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*Renewals of*  
and  
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the Kernel

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## FIVE

# Mourning *or* Melancholia: Introjection *versus* Incorporation

N. Abraham and M. Torok, 1972

### METAPSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY AND FANTASY

Incorporation denotes a fantasy, introjection a process. Here is a useful clarification, sometimes found in Kleinian texts and one that holds no surprises for us. However, we are astonished that Melanie Klein sees fantasy—a product of the ego—as predating the process, which is the product of the entire psyche. On this fundamental point we cannot agree with Kleinian “pan-fantasm.” We seek to limit the precise meaning of the concept of fantasy by contrasting it with the entity masked by fantasy. Granting our metapsychological definition of “reality” as everything, whether exogenous or endogenous, that affects the psyche by inflicting a topographical shift on it, “fantasy” can be defined as all those representations, beliefs, or bodily states that gravitate toward the opposite effect, that is, the preservation of the status quo. This definition does not address the contents or the formal characteristics of fantasy, only its function, a preventive and conservative function despite the highly innovative genius of fantasy, its vast field of action, and even despite its definite complacency with respect to desire. In our conception fantasy is essentially narcissistic; it tends to transform the world rather than inflict injury on the subject. That fantasies are often unconscious does not mean they pertain to something outside the subject but rather that they refer to a *secretly perpetuated* topography. Understanding a fantasy entails the identification of the specific topographical change the given fantasy is called upon to resist. Consequently, the primal fantasy would itself repre-

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sent appropriate measures to keep the original topography intact in the face of danger. In the final analysis, is not metapsychological theory intended to explain how and why fantasy and its corollaries arise? Placing fantasy at the root of the process would seem to suggest a perilous reversal of the entire psychoanalytic method. If on the contrary, by analyzing fantasy, we seek to detect the transformation of the underlying process that is being opposed, we move from the description of phenomena to their transphenomenal basis. Using this characteristic mode of psychoanalytic inquiry, we will find ourselves at just the vantage point where we might be able to read the metapsychological origin of every fantasy as far back as the "origin" of the original fantasy itself.

#### INCORPORATION: THE FANTASY OF NONINTROJECTION

When it is not truncated or deformed, fantasy can be doubly telling as regards both the subject and the danger to be parried. This is so because fantasy is inseparable from the intrapsychic state of affairs it is supposed to protect as well as from the metapsychological reality that demands a change. Among the various fantasies traceable in this way to their function, some are privileged because their contents illustrate the prevailing conditions of the psychic agencies. Well-known examples of these are the arch-fantasies of the primal scene, castration, and seduction.<sup>1</sup> There is also—but this is much less well known—another type of equally privileged fantasy whose contents illustrate the process whereby the topography is on the verge of being transformed. Such is the fantasy of *incorporation*. Introducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one's own body, possessing, expelling or alternately acquiring, keeping, losing it—here are varieties of fantasy indicating, in the typical forms of possession or feigned dispossession, a basic intrapsychic situation: the situation created by the reality of a loss sustained by the psyche. If accepted and worked through, the loss would require major readjustment. But the fantasy of incorporation merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic; it does so by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. So in order not to have to "swallow" a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing. Two interrelated procedures constitute the magic of incorporation: *demetaphorization* (taking literally what is meant figuratively) and *objecti-*

1. J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 331.

*vation* (pretending that the suffering is not an injury to the subject but instead a loss sustained by the love object). The magical "cure" by incorporation exempts the subject from the painful process of reorganization. When, in the form of imaginary or real nourishment, we ingest the love-object we miss, this means that *we refuse to mourn* and that we shun the consequences of mourning even though our psyche is fully bereaved. Incorporation is the refusal to reclaim as our own the part of ourselves that we placed in what we lost; incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss, a loss that, if recognized as such, would effectively transform us. In fine, incorporation is the refusal to introject loss. The fantasy of incorporation reveals a gap within the psyche; it points to something that is missing just where introjection should have occurred.

