

*Six Steps in the Treatment of Borderline Personality Organization*

# The Development of Transference Neurosis

Vamik D. Volkan

# **Six Steps in the Treatment of Borderline Personality Organization**

**Vamik D. Volkan**

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *Six Steps in the Treatment of Borderline Personality Organization* Vamik D. Volkan

Copyright © 1987 by Vamik D. Volkan

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

## Table of Contents

### Step Five: The Development of Transference Neurosis

PEACOCK STORIES

A MAGICAL TOY

THE FATHER OF TODAY

MANIFESTATIONS OF EROTIC TRANSFERENCE

ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE INTRAPSYCHIC CONFLICTS IN CONCRETE FASHION

THE VERMIN STORY AGAIN

OEDIPAL TRANSFERENCE

FURTHER TAMING OF AGGRESSION

WISHING TO HAVE CHILDREN

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

TAKING STOCK

## Step Five: The Development of Transference Neurosis

### PEACOCK STORIES

No drastic event marked Pattie's move from the fourth to the fifth step. For many months she vacillated between these steps before she could be considered neurotic and no longer on a lower level of personality organization.

What follows is my understanding of her transition as evidenced in her "peacock stories." Her last attempt at therapeutic regression in Step Three had occurred when she dreamt of driving her car backward and had been anxious over this regression lest she hurt someone. With my encouragement she recaptured the memories and feelings of her murderous attack on her mother. Now her ego allowed her to tolerate a detailed recollection of this event. This therapeutic *regressive* move resulted in her individuating more effectively from her mother's representation. She gave up Ken, who stood for aspects of Mother, Father, and her "greedy mouth," and she was now ready to become involved in a *progressive* move, which symbolically became evident in her speaking about peacocks. On the farm, she was raising baby peacocks in a caged area, and when they matured enough she released them from the pen. The act of freeing them made her anxious, representing her breaking away from the satellite state. She feared their being eaten by foxes and raccoons once they were given their freedom, but to her delight they survived and flew about. She knew they represented her sense of self.

The night that she freed the peacocks one of her initial symptoms returned—she slept in the barn. However, in discussing this we understood that this symptom was now used for a different psychic purpose than when she had been afraid of human contact and sought safety among the animals. Now she was sleeping in the barn with the newly liberated peacocks to assure their safety for the night. In the morning they would be freed again. Pattie was making herself into a good, nurturing mother, one who would protect her children but also let them move out of her orbit at an appropriate time. This behavior symbolically made up for what she had not received from her own mother when she was a child (Volkan 1982a, 1982c). Once the good mother was created and Pattie had absorbed her functions, Pattie had a

chance to advance through regular developmental channels.

### **Symbolic Meanings of Peacocks**

We discussed her unconscious choice of peacocks to symbolize aspects of her childhood problems and her triumph over them. The cry of a peacock is like that of an infant, and we equated *peacock* with a penis. Thus the birds represented Pattie's helplessness and the power to deal with it. The possession of a penis was in the service of her differentiating from her mother, and soon Pattie realized that she was no longer obsessed with having a penis, although she was still ambivalent about this obsession. She knew that further progress in her treatment would lead to her surrendering this obsession. Her main symbol for her fantasied penis was still the prized gun given her by her maternal grandfather, to whom she had written without receiving a reply. Her initial excitement about getting to know the old man was gone.

She would not give up the penis (gun) easily. If her grandfather was feeble, she could cause her gun to be "recatheted" in the transference. Thus an aspect of the transference neurosis dealing with sophisticated psychosexual issues and structural conflict was evolved and sustained for some time, signaling full entry into Step Five.

Having heard of a *physician* (representing her analyst) who gave skeet lessons, she enrolled, taking her grandfather's gift to her lessons. The gun would thus not be used for aggression—the killing of horses, or the murder of Mary or their mother—but for a "tamed" sport, and thus she could still keep her "tamed" penis and have it approved by the physician (analyst).

