also demands a resistance to emotional life that potentially brings truths of felt experience. Furthermore, the future, in Bion’s conceptualization, is blocked from evolving into its destined meaning (Bion, 1997; Ogden, 1994; Panajian, 2003).1

I want to take up Klein’s brilliant discovery and exploration of infantile phantasies with Bion’s theory of nameless dread in mind. I am suggesting that the “death instinct” appears as a tyrannical force in conditions of an infantile catastrophe. Female subjects are prey to a double assault from the “death instinct.” One may be seen as the infant’s own response to trauma and the other as the projective identifications of the family and culture, which carry the impulse to sacrifice. Klein brings to our attention this critical version of projective identification. As discussed earlier, the infant mind under circumstances of distress feels sacrificed to a cruel destiny and wishes to rid his or her self of that pain. The infant sends the feeling of sacrifice to the “Other,” (M)other or mothering one. But in need of containment themselves, the parents use projective identification to unburden themselves; their offspring become the warehouse for their sacrificed infant aspects. The next generation, infants and
children, are overwhelmed and take on the projected designation, or they hurl back a rejection of the parent's messages. Feelings of confusion, of not being able to help and of feeling unappreciated flare up in the parents.

In this closed system, the psychic reality of female infants and children are haunted by vengeful maternal imagoes that are felt to be the murderers of the subject's body and mind, particularly the reproductive organs. Unborn infants and eggs are felt to be demonic and vengeful in retaliation for the girl's wrath and hatred of Mother's capacities for reproduction. The subject is deeply identified with infants and children stuck in the caverns of the maternal body; thus, claustrophobia, including fears of entombment, burial alive, and serious mutilation are major phantasies masking the continuous dread of nonbeing. Mergers with the dangerous figure are often translated into somatic suffering and parallel ideation of lack of self-worth and self-denigration. Alternatively, identification with the vengeful mother is manifested in hatred and destructive feelings toward helpless aspects of the self, most particularly toward the infant ones. Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing are staging grounds for the presentation of these inner dramas. Both men and women are burdened with the undeconstructed signifier of (M)other. Men historically have been defined by aversion to women's ability to give birth and to provide the means to survival by nursing the new infant, and by shunning tenderness and helplessness.

THE SUBJECT WHO CREATES

Klein further explains that the infant imagines that he or she has fallen into the grasp of the bad mother or breast. She poses that in the absence of the good aspect of the mother, the infant imagines the presence of the bad and dangerous one. Klein adds that males experience persecutory anxiety in the face of the deteriorating maternal imago not exclusively generated by castration anxiety. However, as Klein moves into the more archaic levels of the Oedipus complex and links infantile anxiety to its original sources, death anxiety or survival anxiety, she thought that the closeness to the whole drama of pregnancy, birth, and survival intensified the female child's sense of responsibility and fear of
retaliation. I think that the internal worlds of the female analy-
sands discussed in this section will support Klein’s hypothesis.

The ways in which the persecutory sense of femininity
makes itself known and felt are black hopelessness about her
own future and that of her progeny; fertility and pregnancy are
felt to be under serious attack. Also, the process of nurturing
infancy in the daughter and the grandchildren, if not meaning-
fully signified, lingers between the generations as dark masses of
undigested or undetoxified proto-emotions (Silver, 1981). These
culminate in beliefs that the girl of the present generation is
destined for infertility in literal and figurative ways. The name-
less, dread curses that we have seen in our patients are passed
down as toxic, indigestible basic assumptions. The maternal
presence, felt as body and mind, feels to be filled with nameless
dreads antagonistic to reverie and thinking.