#### INTROJECTION UNDERSTOOD AS THE COMMUNION OF "EMPTY MOUTHS"

Introjecting (= casting inside) is surely the same thing as incorporating, is it not? Certainly the image is identical, but for reasons that will soon be apparent, it is important to distinguish between them, as we would distinguish between metaphoric and photographic images, between the acquisition of a language as opposed to buying a dictionary, between self-possession gained through psychoanalysis and the fantasy of "incorporating" a "penis."

Sandor Ferenczi, the inventor of both the term and the concept, defined "introjection" as the process of broadening the ego. He ascribed the primary role in this process to transference love. Yet, however exemplary the psychoanalytic situation might be as its precondition, introjection undoubtedly appears under comparable circumstances soon after birth. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that the initial stages of introjection emerge in infancy when the mouth's emptiness is experienced alongside the mother's simultaneous presence. The emptiness is first experienced in the form of cries and sobs, delayed fullness, then as calling, ways of requesting presence, as language. Further experiences include filling the oral void by producing sound and by exploring the empty cavity with the tongue in response to sounds perceived from the outside. Finally, the early satisfactions of the mouth, as yet filled with the maternal object, are partially and gradually replaced by the novel satisfactions of a mouth now empty of that object but filled with words pertaining to the subject. The transition from a mouth filled with the breast to a mouth filled with words occurs by virtue of the intervening experiences of the empty mouth.

Learning to fill the emptiness of the mouth with words is the initial model for introjection. However, without the constant assistance of a mother endowed with language, introjection could not take place. Not unlike the permanence of Descartes's God, the mother's constancy is the guarantor of the meaning of words. Once this guarantee has been acquired, and only then, can words replace the mother's presence and also give rise to fresh introjections. The absence of objects and the empty mouth are transformed into words; at last, even the experiences related to words are converted into other words. So the wants of the original oral vacancy are remedied by being turned into verbal relationships with the speaking community at large. Introjecting a desire, a pain, a situation means channeling them through language into a communion of empty mouths. This is how the literal ingestion of foods becomes introjection when viewed figuratively. The passage from food to language in the mouth presupposes the successful replacement of the object's presence with the self's cognizance of its absence. Since language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape* to presence, it can only be *comprehended* or *shared* in a "community of empty mouths."

#### INCORPORATION: ONE MOUTH-WORK IN PLACE OF ANOTHER

If all fantasies indicate the refusal to introject and the denial of a gap, we have to wonder why some of them take the privileged form of introducing an object into the body? In other words, why are some fantasies directed at the very metaphor of introjection? Once we put it this way, the question implies part of the answer. Incorporation implements the metaphor of introjection literally when the usually spontaneous process of introjection becomes self-aware, that is, when it undergoes reflexive treatment, as it were. This form of reflexive treatment occurs only if the barely initiated or expected work of introjection encounters a prohibitive obstacle. The obstacle is found in the mouth, in the seat of the phenomena steering introjection. Because our mouth is unable to say certain words and unable to formulate certain sentences, we fantasize, for reasons yet to be determined, that we are actually taking into our mouth the unnamable, the object itself. As the empty mouth calls out in vain to be filled with introjective speech, it reverts to being the food-craving mouth it was prior to the acquisition of speech. Failing to feed itself on words to be exchanged with others, the mouth absorbs in fantasy all or part of a person—the genuine depository of what is now nameless. The crucial move away from introjection (clearly rendered impossible) to incorporation is made when *words*

fail to fill the subject's void and hence an imaginary thing is inserted into the mouth in their place. The desperate ploy of filling the mouth with illusory nourishment has the equally illusory effect of eradicating the idea of a void to be filled with words. We may conclude that, in the face of both the urgency and the impossibility of performing one type of mouth-work—speaking to someone about what we have lost—another type of mouth-work is utilized, one that is imaginary and equipped to deny the very existence of the entire problem. Born of the verdict of impracticable introjection, the fantasy of incorporation appears at once as its regressive and reflexive substitute. This means of course that every incorporation has introjection as its nostalgic vocation.