During one skeet lesson the physician received a summons to care for a man with a badly cut arm. He exclaimed, "Shit!" and went on shooting for another half hour before taking his emergency call. When he did leave he failed to say goodbye to Pattie and seemed to ignore her altogether. The next day she came to my office with a tight mouth and an unhappy expression. When I asked the cause of it she reported having dreamt that her grandfather had given her a bent rake—for cleaning "shit"—instead of the gun. The dream's day residue clearly came from the events at the shooting lesson. She had desired pride in her roots and so had gone to the physician to improve her ability to use the gun her grandfather had given her. But the physician's exclamation "Shit!" had symbolically given her ordure. He was not

compassionate and failed to give adequate care to his patient, with whom Pattie identified. The prized gun had turned into a bent rake.

The physician's attitude reminded Pattie of her childhood. Her mother was not compassionate, and her father failed to approve of Pattie. "I have my childhood feelings," she said, and angrily demanded that I interpret the dream at once.

I told her that she perceived me as one who would not understand how much her prized gun meant to her. She was not really ready to hear my interpretation and would probably nullify anything I tried to say.

#### **Wish for Premature Termination**

She was angry toward me for a month, declaring that she was all right now, and that we could terminate treatment. I told her that although she had freed herself from her mother as she had freed her peacocks, she still wanted to be free and have a cock or a prized gun, and that she was perceiving me as someone telling her to be free without a penis. She had come to the point in her analysis at which she was thinking about becoming a woman but also considering that this could only be achieved by the surrender of something she had formerly highly valued. Her progressive moves in the past had made her anxious; now they added to her anxiety by making her face a conflict between wanting to keep and to give up something of value.

These remarks were the day residue of a dream she reported on the following day. In it, she was driving a car that went forward this time, representative of her progressive move. When she came to an intersection (the point in her analysis I had spoken of in her previous session), she wanted to stop but could not because the brakes would not hold. When she tried the hand brake (a penis), it failed too, and she was terrified at the likelihood of being run over by a huge truck. There was no collision, but her terror awakened her. The dream suggested that speedy progress was risky, and that without a properly functioning penis she might be crushed by the huge truck, which she called "a real prick!"

I told her that I was in no hurry, but observed her desire for a speedy recovery. Could we not stay for a while at the "intersection" and see what kind of choices she might make? My calm remarks about her

nightmarish event had a soothing effect, and her hostility toward me vanished. However, she could progress only by returning to one of her symptoms. She began coming anywhere from 5 to 15 or 20 minutes late to each session.

### **Being Late to Sessions**

Formerly, when afraid of her aggressive impulse to kill me, she would skip a session and sleep all day. Her new habit of being late, as I understood it over time, was her security control—a control over her working through her separation-individuation problems. She would use her 5, 10, or 15 minutes of tardiness to separate herself from me as the preoedipal mother. With the establishment of this habitual control, then, she could move on to deal with me as the oedipal father or the representation of people or things of higher-level investment. I interpreted her habit again and again over a period of time, and she understood and agreed with me. In spite of this, she kept being tardy for most of the rest of our time together. In view of the severity of her preoedipal problems I thought that her coming late to her sessions was a token of triumph that she could not give up. To be sure, she had worked feverishly to resolve object-relations conflicts in order to move upward to confront structural conflicts, but in a sense she could control with her tardiness for sessions whatever object-relations conflict might remain, and thus move on to deal with the structural ones.

### **The Analyst's Peacock Fantasy**

After grieving in various ways over the surrender of her penis, she would ask me to guarantee her success as a woman. The meaning of her preoccupation with peacocks changed. Now she was interested in a hen peacock and the hatching of eggs and the emergence of chicks.

