Nancy began her treatment with me when she was in her 30s. She wanted to form a deep and lasting relationship with a man and to marry and have children. She felt that she tended to drift along and hoped that treatment would provide her with someone to light a fire under her. She had had several years of therapy with an analyst in another area of the country. Nancy and her analyst both felt it was a success. The central focus of the analysis had been her disturbed, guilt-ridden relationship with her deceased mother. With the help of the analyst, she ended a relationship that seemed to be unworkable and made a major life decision: She interrupted her career as a medical laboratory supervisor and moved east to enter the graduate department of a university as a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy.

The patient's mother married the patient's father, a man 15 years her senior, when she was 22 years old because she was afraid she would be an old maid. She came from a well-to-do southwestern family of eight daughters. Her mother (Nancy's grandmother) was considered a great beauty, as were the daughters, although Nancy's mother considered herself ugly and dumb in comparison to her mother and sisters. The sisters, who all married men in the oil industry, felt Nancy's mother had married beneath herself. Nancy's father came from an established farm family in an eastern state. He left the farm to work in the oil industry, but during a business recession shortly after his marriage he decided to return to farming, thereby separating his wife from her family. Nancy's mother, who had the reputation of being a “saint,” accepted her husband's decision but was never happy with it. Nancy was born three years after her older brother, Matt.

During the last trimester of her pregnancy with Nancy, Nancy's mother was ill with placental previa and spent the time with her
family in the Southwest. Nancy weighed just under 5 lb at birth, but was healthy. Her mother was recovering slowly and it was decided that the baby would be taken back to the farm by her father, with her mother to follow her some time later. Thus Nancy received her initial care principally from men—her father and grandfather. Nancy firmly believes that even after her mother’s return to the family, the feeling of affection that Nancy noted between her mother and Matt never became established with her. Until the age of five, Nancy ate sitting on her father’s lap, and until the age of three, Nancy slept in her parent’s bedroom. Nancy was also three years old when her grandfather, whom she loved dearly, died. Nancy was enuretic until she was 11 years old and received frequent enemas for constipation.

As a little girl, Nancy had blond curly hair and a petite body. Everyone thought of her as pretty and this won her favor even with her mother. By age five, when she was removed from father’s lap, Nancy’s hair had darkened and she believes she had lost her attractiveness. For the next few years, Nancy worked in the fields with her father and brother, refusing to wear a shirt to be like them. As a young teenager, she had a rapid growth spurt and thus was a big, awkward girl, hulking over her classmates.

Nancy’s relationship with her brother occupied an important role in her early life. She described an early memory of her grandfather waving his cane at Matt, who was teasing and tormenting her. Matt would attack all her toys, he even dismembered and burned her favorite doll. At an early age, Matt began to rub his penis against her leg, and later he would lie on top of her and masturbate. Despite the abuse, Nancy would follow him around, desperately seeking his company. At age 11, Nancy began to rebel against the sexual activity. Matt threatened to injure her if she told their mother and bribed her with money to continue. After about another year, Nancy insisted that the sexual activity stop and Matt turned to the few girlfriends she had made. She felt doubly betrayed as both her brother and her friends turned from her to each other. (She and her principal girlfriend had played many exploratory sexual games.)

In school, Nancy was a good student. She was serious and showed an interest in religion. She never thought of herself as bright or quick as Matt. However, as a late adolescent she learned that she could trick her father and brother into making dogmatic or bigoted statements and she would then feel superior to and be contemptuous of them. Matt left college, having failed there. Her father then refused to give Nancy money for college, saying that if the boys couldn’t make it she certainly couldn’t—and that a girl didn’t belong in college anyway. An aunt gave Nancy money for her first year in college and she went through the remaining years on scholarship.

**EFFECTS ON THE SELF AND THE MOTIVATIONAL SYSTEMS**

Overall, when Nancy’s self-organization was at its most cohesive and vital, she was an attractive, bright, competent, caring person. But the problems that existed in each of her motivational systems left her vulnerable to episodes of loss of self-cohesion and a variety of painful dysfunctional states.