A woman patient entered analysis in her late twenties suffer-
ing from considerable anxiety. Her fears and unease seemed to
be connected with intense demands for perfection, in tension
with self-doubt and denigration. Alicia is the only child of a well-
educated and financially well-off family, but one marked by suf-
fering and tragedy. Alicia is the first-born and the only survivor
amongst several miscarriages and the death of a one-month-old
sibling. Her premenstrual moods are marked by severe worry,
depression, and anxiety. Explorations of her phantasies at the
onset of PMS and menstruation itself reveal dread and terror
of mutilated and dying creatures. Consciously, Alicia had set up
projects for the rescue of helpless ones, and the prevention of
their extermination. The horror of extermination has haunted
her throughout her life. Alicia has experienced some relief from
interpretations that explore the relationship between her moth-
er’s failed and tragic pregnancies, and her belief system that
holds her self responsible for the tragic outcome of her parent’s
attempts to have other children. The autochthonous creations
that include lethal envy, jealousy, and rivalry on her part as
causal agents are marked by severe worry, depression, and anxiety (Grotstein, 2000). Explorations of her phantasies about the
onset of PMS, and menstruation itself, reveal terrors of mutil-
ated dying creatures.
A further penetration into the sources of her anxiety has recently become possible. The worry over the contents and condition of her mother’s insides was complicated by the family lore that told of Alicia’s prized goodness and mildness. Mother was apparently depressed at various times, particularly at the time of failed pregnancies, but also at the time of Alicia’s birth. The contribution of the family myths included a Mayflower heritage on Mother’s side that had translated into a social-psychological program of emotional control and extreme sensitivity to lack of decorum. Alicia was sent to a girl’s high school that was devoted to WASP values that moved her forward in that mode, including coming out as a debutante and attending the “right” college. It seems to me that Mother’s depression may in part have been a generational resistance to these values, but not a complete one, understandably.

As Alicia moved along in her mental development, genuine concern began to emerge for her first child. At the time of her first pregnancy, her love and concern for him were scattered and split off, as were feelings about her own infantile self and experiences. Extreme anxiety, fears of nonexistence and persecutory guilt shattered her sense of self and provoked states of morbid dread. All of these were covered over by the employment of polite, gracious manners on the one hand, and frantic activity, spiced with the belief that she should be able to do everything and be everywhere at the same time, on the other. As we investigated her underlying beliefs, myths, and dreams, Alicia began to experience authentic and deepening feelings about the “endangered” infant inside Mother’s body, and inside hers. About the fourth month of her second pregnancy, primary maternal preoccupation began to flower. Her prepregnancy worries were centered on her belief that she could never be pregnant with a second child, or if she were able to conceive, the pregnancy would be terminated; some of her phantasies involved a fallopian pregnancy, birth defects, and the threatened imminence of miscarriage. These were felt intensely, but almost in a delusional way, that these outcomes were inevitable and were part of a curse that she either inherited or instigated. Persistent work on the old certainties and protection of the newer feelings
that she could offer the fetus a safe environment in which to grow yielded confidence in her pregnancy and in her primary maternal preoccupation.

At the beginning of these transformations, I felt anxious, bewildered, and irritable. I realized that Alicia was in pain and bewildered not only because she had disavowed her feelings of painful potential loss, but also because she was suffering from the birth of hitherto unknowns. As I became more aware of the shifts taking place between us, I was able to translate emotionally to her the feelings of a viable pregnancy. Alicia then became free to relate to the fetus inside of her. She named the little growing girl and began speaking more openly with her and to me about her future life with “Anika.” The various exchanges about the shifts in attitudes about the pregnancy and future life of the fetus seemed to me to function similarly to the generational errands and messages that contribute to transformation or the destruction of mental growth. Leonardo da Vinci’s work on Mary and Jesus with St. Anne as the grandmother comes to mind. Da Vinci’s rendering of the three, particularly in the cartoon, symbolizes various forms of projective identification taking place among them (Van Buren, 2004).

At seven and one-half months, Alicia began to feel considerable pressure at the neck of the womb. Her hasty trip to her obstetrician confirmed that all was not well. The fetus was placed in a breach position and her feet were pushing insistently at the cervix, causing considerable softening and dilation. Alicia was put on bed rest. Two days later, we had a phone session in which her major anxieties were focused around the notion of forced dependency. The images that she described led me to imagine an infant trapped helplessly in her crib, trying not to bother anyone and feeling overwhelmed that her cervix had diminished. Alicia remained hopeful; however, by the end of the analytic week some of her worries returned. I could not be sure of the origin of Alicia’s worries, but I felt a strong conviction that the end-of-the-week’s sessions were playing a very significant part in her feelings. I offered this to Alicia, and got a strong reaction from her that indicated to me that I was on the right track. “Oh, just a minute! I do not know about that.” I thought that I had articulated her worst fears and penetrated her shell of self-suffi-
ciency. I pressed on: “I think you want to believe that you have no need of a mother or grandmother me, and that Anika is felt to reflect your feelings by not waiting to come out. She feels strong-willed and wants all her doubts resolved concerning when and how. Alicia began to relax and said to her prenatal daughter to be patient and to wait out the full term since it would be better for her. I hypothesized that the anxieties about the success or failure of the pregnancy were connected to Alicia’s Mother’s many failed pregnancies. Persecutory guilt and a belief in a family curse fueled Alicia’s manic-like attempts to avoid any unresolved feelings, and to remain straddling two alternatives or to believe that she might be able to do both. One primary conflict centers around work and mothering—to give up work or not. Deeper still lies the conflict to be able to give life or not.