#### FALSE INCORPORATIONS

Why are the words of introjection suddenly missing? Why the emergency call for them? Once more the questions suggest the answers. *The abrupt loss of a narcissistically indispensable object of love has occurred, yet the loss is of a type that prohibits its being communicated. If this were not so, incorporation would have no reason for being.* Cases of reluctant mourning are well known. Yet they do not inevitably lead to incorporation. We are reminded here of the unforgettable sight of a man, seated alone at a table in a restaurant, ordering two different meals simultaneously; he ate them both as if he were being accompanied by someone else. This man, who was clearly hallucinating the presence of a departed loved one, did not, however, have to resort to incorporation. We can surmise that the shared meal allowed him to keep the dear departed outside his bodily limits and that, even as he was filling his mouth's vacancy, he did not actually have to "absorb" the deceased. "No," he seemed to be saying, "the loved one is not dead, she is still here as before, with her wonted tastes and favorite dishes." The waiter seemed to be aware of the situation and was helping the man choose the *other* dish; perhaps he knew the habits of the deceased. . . . Nothing of the sort would ever happen in cases of incorporation. Once an incorporation has occurred, no one at all should be apprized of it. The very fact of *having had a loss* would be denied in incorporation. The imaginary meal, eaten in the company of the deceased, may be seen as a protection against the danger of incorporation. Such a meal is reminiscent of the wake, which must have a similar purpose, namely the communion of the survivors through the partaking of food. The communion here means: instead of the deceased we are absorbing our mutual presence in the form of digestible food. We will bury the deceased in the ground rather than in ourselves. Necrophagia,

always a collective practice, is also distinct from incorporation. Even though it might well be born of fantasy, necrophagia constitutes a form of language because it is a group activity. By acting out the fantasy of incorporation, the actual eating of the corpse symbolizes both the impossibility of introjecting the loss and the fact that the loss has already occurred. Eating the corpse results in the exorcism of the survivors' potential tendency for psychic incorporation after a death. Necrophagia is therefore not at all a variety of incorporation but a preventive measure of *anti-incorporation*.

### THE INTRAPSYCHIC TOMB

Even when denied introjection, not every narcissistic loss is fated to incorporation. *Incorporation results from those losses that for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such.* In these special cases the impossibility of introjection is so profound that even our refusal to mourn is prohibited from being given a language, that we are debarred from providing any indication whatsoever that we are inconsolable. Without the escape-route of somehow conveying our refusal to mourn, we are reduced to a radical denial of the loss, to pretending that we had absolutely nothing to lose. There can be no thought of speaking to someone else about our grief under these circumstances. The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person, complete with its own topography. The crypt also includes the actual or supposed traumas that made introjection impracticable. A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence. Sometimes in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations.

One of us has analyzed a boy who "carried" inside him his sister, two years older than he. This sister, who died when the boy was eight, had "seduced" him. Several years of analytic relationship and a providential slip of the tongue—in which the boy gave as his own the age his sister would have been, had she lived—led to the reconstruction of the boy's internal situation and also revealed the motivation behind his kleptomania.

"Yes," he said, explaining his thefts, "at fourteen she would have needed a bra." This boy's crypt sheltered the girl "alive" as he unconsciously followed her maturation. This example shows why the introjection of the loss was impossible and why incorporation of the object became for the boy the only viable means of narcissistic reparation. His prohibited and shameful sexual games did not admit of any form of verbal communication. Only the incorporation of, and subsequent identification with, the girl allowed the boy to safeguard his topography marked by the seduction. The carrier of a shared secret, he became, after his sister's death, the carrier of a crypt. To underscore the continuity of these two psychic states, we have chosen the term *cryptophoria*. To have a fantasy of incorporation is to have no other choice but to perpetuate a clandestine pleasure by transforming it, after it has been lost, into an *intrapsychic secret*.