**Regulation of Physiological Requirements**

Nancy’s early history of disturbed regulation of elimination, her enuresis and reliance on enemas, persisted in direct and metaphoric forms. She often had difficulty with constipation and this coincided with withholding, forgetting, ignoring, and “messing around” with her payments to me. She often feared and threatened that she would lose control of her money and have to quit the analysis. She wished I would charge her nothing or take over the whole problem from her. She lived a very marginal economic life, supporting herself largely as a laboratory technician on weekends. She received some money from her parents’ estate and as a graduate instructor in philosophy. She also experienced severe anxiety that she would lose control of her urine and her menses and flood or soil the couch. During the analysis she stopped smoking and for a period eating became a problem, but not a serious one. She believes she received very little tactile stimulation from her mother and associates the deprivation with eczema episodes that began when she was very young and continued into adulthood. A model scene that ties together many problems of regulation derived from her memory of going up to bed alone and carrying her potty, which she banged noisily on the stair rails. Each night she failed to get her mother to come up with her, leaving her alone to deal with both potty and sleep. Her noisy banging expressed her anger and rebellious spirit mixed with her submission. As an adult she had a degree of sleep irregularity. She had frequent nightmares marked by intense anxiety and shame over-exposure to her loss of bowel and bladder control.
Two of Nancy’s memories served as triggers for model scenes (Lichtenberg, 1989), which we worked with repeatedly to expand their meaning. The first is Nancy’s memory of tugging at her mother’s leg or skirt and sensing the stiffening of her mother’s body as she resisted the child’s importuning. The second model scene is Nancy’s mother’s leaning down and picking up Matt, placing him on the kitchen table, and having him sing to her. When Nancy climbed onto the table her mother said “You can’t sing.” These two model scenes help us to define the nature of Nancy’s attachment to her mother. It is attachment to a caregiver who has no spontaneous positive inclination toward the child, but whom the child observes to be quite capable of reaching for, lifting up, affirming, and praising another. Nancy saw her mother as always there to do her duty with a “saintly” but unyielding rigidity. In turn, as seen through her mother’s eyes, Nancy was an overdependent nuisance who she thought should get out from under her feet so she could get on with her overburdened life. Alternatively, Nancy found many people—mostly men, but also a maternal aunt—who did welcome her and with whom she could experience intimacy.

Nancy’s affiliation with her family was characterized by tight intimacy. Life on the farm was isolated for the children. The nearest neighbors were childless uncles on their farms. Playmates were rare, making the family members especially interdependent. This meant that Nancy was more than ordinarily dependent on her family unit for a sense of pride and worth. However, because of the circumstances of their life, she had great difficulty in sustaining a sense of having someone to admire and respect within her family, and nowhere else to get it. Her father’s family were established landowners in what had been valuable farm country. Her father had been successful in the oil industry and had traveled widely. But in her mother’s view, Nancy’s grandfather was a dirty, smelly old man with a spittle hole and Nancy’s father was an incompetent farmer who drank too much. Nancy’s loyalty was primarily to her father’s family and her efforts to feel included by her mother’s family were blocked by their assumption of condescending superiority.

Nancy felt some affinity to issues of religion, an interest not encouraged by her parents. As an adult, she decided on an independent affiliation and converted to the Catholic church against the expressed wishes of her evangelical Protestant family. Her involvement with psychoanalytic treatment represents to some degree an “adherence” to an independent affiliation, also in opposition to her family.

Case Summary

Exploration and assertion

In her childhood, Nancy established patterns of exploration and assertion that continue to the present. To feel comfortable and able to use her excellent mind to explore and sort out her personal creative responses, she must be alone. This, I believe, derives from times of creative play with toys and dolls when she was alone or with a girlfriend. For Nancy, play with her brother, and now study or work involvement with others, meant intense comparison, competition, and the expectation of put-downs and humiliation. But even more of a problem than this is her belief that to feel competent she must accomplish tasks rapidly—without regard to risk. A model scene for this belief is the children playing on the roof of a shed and Matt saying that Nancy would have to jump down with him or he’d leave her up there. Desperate not to be thought cowardly or to be abandoned, Nancy ignored her fear and the danger of injury to her as a much smaller child and jumped. The result is that Nancy feels committed to rapid counterphobic action in decisions at work, taking exams, or plunging into problems in the analysis. Nancy’s goal of quickness and risk-taking is not only to assure herself of being liked by her brother but also for her to feel a sense of efficiency and competence. Any other way feels plodding and boring to Nancy. At some point during latency, she observed one of her mother’s friends who was unmarried but self-supporting as a medical technician. Nancy formed a career intention by using this woman as a model.