My family had recently acquired a new house that stands in a woodland, and as I listened to Pattie's account of her peacocks I thought I would like to have some too. I envisioned them strutting across my grass and perching in the trees outside the living-room windows. I wanted to ask Pattie to give me a pair of the baby birds, but I would never ask for such a gift nor abandon my technical stance. I was so involved in my patient's therapeutic story about the birds, and I enjoyed hearing about them so much, that I had my own peacock fantasy. I knew that when Pattie became a woman and gave up her penis she would



want to create a substitute by having my babies, and a baby peacock stood for such wished-for babies. My fantasies showed how much we were attuned in this process of making a woman out of Pattie!

She stopped making any mention of her mother during her sessions, and I amused myself by imagining that her mother was assigned treatment during the initial five minutes of her sessions she chose to miss herself.

### **A MAGICAL TOY**

One day, cleaning her room, Pattie found the magical toy baby bottle that she had stolen and with which she had fed rats. She brought it to a session and recalled again, with intense affect, the story about her mother that caused her to steal the bottle. She asked me if she could keep it on my desk, wanting to keep it between us so its meaning could be analyzed. She indicated that she still had a conflict about keeping it or disposing of it. I agreed that she could leave it on my desk with the understanding that we would analyze its psychological meaning and then she could take it and dispose of it. The bottle stayed in full view on my desk. I told her it was another controlling device keeping her from slipping back into her mother's orbit, as was her habit of coming late to her sessions. Under these conditions she could examine her relationship with her father and with men in general. She eventually took the bottle back and threw it away without ceremony. Its magic was gone, but she kept using her other safety valve—her tardiness.

### **THE FATHER OF TODAY**

After we had analyzed Pattie's story of the baby peacocks, she made an effort to be friendly with her father, who responded positively at first. He occasionally came to the farm alone and took Pattie out to dine. Although she continued coming to my office in dirty jeans, she said that for the candlelight dinners with her father she dressed in an appropriately feminine way. Soon, however, Pattie became disappointed in him. He sounded to me like a depressive character, and there was no pleasing him. Although their encounters, in which Pattie had had so much hope, turned into shouting matches, she stuck with him and tried to influence him. He accepted her as a business partner only on his terms, and it was clear he saw his daughter as a sick girl. Masochistically, she undertook more and more responsibility for the work on the farm, which now had a flock of sheep and some new horses. Her father never gave

spontaneous expression of approval or appreciation of her efforts, and when she demanded acknowledgment it seemed insincere to her, although he occasionally paid her a few compliments. After watching this cycle of her solicitation of tenderness from her father for some time, I spoke of it to her, and we both expected it to continue while her reaction to his shortcomings became gradually less painful.

After Ken left and she began trying to recapture and modify her oedipal life, Pattie was virtually abstinent sexually. Once highly promiscuous, she no longer needed sexual activity for the resolution of preoedipal issues. She could not, in fact, indulge in sex since the oedipal issues were not worked through. On the infrequent occasions when she did take a sex partner she felt satisfied biologically, being able as she had not been with her pickups in the past to reach orgasm. She felt the need, however, for psychological satisfaction and announced that she wanted to find someone with whom to fall in love. She was nevertheless aware of having many intrapsychic issues to deal with first.

I told her that it was unlikely that unfinished issues concerning her father, influenced by her childhood experience, would be resolved by trying to recapture and change her relationship with her *father of today*. I said that her daily preoccupation with him was a resistance to bringing such unfinished business from her childhood into the open for us to confront.

### MANIFESTATIONS OF EROTIC TRANSFERENCE

Since sharing the peacock stories, Pattie was even resisting viewing me as a man. She was controlling me by separating us for five minutes or so as though I were her mother, and she was trying to resolve her problems with men outside her sessions. Although she understood my interpretation of her resistance, she stayed cautious about returning to a charged oedipal transference neurosis.