The daughters of Holocaust survivors that I have worked with analytically have had extremely disturbed mental functioning, but, more than that, they have lost contact with their own sense of agency. Thus their sense of being was haunted by whether they had a right to life or not. As daughters raised by parents who lived constantly under the shadow of death, they suffered from emotional projections of the blackest cynicism and hopelessness. The dark cloud that hovered over them emitted such virulent and hideous imagery and sensual vibrations that any efforts at communicating to these patients were pathetic and bounced off the various protective shields that they had established with increasing ferocity (Bion, 1967).

One female patient entered treatment with a great many doubts about pursuing the etiology of her depression and poor functioning in personal relationships and in her profession. My impression was that she had exhausted her colleague and friend, who had kindly but naively attempted to provide solace in the face of perpetual streams of agonized pleas to be released from what I later identified as an emotional reenactment of torture, imprisonment, and the threat of extermination. “Rebecca” was 47 years old when she began treatment. By training she was an academic with a PhD in the humanities. However, since she regularly cast a net of paranoia wherever she worked, she never progressed and was let go. Since this pattern was not at all known to Rebecca, emotionally or consciously, she repeated an
intense cycle of idealization, disillusionment, increasing paranoia, and finally the attempt to rid herself of the whole unhappy situation. The cycle filled the person or persons in her present environment, personal or professional, with feelings of violent hatred or of losing their mind. I not only listened to the accounts of these emotional shifts, but was involved in them as part of the transferential–countertransferential field. However, Rebecca held this pattern of internal object relations rigidly away from our ongoing relationship in the sessions. She spoke endlessly about the new object of choice, vacillating between dizzying optimism for ecstatic merger (atonement) and repetitive protests of poor or cruel treatment. I began to feel that these “relationships” went on in a limbo place constructed as delusions or hallucinations in the sense that they seemed without any inclusion of awareness of otherness, either internal or external.

In addition, there were other signs that Rebecca was locked down in a world of demonic anxieties and the more she tried to escape from the threat of the jailor, the more anxious and frenzied she became! She had let me know that the only way she could tolerate living in her skin or standing any sense of presence was to focus entirely on the goodness or badness of the chosen one. Since it could rarely be known as myself, I attempted to live out with her the anguish she suffered in the “language” of her distraught, undreamable emotions. I want to specify that Rebecca could not yet turn her proto-feelings into feelings that were amenable to some meaningful organization. Instead they came at her like tornado, destroying every thing in its path. Rebecca fled from these forces by acting out her delusional fantasies about the ideal or demonic character.

My first encounter with this release safety valve was her taking up with the manager of my building. I left my office after her session to find Rebecca and this man huddled together in a cozy tête-à-tête in the courtyard outside my front door. The relationship spiraled into an affair. I found myself becoming furious and feeling pathetically impotent. I, of course, took refuge in my faith in analytic technique. I interpreted the meaning of the office manager in all his shadings and dimensions. At moments Rebecca seemed to listen and consider; however, this moment was tragically destroyed in a split second. Eventually this liaison lost its charm. They had little in common except for the halluci-
nated link to Mother’s body. Also, he was a refugee from a fascist regime and had lost everything—his family, his profession, and his properties. Rebecca’s relationships did not end because of her increasing insight into her unconscious feelings. She usually drove the person away due to her impossible demands and the dread fear that she was devouring him. Since her experience of what two people meant to each other was so entirely out of the other person’s range of experience, he lost interest or was driven to hatred. Critically, I myself did not feel that way, which worried me because I knew that this intense search for salvation remained extremely disavowed for Rebecca.

Another ritual meant to shield her from the feelings of the Holocaust that lived on inside her inner reality was a strange kind of hedonism and sensual satisfaction. Rebecca would withdraw to her present residence, which she had outfitted with every possible convenience and comfort. She would darken house by drawing heavy shades, play music that she loved, and drink the best of wines. The ritual may be read as a withdrawal to an elegant and plentiful womb that kept out the “witch” mother. The latter emerged infrequently as herself and was hidden deeply, but also was partially present in the character who disillusioned her. Furthermore, since her mother of provision was poisonous and unpredictable, she turned to her father for supplies she needed to hold on to her fragile sense of sanity. Her predicament led to the ending of her analysis; she could not bear to give anything to me or receive anything from me, so the exchange of money was horrifying. Consciously she brooded constantly that supplies were running out; she believed that people were stealing from her, and because she could not keep a job her worries were exacerbated. She was frequently let go because of her extreme attitudes toward people at work. Truly, she was also greatly relieved to be freed from her obligations and able to return to her retreat, a place where she believed she might escape all demands on her.