Although Nancy has had a successful career as a laboratory technician and supervisor, she has felt dissatisfied with the low level of intellectual challenge. She has a strong desire to explore conceptual matters and chose to attend graduate school to study philosophy because it allowed her to pursue the study of ethics and responsibility. These moral questions could be applied to issues of patient care and to her personal quest to sort out questions of responsibility for what had happened and continued to happen to her.

Aversiveness

Nancy’s general sense of friendliness and warmth provides a strong indication that her innate predisposition was toward a loving relatedness and that despite the difficulties of her early life, her aversive system was not organized into rigid patterns of antagonism or withdrawal. The aversiveness she felt toward her mother and feels strongly that she received from her mother were largely the sense of a cool stalemate. Her anger was muted by the blanketing of her mother’s
Attachment and Affiliation

Two of Nancy’s memories served as triggers for model scenes (Lichtenberg, 1989), which we worked with repeatedly to expand their meaning. The first is Nancy’s memory of rugging at her mother’s leg or skirt and sensing the stiffening of her mother’s body as she resisted the child’s importuning. The second model scene is Nancy’s mother’s leaning down and picking up Matt, placing him on the kitchen table, and having him sing to her. When Nancy climbed onto the table her mother said “You can’t sing.” These two model scenes help us to define the nature of Nancy’s attachment to her mother. It is attachment to a caregiver who has no spontaneous positive inclination toward the child, but whom the child observes to be quite capable of reaching for, lifting up, affirming, and praising another. Nancy saw her mother as always there to do her duty with a “sainthood” but unyielding rigidity. In turn, as seen through her mother’s eyes, Nancy was an overdependent nuisance who she thought should get out from under her feet so she could get on with her overburdened life. Alternatively, Nancy found many people—mostly men, but also a paternal aunt—who did welcome her and with whom she could experience intimacy.

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dutiful, long-suffering care, which led her mother to be regarded as a saint. Nancy was fully aware of her feelings of hurt and resentment only when she observed her mother’s delight with Matt. She quickly turned off her open expressions of protest and instead withdrew into self-doubt. The model scene that expressed this sequence took place when Nancy was chosen by her music teacher to sing a solo in the school chorus. She came home excitedly to tell her mother. Her mother responded by saying, “But you can’t sing, your brother is the singer of our family.” Nancy dropped out of the chorus, confused as to whether she could sing or not. She then gave up singing.

Another prominent pattern of aversiveness toward her mother turned on Nancy’s altruistic efforts to look after others. Nancy sensed early on that her mother wanted her to be a big girl, to look after herself and help her mother. If Nancy threw up or soiled her bed or clothes, she would have to clean herself up because, if her mother tried to, she would gag and throw up too. Without much assistance, Nancy frequently fell or was pushed around by Matt. Nancy would then cry out. Any of these behaviors—making noise, vomiting, soiling, crying when hurt—would disturb Nancy’s mother and could bring on a migraine. Nancy was then assigned the task of entering the darkened room, carrying cold towels for her mother’s head. She was thus both guilty culprit and needed nurse. In adolescence, Nancy felt that her being a big girl/adult led to another episode of exploitation. She had been delighted when her mother spent time with her in the kitchen teaching her to cook and clean. Then she became completely averse to her new skills when she discovered that her mother’s motive was to go off and get a job, leaving Nancy as housekeeper for the men.