When she had felt rejected by her father when he had become depressed over the loss of the recognition he had counted on, she was 8 years old, and the rejection robbed her of the hope of having an integrated self and high self-esteem. I offered her her last chance to alter things for the better, and if she failed to accept, there was no hope for her. She seemed sensible about it, and I encouraged her to take this chance when she felt ready. Instead of agreeing to go back to oedipal issues in her sessions, she gained weight and began to look most unattractive. Her overeating had many meanings, including her

desire for motherly love, but its main purpose was to make her sexually unattractive. “You are building up a wall of fat between us because you don’t want to be disappointed in my possible manly love for you,” I said.

She began to diet and tried to make me sexless. She recalled how terrified she had been when I first told her that we would work together with her lying on the couch. “At the time, I sexualized this, but I didn’t tell you about that,” she said. “It terrified me, but I took the chance. But, you see, you never screwed me, so I trust you.”

I told her that I was pleased to hear that my behavior had made her trust me, but that I now heard a different meaning in her statement—that my not making sexual overtures had not made her feel anxious because it indicated the absence of a functional penis. I asked if she could imagine trusting a man who still possessed a functional penis. I also reminded her that she had recently referred to me again as a computer and thus made me sexless. Although she could allow herself to have sexual thoughts about me, an oedipal father transference that could be systematically worked through would not develop. She would say, “It is useless for me to have these feelings anyway; we will never go to bed together. Also, you are too old for me!”

I noted that the possibility of having sexual feelings for me was too much for her to handle. She began bringing one of her dogs with her, leaving it in her car in front of my building while she had her session. She brought another dog that she even taught to run loose around the building during her sessions. I thought she saw the dogs as chaperones. She would not cooperate in exploring the meaning of this behavior.

### **ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE INTRAPSYCHIC CONFLICTS IN CONCRETE FASHION**

Pattie was becoming more skillful as a horse trainer and thought of the possibility of studying veterinary medicine. This pleased me, and I told myself that my pleasure reflected the importance placed on education and the attainment of a professional degree in my family. I realized, however, that she was not ready to tolerate a rigorous school schedule and that it was doubtful that she would qualify for college. She did not go to school, but undertook on her own a program of reading and began making

reference to social and political issues. I came to consider her highly intelligent.

Her fifth year of treatment found her still living at the farm, although she often had spoken of moving out. In reality she could not afford to move. Her talents lay in the horse business, and she was unable to support herself independently. She worked hard at improving relations with her father, and after some struggle they made a deal to buy horses from Europe, keeping them on the farm for training and subsequent sale. Pattie made an effort to improve her acquaintance among people in the business of selling and breeding horses, which she realized offered lucrative financial possibilities. With financial support from her father, a training ring was set up on the farm, and a skilled European trainer was brought over to train the animals and to give instruction to Pattie. The employment of this man, Klaus, necessitated a trip abroad on which Pattie accompanied her father. After a two-week sojourn with him, Pattie seemed to have gained confidence, but she began to perceive Klaus as an unwanted sibling and to complain that her father was so stubborn that she disliked traveling with him. She did not tell me of a dramatic event that had taken place on their trip since she was not conscious of its meaning. It was disclosed in Step Six, but had I known of it upon her return I would have better understood the meaning of her dreams at the time. On the manifest level, her dreams dealt with some sexual occurrence that took place while she slept. She also dreamt of being crucified or trampled by horses, as though for being guilty of something.

She filled her sessions with her hatred of Klaus. I did not challenge her interpretation of this excessive dislike as reactivation of her old sibling rivalry. Had I known of the events in Europe I might have noted how her preoccupation with the familiar, old sibling rivalry issue was used to resist the conscious acknowledgment of another unresolved issue. Klaus stayed in the house with Pattie, and I learned that sharing the house with him in the absence of her parents caused her to feel sexual tension that she needed to deny.

I have observed in my practice that patients like Pattie who have been severely traumatized in childhood have a need to use their "parents of today" to reexperience their childhood. As though talking about and understanding their childhood is not enough, they have to resolve things *concretely*. Pattie had done this with her mother and was attempting it with her father. I knew that she was capable of forming a lasting transference neurosis about oedipal issues, as she had done with her peacock stories at

the start of Step Five. Now, a year after hearing these stories, I still awaited her development of a “hot” oedipal transference to me.