### INCORPORATION AS ANTIMETAPHOR

The foregoing represents our hypothesis. Its clinical import is that every time an incorporation is uncovered, it can be attributed to the undisclosed grief that befalls an ego already partitioned on account of a previous objectal experience tainted with shame. The crypt perpetuates the dividing walls by its very nature. No crypt arises without a shared secret's having already split the subject's topography. In the realm of shame and secrecy, however, we need to determine *who* it is that ought to blush, *who* is to hide. Is it the subject for having been guilty of crimes, of shameful or unseemly acts? That supposition will not help lay the foundation for a single crypt. Crypts are constructed only when the shameful secret is the love object's doing and when that object also functions for the subject as an ego ideal. It is therefore the *object's* secret that needs to be kept, *his* shame covered up. Yet the love object's mourning does not proceed in the usual way with the help of words used figuratively. This is so because if the metaphors that were used to shame the object somehow reemerged in the course of mourning, the ensuing loss of the ego ideal, their guarantor, would nullify them in their role as metaphors. The cryptophoric subject's solution, then, is to annul the humiliation by secretly or openly adopting the literal meaning of the words causing the humiliation. "Introjection" regresses here to the level of "inserting in the mouth, swallowing, eating." As for the debased love object, he will be "fecalized," that is, actually rendered excremental. The refusal to introject the loss of the ideal will be expressed in the most extreme cases by defying the humiliation itself through various manifestations of the fantasy of

eating excrement: unkempt outward appearance, filth, coprolalia, and the like. The above makes clear that *the crucial aspect of these fantasies of incorporation is not their reference to a cannibalistic stage of development, but rather their annulment of figurative language.* To save their ideal object, cryptophores undermine anyone who would shame their object. They neutralize, as it were, the material instruments of humiliation, the metaphors of dejection and excrement, by pretending that these disgraceful metaphors are edible, even appetizing. If we are determined to see a form of language in the processes governing this type of fantasy, we will need a new figure of speech in our traditional inventory, namely the figure of the active destruction of representation. We propose to call this figure *antimetaphor*. Let us make clear that it is not simply a matter of reverting to the literal meaning of words, but of using them in such a way—whether in speech or deed—that their very capacity for figurative representation is destroyed. Coprophagy is the prime example of such an act and an instance of this type of language use can be found in obscenities encouraging incest. But the most antimetaphorical of all is incorporation itself. *Incorporation entails the fantasmic destruction of the act by means of which metaphors become possible: the act of putting the original oral void into words, in fine, the act of introjection.*

#### FANTASY VERSUS INTRAPSYCHIC REALITY

Demetaphorization is not primary; its cause is the intrapsychic immurement of an experience endangering the topography. The role of confinement, imprisonment, and (in extreme cases) entombment is to objectify the fantasy of incorporation. Contriving ways to exclude even while holding fast from within, the fantasy of incorporation is deluded as regards its effectiveness. Clearly, incorporation is nothing more than a reassuring fantasy for the ego. The psychic reality is radically different. The unspeakable words and sentences, linked as they are to memories of great libidinal and narcissistic value, cannot accept their exclusion. From their hideaway in the imaginary crypt—into which fantasy had thrust them to hibernate lifeless, anesthetized, and designified—the unspeakable words never cease their subversive action.