For Nancy, altruism, a significant aspect of her approach to her work as a technician, is heavily contaminated by guilt and resentment and has eventuated into crippling panic attacks. Nancy will take on much more than her share of laboratory duties, because of concern that patients who need test results for their care will not receive it otherwise. She obliterates her anger from awareness as much as she can. As her intense feeling of being exploited breaks through, and with it a flicker of rage, she becomes obsessed with some neglectful or harmful act she may have committed. She withdraws in horror and fear and considers abandoning her work. She often cannot rest or return to her studies until she calls the laboratory and receives reassurance that the test was done correctly. This whole sequence is made more intense if a test or procedure involves the patient’s respiration, which draws on another source of Nancy’s exploitation, fear, and anger—the sadistic game of Matt coming up behind her and holding her nose and mouth. When she panicked at the feeling of suffocation and began to flail wildly, he would let go. As she cried and protested he would chide her that her reaction was a breach of trust in him, that he would never really hurt her and that she should feel guilty for resisting and for her attack. Nancy’s complaints to her mother met with similar counterblaming—Matt was a good boy who wouldn’t hurt her, and it is her fault for following him around instead of playing with her dolls. Her brother took full advantage of Nancy’s altruistic concern by faking serious injuries, arousing her fright and worry and then laughing at her gullibility. Another source of early fright for Nancy was connected with her father. Her mother would often leave the farm for the afternoon. Nancy, too lonely and frightened to remain alone in the house to play or nap, would seek out her father at work. He would place her up on the tractor next to him. Her initial happiness at this closeness to him would turn to disappointment and shock whenever, as occasionally happened, she became drowsy and fell off. She does not remember being hurt badly but each time reexperienced the fear she would fall and be run over. At the same time, she felt ashamed of bothering her father at work. Because of the intense shame and guilt she felt in conjunction with her fears, she did everything she could to suppress and repress her anxiety. A psychiatrist who had spent a lot of time with her concluded that she was the least hysterical woman he had known. It was only in the analysis with me that she began to reexperience prolonged states of anxiety and panic attacks—especially over weekends.

For Nancy, knowing and not knowing became a weapon she could use as an expression of competitive antagonism. A game of setting another up to seem to be the dumb one was seemingly indulged in by each of the family members. As an adolescent, Nancy learned to set up her father and brother by getting them to express political views that she considered far out and of which she could be contemptuous. She continued this form of antagonism with authorities at the hospital and at graduate school, taking stands that often were highly principled but allowed her to experience both righteous indignation and rebelliousness.

Sensual enjoyment and sexual excitement

Due to her mother’s illness at the time of Nancy’s birth, and the ensuing separation of infant from mother, an ordinarily expected
level of mutual sensual enjoyment in holding, fondling, cuddling, rocking, and vocalizing seems never to have occurred between Nancy and her mother. Alternatively, Nancy’s male caregivers appear to have been at least adequate in engaging the infant in body contact. We can form a hypothesis that Nancy may have been a skin-sensitive infant from the eczema that has been a recurrent experience. Whatever its possible connection to sensuous maternal under- or paternal over-stimulation, eczema during adult life has become closely related to sexual activities—heterosexual and masturbatory. Throughout her growing up, the high level of overexcitement in which Nancy was a participant tended to limit her ability to experience sensual enjoyment as a soothing, rest-inducing experience. The quest for soothing and comforting regularly turned, either immediately or after some delay, into excitement states that triggered confusion, shame, embarrassment, and guilt. She slept in her parent’s bedroom until she was three. This early exposure to sexually exciting sights and sounds seems implicated in her persistent enuresis. Her associations suggest that clamoring to be taken out of the crib to go to the potty may have been in response to parental awakenings and possibly attempts to interrupt their intercourse. Removal to her own bed was explained as letting her get to the bathroom by herself—a responsibility she experiences as an abandonment. This struggle over bed-wetting, with its polymorphous link to sexuality, continued until puberty.