Although she had had high hopes of the European trip she took with her father, she was still disappointed in him, and began telling me that there was no possibility of being friends with him. She planned to retain their business relationship and continue living on the farm, but thought of finding new relationships with other people.

### **Recalling Childhood in Actions**

At five years and three months into her analysis she arranged for a significant activity involving both parents. This time she was most cooperative in her free associations, so *both* of us understood the intrapsychic aspect of what she had done. After seeing an advertisement for a special seminar at a rather distant university, she enrolled herself and her parents, leaving Klaus to look after the farm. The seminar dealt with equine anatomy and diseases, with special reference to reproduction and the delivery of deformed colts. During the few days of the seminar, Pattie shared a motel room with her parents, sleeping in the bed with her mother while her father, then in his early sixties, slept in the second bed. Thus Pattie was their *only* child! Moreover, a slide show of foals with deformed legs provided a representation of Mary. Pattie talked to her mother about Mary’s childhood, and she was now less defensive over hearing Pattie’s claim that her troubles had begun with Mary’s being deformed at birth. Pattie’s memories of Mary as a child poured out, and she recaptured specific memories of her mother’s being unkind. For the first time she experienced a primitive form of powerful guilt. While sharing a room with her parents Pattie was flooded with memories of her childhood “mouth monsters” and witches. She had one dream of a mouth, representing her oral greed, being smashed. She exchanged roles with her mother, creating good mothering for the little Pattie in an effort to undo the mother’s original ineptitude as a parent. She saw that her father was unaware of what was going on. On the return trip he had the car radio turned on but not set to any station, and he seemed content to listen to static. Pattie thought this symbolized the way in which her father put a buffer between himself and other people. Her hope of changing her parents and reconstructing her childhood with them disappeared. Although I knew she would still struggle with her hopes, by now she had done sufficient reality testing to know that her neurosis would not be resolved in this way.

## Searching for Objects for Identification

After they returned to the farm one of their horses went berserk and she beat it. I was never sure whether or not she had purposely aroused it, but she hit its mouth, which probably represented her oral sadism. I felt that the animal also stood for her parents and Mary. Although she knew that beating it was not as bad as killing it, she was very remorseful, asking a knowledgeable woman horse trainer what she could have done besides beating it. While she was talking to this woman on the telephone, her father kept calling her downstairs every few minutes asking her to wash the dishes. She was furious at his interference, but was able to listen to the woman's advice, which consisted of a recommendation to use a tranquilizer. The woman added, "The most important thing is that you protect yourself when a horse goes berserk, so you don't get hurt."

Pattie found a similarity between me and this woman, saying, "The most important thing is that I am coming here to see you to find out different ways of handling my emotions and my life." She adamantly declared that she would leave the farm, and although I said little I knew that she could not yet manage this. Then she burst into a long, cleansing sob, displaying real grief over losing the hope of changing her parents.

## THE VERMIN STORY AGAIN

Pattie felt more energetic and better integrated in the following sessions and exhibited two phenomena. First, she brought a white flower in a pot to a session, which she had bought on the way to my office not for me but for *herself*. I felt it represented the birth of a new ego, one of which she herself could take care. She spoke of forming a better and more civilized relationship with her older sister. Although the siblings lived in different states, Pattie had become friendly with Mary, who was also in treatment. At times they compared their understanding of their past. Although they could never become close friends, Pattie had considerably improved her relationship with her other brother and sister. Klaus had by then gone home, but Pattie spoke of her growing prowess as a rider and trainer of horses.