Another scene that we visited was made up of her parent’s depression and anxieties. Rebecca rebuked her internal parents for being so caught up in their mental states. She accused them of making her life a living hell with their continuing complaints about their states of mind and miserable lives. She also understood and felt compassion for their Holocaust history. Rebecca’s
parents were Viennese Jews. Everyone in their families with the exception of themselves, Rebecca, and Mother’s mother died in the camps. Rebecca felt that they grieved endlessly for their murdered loved ones, leaving no shred of peace or happiness for her. She felt deeply convinced that her mother despised her having been born and that she deserved no happiness or satisfaction, as she felt she was a child of her mother’s guilt. A major outgrowth of Rebecca’s identity theme as the one who had to atone for the deaths of the others was her inability to be born psychically, let alone to have children of her own. Her womb became a burial ground for her murdered family, her mother’s unborn children, hers, and the stillbirth of her unborn self. Rebecca carried at the heart of her being utmost dread and terror. Rebecca’s personal holocaust undoubtedly sprang from the grief and depression of her parents as well as her own rage and fear of living without much solace. The whole family lived under a reign of terror, the terror of the demonic attack on the life instincts.

We have learned in the last years of the twentieth century more about the etiology of the anti-life forces of the individual and the group. Psychoanalytic thinkers, commencing with Freud, began to understand that not uncharged libido but the stimulation of the wish to end life and escape its pain and dread was the fiercest foe of human health and peace. Klein, Bion, and Grotstein interpret the surrender to death over life as derived from the fragility of life and the awareness of that possibility in the human infant. Klein had taken up Freud’s explorations of the death instinct as developed in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” and Civilizations and Its Discontents and emphasized the awareness of death brought to the surface by birth and manifested as death anxiety. In her theoretical and clinical observations she emphasized the powerful response to ward off the feelings of being attacked from inside. As we know, this led to her theory of projective identification; thus, her infant was not described as passive but as suffering from the introjected imago colored by the death instinct hurled outside the self. Bion modified the fate of the infant threatened by the fear of dying by adding the container’s role, defined as the mature mind of the mothering one that accepts emotionally the fear of dying. As
discussed, the absence of emotional containment, or reverie, leaves the infant (patient) with tumultuous feelings of endangerment that gain in increasing velocity and power, reaching tornado-like storms, fragmenting the mind and soma, and scattering the bits and pieces through violent disavowal.

Another critical factor in the triumph of the death instinct is the overwhelming certainty that one is helpless; ironically, passivity of an extraordinary power pulls the living tendencies into a vortex of deeper pools of nothingness (Bion, 1967). The collapse of the personality gives rise to the fierce drag into the black hole where no life can exist, and where no one knows that the individual has disappeared or “died” (Grotstein, 1990a, 1990b; Bion, 1967).

In my countertransference experience with Rebecca I felt that the black hole was her utmost nadir of anxiety. She had been drowned in her parent’s Holocaust horrors as well as her surviving grandmother’s, with whom she shared a room. She sometimes was able to explain to me that she was the new hope for the family in the New World, but was also severely criticized for not realizing their hopes. As discussed earlier, Rebecca functioned at very poor levels. Everything she attempted was swept away by the work of the negative (Green, 1997). She had no faith that she could survive carrying the utmost annihilation anxieties of the family and being overwhelmed by own chaotic emotions, which were not allowed direct expression outside the inner concentration camp.

This discussion has centered around Bion’s notion of the maternal (parental) container as the essential aspect of the formation of emotional significance. Evacuation of our potential dreams and myths has led to dread, hatred, and envy. The tragic irony of the use of the image of mother’s body both as a refuge and as enemy is an essential part of the of human mental history and the conflict between life and death.

NOTE
1. Bion (1991), in his book *Memoir of the Future*, proposes that incipient meanings from preconceptions and present realizations evolve into future meanings that we are unable to know at an earlier time. Meanings build upon meanings, forming new towers of interpretations.
REFERENCES