Nancy’s core gender identity seems to have been clearly female. She was regarded as the pretty, blond-haired, delicate little girl—a favorite of her father and grandfather. Her loving sensual interest was directed toward men early. Too early—in the sense that it served as a substitute for the missing loving sensual interest in her mother and her mother’s body. This interest then was played out with her girlfriend in prepuberty and appears in dreams and fantasies as a preoccupation with women’s breasts and bottoms—the soft, caressable body parts. Until the age of five, Nancy ate her meals while sitting on her father’s lap. This sensual experience, which she regarded as a source of comfort and safety, became itself a source of sexual excitement and rejection. A reconstruction based on her self-conscious wriggling on the couch and her preoccupation with what I was doing behind her led us both to the belief that she had become aware of her father’s arousal and erections, and that the growing threat of his sexual excitement led him, in her view, to push her away. When she was grown, her father often called her by his wife’s name. After his wife’s death, he made sexual overtures to two of his sisters-in-law. On an occasion when Nancy was planning to leave to spend a weekend with a boyfriend, he told her angrily that if she was going to go off screwing with somebody else she should stay home and sleep with him.

Nancy has no clear idea of when her brother began to rub his penis against her body. In the beginning, the activity was against her leg. Later he would lie on top of her and masturbate to orgasm. With the expulsion from her father’s lap, Nancy’s orientation toward her femininity changed. She became a tomboy, working along with her brother and refusing to wear a top. Presenting herself as a tomboy who was able to compete with anyone—male or female—became a highly invested motive. This motive served as a spur to Nancy to do well in school, but also became a source of excitement that hampered her performance in graduate school. The quest for exhibitionistic excitement led her to fight real and imagined battles of wit with other students and professors, leading at times to a serious loss of focus on the problem to be solved and to failures.

As Nancy entered puberty, she insisted that her brother stop his sexual use and abuse of her, but was threatened and bribed to continue. At this time, her mother also bribed her to stop wetting the bed. After a year, Nancy refused her brother’s sexual demands and also stopped her enuresis, regarding her mother’s bribe of money as something of a gift. She was now actively exploring sexual games with a girl her age. A major effect of all the sensual and sexual under- and overstimulation was that Nancy was as far as she can remember totally without sexual sensation or arousal. This complete absence of pleasurable genital sensation continued into her first treatment, despite many promising relationships with men. During her first therapy, she regained sensation, but “shut down” as her arousal approached orgasm. Nancy had her first orgasmic experience during the analysis. She had broken off with a flirtatious, “virtuous” man with whom she indulged in ambiguous mutual come-ons. She began a brief tempestuous affair with a foreign doctor who came at her aggressively with unambiguous seductive intent. With mixed relief and guilt, she “sucumbed” and had her first orgasmic experience. As this affair ended, she experienced humiliation at the sordidness of it and pleasure in having accomplished an important experience—having full sexual excitement.

During adolescence, Nancy rarely dated. Her maternal grandmother told her she pushed boys away, thinking no one was good enough for her. Nancy believed her grandmother was right. Nancy thought that the boys she liked would never be acceptable to her mother’s family, and the boys they approved of were unsatisfactory to her—
usually on idealistic grounds. Behind these more surface reasons lay Nancy’s own scale of measurement—none was as handsome, bright, or risk-taking as her beloved brother Matt.

Chapter 2


The goal of a clinical exchange between an analyst and a patient is to facilitate that particular form of attachment that is required to conduct a joint exploration in depth of both the disturbed self-experience of the patient and the nature, tensions, and meanings of the exchange itself. Each clinical exchange is as unique as the fingerprints of the participants compounded by their ever-changing intersubjective fields, and yet clinical exchanges are similar enough that other analysts should be able to enter the scene as a “fly-on-the-wall.” However, only the analyst and the analysand were there to make the exchange happen. The spontaneity of the moment is theirs. You, the reader, enter their interchanges after two years have elapsed. Later in the book we will refer to incidents that preceded this entry point. Both the analyst and Nancy believed they had established a way of being with and talking to each other that constituted the essential features of a working exploratory treatment. The form of our presentation in which we present verbatim exchanges with bracketed reflections and explanations by the analyst offers the reader two choices. You can ignore the analyst’s post-session commentaries and initially read the exchanges without explanatory interruptions and then read the commentaries. Or you can read the commentaries as they appear and try to experience the session as it is being viewed by the patient during and the analyst both during and after.