The second phenomenon occurred in the very next session. She returned to her tale of being infested with vermin. Now, however, she had no delusions, saying that the first time she had spoken of being infested there was every likelihood of this being so. She had met a woman of her age who was

having sex with a very ugly man. Apparently, Pattie had identified with her and then wished that her new friend would be different from others who had disappointed her. This woman looked like an animal, having flea bites all over her arms and lice in her eyelashes. Pattie had thought of cutting the woman's hair, but felt that cutting it would brand her. This led her to associate with the branding of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*. Discussion of this allowed her to see that she was feeling guilt for her oedipal sexual wishes. The story about vermin contained elements from the oedipal level.

She reported dreaming of being in a European hotel with a girlfriend. The room's doors did not close, so her friend went freely from room to room and slept with different men. Pattie did not want to do this; she wanted to be able to say "No." I would have understood the meaning of this dream more clearly had I known what took place on Pattie's European trip. Her associations related to her development of more stable boundaries by being able to say "No" to her impulses and to other people. She recalled how, during her original experience of "having bugs," we had both itched and developed psychological borders between self- and object representations.

She said she felt herself to be in a transitional state. Although she commented that she had dreamed of a European country, the country might have been Persia. She was reading about Alexander the Great and Persia and thinking about me at the same time. This was the start of her sustained return to an oedipal transference neurosis with me. She kept trying to identify my native land and finally recalled, on the basis of what someone had said, that I was from Cyprus, "near Persia." We were both Alexander the Great, conquering new territories in her psyche. She then directly associated me with Alexander. When her readings disclosed that Alexander had been a homosexual, she decided that I was not in fact sexless, but a homosexual who was no threat to her. She could continue to deny her sexual feelings for me.

It was at this time that the hospital worker who had gotten her pregnant called her, and it gave her great joy to say "No" to his suggestion that they get together.

### OEDIPAL TRANSFERENCE

In order to change an appointment, Pattie called my home. Later she spoke of her fantasy of having spoken to my wife there, whom she perceived as a young woman. She asked me if she were in her

twenties, saying that if this were so, I frightened her. I finished her sentence—“since sex between us (a young woman and an older man) would then be a real possibility.” When, at last, she declared her love for me, she blushed furiously. She was very shy and alternated between denying what she had said and affirming it. During this time she lost six pounds and looked very pretty.

She had not had sexual relations with anyone for seven months, nor could she recall masturbating during that time. When she was 27, five years and three months into treatment, she arranged a date with a man totally different from her truck driver pickups. When she had intercourse with this gentle and rather effeminate man, it was of very brief duration, but she had wanted to give herself, to keep things under control, to be a sexual woman. A few weeks later she had intercourse with someone she had known for a long time and enjoyed it greatly. She thanked him for satisfying her, but realized that he was too self-centered to appreciate what she was going through. Considering him callous, she never slept with him again. Often in her transference she said that she was in search of a man like myself to love and with whom to have children.

### **Practicing Motherhood**

She became friendly with the mother of two small children with whom she spent a good deal of time. “You know, I am practicing motherhood,” she said, “and I like it.” Recalling her two abortions, she declared, “You know, I could have two children myself.” Although she experienced remorse and grief, she knew that if she had delivered her babies she could not have been a good mother to them. “Besides, I want my children’s father to be a man as mature as you,” she said.

She was changing rapidly. Her lumpy fat was gone, and she bought new clothes, including a black dress “to mourn my old self.” She also bought a watch, feeling that keeping track of time is an adult activity. She had a series of dreams she called her “high school dreams.” They concerned her years in school, when things were very bad for her; she said the dreams represented her desire to go back and start over on a different track. I heard from her the typical girlish Cinderella fantasy of finding a rich man and marrying him. She brought a picture of her bedroom for me to see; it showed a nice, tidy room in which the bed was neatly covered with a lace-bordered bedspread. I had the answer to the question I had asked myself in the past as to whether or not she lived in squalor. She may have done so at one time,



but no longer. She was obviously inviting me to visit her bedroom—as a father aware of her sexuality, or at least as a father who would accept her femininity.