We suspect that, in a recently completed essay, we have uncovered the existence of such an untellable word in the Wolf Man's psyche: the Russian verb *teret*, meaning "to rub." In our view, the traumatic events the Wolf Man experienced crystallized around this word when he was less

than four years old; the events were related to the incestuous fondling by which the Wolf Man's father had received gratification from his daughter, the boy's elder sister by two years. We have described how, through its varied disguises, this word condensed the Wolf Man's entire libidinal life as well as his sublimating activities.<sup>2</sup> We may add at present that this same word also played a role some sixteen years later in the schizophrenic suicide of the sister in question. The young woman died from the consequences of a delirious act that we consider suicidal only because of its fatal effects: she drank a bottle of liquid mercury. Now, the Russian word for mercury is *rtut*, which is the phonetic inversion of a somewhat guttural rendition of *teret* (as in the glottal pronunciation *t.r.t*). It is as if, with this delirious and tragic act, the daughter had wanted to rehabilitate her ideal object's spurned desire. She did so by eating, by proclaiming that it was "fine to eat" the word that had become excremental to others and was now objectified in a toxic substance (mercury). Let us note in passing, because it makes our position clear, that though tempting for some, it would be a grave misjudgment to interpret the young woman's ingestion of mercury as a disguised wish to perform fellatio. It was the word, the demetaphorized and objectified word that had to be swallowed in a display of coprophagic bravado.

The examples just cited illustrate another crucial aspect of the fantasy of incorporation (whose ineffectual counter-cathecting role was indicated earlier). Incorporation might at first sight resemble a hysterical type of repression, complete with the return of the repressed and having even a sexual element. Yet appearances here are false. Certainly, in the example drawn from the Wolf Man's material there are hallucinatory wish-fulfillments on the part of both the brother and the sister. Nonetheless, there is also a major qualification. The fulfillments are not representative of the subjects experiencing them but of their incorporated object of love, here their father. Both the brother and sister identify with their father by means of the spurned word denoting him. The boy achieves orgasm, in his father's place, as it were, by disguising the word in question (*teret*: to rub) in the visual image of a woman scrubbing the floor. Perhaps for oedipal reasons, the girl does not do quite as well. Nevertheless, she too acts as if she were her father; she gives the father an erection just as the boy does through his own fantasy of the charwoman. The basic difference here between incorporation and hysterical repression is that the father,

2. "Le mot magique de l'Homme aux loups: Incorporation, hystérie interne, cryptonymie," *Revue française de psychanalyse*, no. 1 (1971); since then chapters 1 and 2 of *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

rather than the children themselves, is the genuine subject of the children's acts. Through their acts, the father is the one claiming the right to affirm his spurned desire. This means that because of their identification, both children (the boy through fetishism, the girl with her delirious action) are trying at all costs to reinstate their father as their ego ideal. The children's acts (sexual in the one case and only apparently so in the other) have the narcissistic mission of bolstering the ego ideal. In short, the symptoms of incorporation are a medium through which the spurned ego ideal seeks acceptance. We can conclude therefore that the primary aim of the fantasy life born of incorporation is to repair—in the realm of the imaginary, of course—the injury that really occurred and really affected the ideal object. The fantasy of incorporation reveals a utopian wish that the memory of the affliction had never existed or, on a deeper level, that the affliction had had nothing to inflict.

#### INCLUSION TOPOGRAPHY

The effects of incorporation are extremely difficult to diagnose. Many an analysis of cryptophores is conducted as though the patients were hysterical or hysterophobic. A curious and troubling process sometimes occurs when patients behave as if they were truly hysterophobic (it is amazing that they can do this). Such patients end their therapy without ever touching on their basic problem. A lot remains to be said about these *as if analyses*<sup>3</sup> and their effects on incorporation. But these analytic misapprehensions are not surprising, since incorporation is indeed a cryptic phenomenon, as regards both its genesis and its function. Incorporation often hides behind "normalcy," takes flight in "personality traits" or "perversions," and appears openly only in delirium, in the mental state Freud called narcissistic neurosis, that is, manic-depressive psychosis. Yet the inherently cryptic nature of incorporation is perhaps not sufficient to explain the lack of recognition from which it has suffered. Since Freud's essay on "Mourning and Melancholia" nothing has emerged that would increase our understanding of the meaning of the fantasy life bound up with incorporation and so-called manic-depressive psychosis. Sections of Freud's correspondence with Karl Abraham hint at the nature of the problem. In the exchange K. Abraham suggested that melancholia might be linked to issues of instinct (such as guilt associated with cannibalistic and anal-sadistic desires blocking the process of an archaic mourning). To