4/21/83 Tuesday

83:1:1 P: Here we are again and I have this reluctance to get started. I worked at the laboratory but decided to ask off after eight hours instead of twelve. I went home, took a nap, and went to the Easter service. It was awesome. I felt good about being there and what we are doing here. It’s not at odds—that I am going to destroy myself by being religious. Coming here brings the problems about it into focus. Particularly about my being a saint. It’s come up before [sigh]. An important problem can be faced in here without destroying
my desire to be religious. The part that was disappointing was the priest who did my conversion was too busy to talk to me, too preoccupied, and I felt hurt. I realize he’s got things in his life, he’s not just there for me. Another thing—Arthur [a man whom she had dated briefly] went to [the] service with me and his ex-girlfriend. It was more comfortable for me to have her along. Over the weekend I was feeling a lot better, but Saturday I felt enormously depressed. I don’t know if I hate the weekend because I’m away from you. That must be involved—although I don’t know what it means. I’m not happy [about] how we’ve understood that.

83:1:2 A: What you said about the priest could apply? [The sequence begins with an intervention that picks up the themes in the opening associations—disappointment with and hurt over a priest who was too busy and preoccupied to talk to her—combined with her weekend depression. The timing of the question is geared to respond to her self-reflective interest in meaning, an expression of a shared exploratory motive. The intervention is closely woven to the associations and affect. It is based on the assumption that a similar emotional response was triggered in her relationship with both priest and analyst.]

83:1:3 P: Yeah. That does apply, but it doesn’t help me to not feel it. I’m not unwilling to miss you. I’d like not to feel bone-crushing depression. Then I fell out from under the stress of exams and became sexual and felt it’s good to have that feeling even if I’m not happy to direct it at Arthur. Fantasies of being close and making love. I trust I can confide in you and talk about it and feel better. On the news I heard about a psychiatrist who raped his patient. Here I am bringing all these explicit sex stuff in. What kind of person are you to want to hear about it, help me with it? Isn’t there something perverse about it? [challenging, provocative tone] What in all these cases gets out of control? The potential is there. I sense this is going to get personal in a way it hasn’t before. Friday I thought of wanting to look at you. At people naked, too—to see my brother’s penis. It occurred to me all my fantasies about Arthur are upside down fantasies about you. I say I won’t with you, but I will with someone who’s opposite—young, tall, and naive. These are ways to get involved with sex without full realization! [pause] How can you do this all day, listen to this?

83:1:4 A: What you asked before, does it put me at risk for getting out of control?

83:1:5 P: That’s a possibility. I see others. You have these feelings—pleasure, excitement.

83:1:6 A: That I get stirred up as a result of what you’re talking about.

[These two interventions were close together in time and theme—the second following up on Nancy’s response to the first. She makes more explicit the nature of her rising fear that I will repeat her “perverse” incestuous experiences and I pick up on her attribution.]

83:1:7 P: You have to deal with it. If you repress it, it comes out some other way. That’s the theory isn’t it?

83:1:8 A: Is your hope that if I tell you how I deal with it, then you’d know how to?

[This interpretation is aimed at exposing a desire for learning by example or mentoring—the repair of a regulatory deficit. Although that motive may have been present and bringing it into awareness desirable, the intervention may also have had the disadvantage of moving away from the more heated issue of my presumed sexual arousal.]

83:1:9 P: I wasn’t aware of it—it could be my motive. The big difference between how I deal with it and how you do. I am thinking about you, as opposed to me. I’ll put the spotlight on you for a while. It’s part avoidance but part sincere concern about how you deal with it. I’ve known psychiatrists who had no method to help them that I knew of. A void in their life. If I entice myself to you, I want to know you are able to deal with the stuff I bring up. I’m selfish—you could get out of control. Or get deadened, unable to empathize. [sigh] I remember talking to Dr. S [her previous therapist] about his having fantasies. I felt comforted by thinking that whatever happened I had control—so he didn’t have to. That’s not okay anymore. My relationship with you—I think of you as my dad. I was very close to him. I had to deal with feelings that would creep up. I have to deal with my own feelings about you, regardless of anything else [sigh]. I’m
aware of strongly stifling my curiosity about your life, desk, car—far removed from you personally. It's not right to invade your privacy. That's opposite to my feeling over the weekend, that it's okay to have fantasies about Arthur. Not you! [sigh] You represent a verboten character.