When I asked for her associations, she said that when she was 15 her whole family went to Europe, renting a three-bedroom chateau for the summer holiday. She was “a big bad blob” then, and no one wanted to share a room with her, their rejection being very painful and humiliating for her. She was now showing me that she had an enviable room of her own. She associated further, saying that her father did not allow her to close the door of her bedroom at the farm, and that she was determined to shut the door for privacy, to have a feminine room and the privilege of inviting whomever she chose to enter. In the next session, remarks about her having a bedroom in a house she did not own led her to consider real-world issues, and we continued doing this during the months to come.

#### **FURTHER TAMING OF AGGRESSION**

By now the farm had 22 horses, 66 cows, 60 sheep, six dogs, five cats, and one peacock, and although a farm manager was employed, Pattie carried an unbelievable workload caring for the animals. She loved the farm, saying, “It is the most beautiful place on earth.” But since her parents were aging and Pattie had no title to the place, she was singularly unprotected; on the death of her parents her siblings would be sure to sell the place. I encouraged her to get legal advice about her future, since although she was not paid much for her work, it was offset by her free lodging, and she had started to pay for her treatment from her own funds.

The result of this discussion was that she persuaded her father that she needed more help with the farm. In the sixth year of her treatment she came to a session highly excited, announcing that now she would be a “boss” and wanted to assimilate all the administrative skills I exercised as medical director of the hospital in which we held our sessions.

At the start of the sixth year of treatment, there occurred an event that had significant symbolic meaning: A yearling broke its foot and instead of destroying it, Pattie nursed it back to health. She recalled the earlier shootings and declared that her aggression was now tamed and that “a horse is a horse; a horse is not Mary!”

## **A Killer Image within the Patient**

Her next session signaled a major intrapsychic change in Pattie. She had brought with her a blood sample from a horse, putting it in the refrigerator near the waiting room, planning to take it to a veterinarian when she left my office. She asked if she had been right to do this. I approved, but suggested that we pursue the possible meaning of her behavior. It turned out that she had wanted to demonstrate to me that drawing blood from an animal was not killing it but benefiting it, and that her aggression was tamed. She recalled awakening the night before and recalling a dream in which she was in the house of her childhood with a pathetic looking man who was a killer. She then dreamt of deciding to get rid of him by poisoning him.

She knew that the killer was herself—her aggression. “I killed the killer in a womanly way—by poison,” she said. “He had no remorse, but I had feelings for him. But he had to die!” She was able to make her own interpretation, and went on to show that in the past she had turned her aggression on herself. “I was abusing my body with drugs and alcohol. Once I thought my body would die. The dream certainly is about my taming my aggression. I now think that I will live a long life. Children give people a purpose to live. I’d like to have children.”

Recalling her shooting horses, she commented that she was in a risky business, that horses could kill her, but that her increasing professionalism as a trainer made her career less dangerous. The dream reminded her of her childhood home. She remembered that her mother had collected many things from her father, but would not use them; the ornaments only gathered dust, the mother treating them, according to Pattie, as she had treated her children. Most of them were now cracked, faded, and in some way flawed.

She had visited her friend with the two children, one of whom fell down and hurt himself while she was there. When his mother soothed him Pattie wondered what her mother would have done under the same circumstances. She remembered breaking some rice bowls as a child, and wondered if she had really wanted to “break” her mother.

## **WISHING TO HAVE CHILDREN**

Pattie spoke again of having children of her own and treating them quite differently from the way in which she had been treated. "A weird thing," she laughed. "I'd like to have your children, but I can't imagine having sex with you." While watching her friend's little son sleeping one day she saw his erection. She was fascinated at seeing how a boy's body functioned. To her, the erection stood for a kind of freedom that the boy had. She now thought of her horses as representing freedom. She could relate to the small boy and the horses differently, with pleasure but without envy.