3. [The phrase "as if analyses" appears in English in the original.—Ed.]

this Freud responded that the instinctual factors might well be important but are too general, as would be an explanation based on the Oedipus complex or castration anxiety. He called to his friend's attention the topographic, dynamic, and economic considerations that might help define the problem.<sup>4</sup> Let us note that for our part, we understand the instinctual factors to be composed primarily of fantasies. It is certainly regrettable that K. Abraham's insights were not pursued to their potentially fruitful conclusion. Actually, the opposite occurred. At the same time, K. Abraham's own disinclination to use a metapsychological perspective whenever his conceptions appeared adequate without it was responsible for the subsequent development of Kleinian theory, a rigorous, generous, and in some respects even grandiose theory, but one that proved unable to transcend a descriptive system of drives dependent on the universal centrality of fantasy.

In Freud's conception, melancholia hovers between love and hate amid archaic unconscious representations that are unable to reach consciousness. The issue in this struggle seems to be whether or not one should keep investing the love object despite disappointments, ill treatment, and ultimately, despite the loss of the love object. This type of ambivalent unconscious situation as regards the object might well derive from predispositions acquired during infancy, but does not in our view define melancholia. After a careful rereading of Freud's beautiful and difficult essay, we are struck by the recurrent image of an open wound that is said to attract the whole of the counter-cathecting libido. This is precisely, we think, the wound the melancholic attempts to hide, wall in, and encrypt. Furthermore, we posit that this activity does not occur in the unconscious, but in the system where the wound itself is located, namely in the preconscious-conscious system. For the melancholic, it is in this psychic system that an intratopographic process must take place. The process recreates in a single psychic area, system, or agency, the correlate of the entire topography, isolating the wound and separating it (with a multitude of counter-investments) from the rest of the psyche and especially from the memory of what had been torn from it. Such a creation is only justified when reality must be denied along with the narcissistic and libidinal import of the loss. We propose to call this supplemental topography *inclusion* and one of us has earlier called its effect *preservative repression*. The derivatives of the fantasy of incorporation are related to the secret life of inclusion topography.<sup>5</sup>

4. *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham*.

5. [Two sentences from the original French text were omitted here at Maria Torok's request.—Ed.]

## MELANCHOLIA: FROM "MOURNING" TO SUICIDE

In the light of our hypothesis of incorporation, is it possible to interpret the struggle of "love and hate" in a subject who, according to Freud, *has in fact been* disappointed in and mistreated by the love object? We find it crucial to affirm the prior existence of a love totally free of ambivalence, to insist on the undisclosable character of this love, and finally to show that a real and therefore traumatic cause had put an end to it. The system of counter-investments—using the themes of hate, disappointment, and mistreatment supposedly endured on account of the object—results from some traumatic affliction and from the utter impossibility of mourning. Hence the fantasized aggression is not in fact primary; it merely extends the genuine aggression the object actually suffered *earlier* in the form of death, disgrace, or removal—this being the involuntary cause of the separation. Inclusion does not occur unless the subject is convinced of the object's total innocence. In the opposite case, when a narcissistic disappointment did originate with the object, schizophrenia would set in, implying the destruction of both the object and the subject. It is not so with melancholics. Their undisclosable idyll was pure and devoid of aggression. It did not end because of infidelity but owing to hostile external forces. This is why melancholics cherish the memory as their most precious possession, even though it must be concealed by a crypt built with the bricks of hate and aggression. It should be remarked that as long as the crypt holds, there is no melancholia. It erupts when the walls are shaken, often as a result of the loss of some secondary love-object who had buttressed them. Faced with the danger of seeing the crypt crumble, the whole of the ego becomes one with the crypt, showing the concealed object of love in its own guise. Threatened with the imminent loss of its internal support—the kernel of its being—the ego will fuse with the included object, imagining that the object is bereft of its partner. Consequently, the ego begins the public display of an interminable process of mourning. The subject heralds the love-object's sadness, his gaping wound, his universal guilt—without ever revealing, of course, the unspeakable secret, well worth the entire universe. The only means left by which the subject can covertly revive the secret paradise taken from him is to stage the grief attributed to the object who lost him. Freud is surprised that melancholics show no shame at all at the horrible things for which they blame themselves. Now we can understand it: the more suffering and degradation the object undergoes (meaning: the more he pines for the subject he lost), the prouder the subject can be: "he endures all this because of me." Being a melancholic, I stage and let everyone else see the full extent of my love object's grief over having lost me.

Melancholics seem to inflict pain on themselves, but in fact they

lend their own flesh to their phantom object of love.<sup>6</sup> Freud saw in this self-inflicted pain an aggressiveness against the love-object which has been shifted onto the melancholics themselves. Yet is it worthwhile to wonder whether melancholics really love their phantom object? It matters very little since the phantom object is simply "crazy" about the melancholic: the phantom is ready to do anything for him. Melancholics embody their phantom object in everything that the phantom, frantic with grief, endured "for them." If there is any aggression at all, it is shared between the love object and the melancholic subject in being directed at the external world at large in the form of withdrawal and retreat from libidinal investments.

Needless to say, the phantom object haunts the process of counter-transference as well and this fact represents a real danger in psychoanalytic therapy. Analysts may unwittingly target the phantom object, not realizing that for the melancholic the phantom (the incorporated object) is the only partner. Assigning aggression to the love object, the analyst actually speaks out *against* the melancholic's most precious and most carefully concealed treasure. And yet, we analysts are meant to recognize the love object behind all the disguises of hate and aggression. The realization that the one is pleased by the other's grief over him; the recognition not of the hate but of the love felt by the object for the subject; the acceptance ultimately of the narcissistic bliss at having received the object's love despite dangerous transgressions—this is what melancholics expect from psychoanalysis. When they obtain this acknowledgment, the inclusion can gradually give way to genuine mourning and the fantasies of incorporation can be transferred into introjections. But if this acknowledgment fails to occur, the original gaping wound will revive and will transform the analyst's comments on aggression into fresh narcissistic injuries. The best response to these injuries might well be a manic reaction. Once the object is under attack, mania parades the omnipotence of love: "See how forcefully he defends me, how marvelously he pleads our cause; he never tires of 'socking it to them': he doesn't mince his words, nothing frightens him, he has no rest . . . ; isn't his passion admirable?" Triumph, scorn, fury, defiance in the face of shame, these are some of the titles in the manic repertory. Admittedly, not much analytic progress is made under these circumstances, but at least the patient's life is safe. Unfortunately, melancholic "mourning" is often the subject's last chance at narcissistic restoration. This becomes clearer if we consider that the bereaved object is

6. ["Phantom object of love" is used here in the medical sense of "phantom limb syndrome," a condition in which amputees continue to experience pain in the missing limb. Abraham went on to use the term "phantom" in a very different sense in "Notes on the Phantom."—Ed.]



envisioned as having *not yet entirely lost* the partner for whom he is, as it were, mourning in anticipation. So, when the subject learns from the analyst, in a repetition of the initial trauma, that his secret lover *must* be attacked, he has no choice but to push his fantasy of mourning to its ultimate conclusion: "If my beloved is to lose me forever, he will not survive this loss." This certainty restores peace of mind to the subject, a picture of what recovery might look like. The cure will be complete the day when the "object" makes the supreme sacrifice. . . .