The character of her hours with me was changing, but she continued to speak of wanting a child. For the first time she mentioned terminating treatment. "I want to have a baby to replace you when we stop working together," she insisted, adding, "It is so amazing what we have done here!"

She reported feeling "solid." I could detect a symbolic reference to her identifying with me. Severely regressed patients like Pattie at first identify with the analyst according to the step of treatment they are in at the time (Volkan 1982a, Tahka 1979, 1984). I earlier noted Pattie's identification with my integrating functions, and she was now identifying with my functions as an analyst and as a catalyst for change in her. She spoke of an old horse with "old habits," saying that I "would not allow her to continue her old habits. With patience, and without losing my temper, and not being 'kind' all the time, I helped the horse to change, and she responded well."

At the same time, she was telling me about her effort to rid herself of her disruptive identification with her parents. She noted that she did not need to be as rigid as her father, nor scatterbrained like her mother.

## THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

In examining one of her dreams, Pattie directly freed her old oral aggression without anxiety or symptom formation. There was a hippopotamus with huge teeth in this dream. It bit someone on the leg, representing Pattie causing Mary's leg problems out of anger. She reported having had the old chewing gum dream again, "But it was not intense. Before, when I had this dream I would wake up with sore jaws. I must have chewed furiously in my sleep. But now I did not experience this intensity."

The hippopotamus in her dream also represented her obesity, although she was no longer

overweight. She recalled our discussion of how her fat tissue was to keep herself sexually undesirable to me. She had recently seen a television account of sexual harassment of female patients by male therapists, and said, "I have full trust in you. In fact, I'm looking for someone like you, but younger."

## **TAKING STOCK**

Pattie began beautiful recitals of all that analysis had done for her, and how she now perceived important people in her life with whom she had formerly felt conflicted. For example, she could now say of her mother, where formerly she would have reported a painful exchange, "My mother is a good-hearted person, but, you know, she is a lost cause."

When she asked when we would end our work I suggested that we take stock of where we were and decide on a mutually agreeable time. In the next session we began taking stock.

### **Real-World Issues**

In two-and-a-half years she could have real control over her money, but she questioned now whether her father should control her trust fund. They had begun selling horses, and, having other money, too, she was paying directly for her treatment. She felt secure in money matters, and had not consulted a lawyer about her legal rights as I had suggested because she believed that would have been tactless. She could keep her options open.

### **Her Relationship with Her Parents**

They were now perceived in more realistic terms than before. She felt close to her mother and had a business relationship with her father. She still felt their influence on her, but no longer buckled under it, being now able to test reality.

### **Her Relationship with Her Siblings**

Her older sister was no longer an archenemy. Although she thought of him as narcissistic, Pattie liked her brother, whom she seldom saw. She now felt comfortable with Mary, to whom she wrote and

whom she called on the telephone. She felt no obligation to join the family at Christmas.

### **Male-Female Relationships**

After long periods of abstinence she had intercourse a few times, always reaching orgasm. She was now selective in picking sexual partners. She had no steady boyfriend, but wanted to have one like me. She did not want to put off terminating her treatment until she found one. She would take a chance on terminating first. She still felt some doubts about her femininity and thought she needed more work on it, but she liked her friend who had children and had become interested in motherliness.

### **Her Love for Herself**

She was much less masochistic. She could invest libido in herself without thinking of herself as a femme fatale. She did not depend on a good mother's availability to have self-esteem. She wanted to lose more weight.

### **Her Relationship to Animals**

She was aware now of how she used horses as symbols of many people and things. Her new ability to manage and care for horses enhanced her self-esteem.

### **Her Aggression and Impulsivity**

All expressions of pathological aggression were gone, and she now used it to assert herself. She had better control over her impulses.

### **Self-Observation**

This was greatly improved.

### **Responsibility**

Pattie was responsible for her work on the farm, but her frustration with her father still interfered.

She was coming to her sessions on time more often.

After taking stock, we agreed to work for six more months. At the time of this decision she had been in treatment for six years and one month.