83:1:10 A: Your father?

[This intervention was a spontaneous reaction. Nancy, after briefly (and probably complacently) responding to the earlier intervention about mentoring, returned to the sexual fear-wish issue. She makes clear now that she is talking about men either acting on or suppressing and deadening their sexual desires. In the course of her discourse, she refers to her dad. Without reflection, I said “father,” totally unaware, until I went over the notes, of the ambiguity and condensation of father-priest, father-dad, and father-analyst—thereby reintroducing the religious theme that she next rephrases as you, Dad, and Christ.]

83:1:11 P: My dad and God. I can't about any of you.... More precisely—you, Dad, and Christ. [I experience some drowsiness] I'm responsible for any responding you or Dad might have. [My drowsiness when she responds reflects my temporary lack of attentiveness with my own unconscious double entendre and how it triggered her return to the religious idiom, which I hear as intellectual.] That's what I didn't want to accept! That was the whole point of I'm not allowed to go around not fully dressed. Not being fully clothed all the way is attempting to seduce.

83:1:12 A: If you keep yourself under tight control you'll do nothing to be seductive, reveal no parts of your body?

[Nancy has made a dramatic shift from a focus on me to her part in the seducer-seduced pairing, and I follow her: I recognize that in her protestation of responsibility, she is repeating what she had been told, really doesn't believe, and is furious about.]

83:1:13 P: Right. But it doesn't work, still comes out. [I thought of a colleague's question in a clinical presentation about whether I found Nancy seductive and my answering no and wondering why not. At this moment, I became particularly aware of her completely non-revealing style of dressing.] Sally [her housemate] walks around in T-shirt and panties. And she's very verbal about people being fully dressed. So I got mad—the same stuff as Dad—I have to wear clothes to not disturb him. Nobody cares how it disturbs me! It's not fair. [angry] Do you? You look—what we said last week, it's interpreted as my problem. Why does it bother me? Why do I want to look and turn away? There's another class of verboten interests. In high school I was particularly curious about women—about breasts, bottoms, legs, and comparing. Am I as attractive? A girl in gym told me not to stare. I was embarrassed and angry. Very. Shit! What's wrong. What's going on. I've become shifty eyed. I can't look at anything.

83:1:14 A: Are you feeling angry toward me as well?

83:1:15 P: I feel in all these cases I'm in the wrong and that's not right. What am I angry at you about? I don't know. I feel put upon. One thing that's distressing here—you can see, my twitching, and I can't see you at all [calmer]. If I turn my head back, roll my eyes back, it becomes an "analytical issue." I'm doing something wrong. I remember the first time I rolled by head back and saw you, how reassuring it was. I do it to be reassured.

83:1:16 A: Reassured in what way?

[Following my inquiry about her anger an affective shift occurred. The sources of her anger move quickly from men who put responsibility for sexual stimulation on her and men who deaden themselves, to a festing of unequal unfair exposure, and back to depression in response to absence—the topic with which the hour began.]

83:1:17 P: I don't know in what way. That you are there. Not gone. That you're with me. I'm reminded how I felt a year ago. I want to put the spotlight on you. Not only me!

4/22/83 Wed.

83:2:1 P: I'm tired. I didn't sleep well. Like drugged. I felt thick-headed when I awoke. Slow. I had a vague dream in which I was working on a problem in metaphysics about truth that I was reading about before I went to sleep. No. I was reading Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*. 
In the dream, on a wall were pictures of a brain—right and left brain, I think. I wish I could keep it straight but I never can. I was in a class but I couldn’t answer. Somebody answers. There was a dish on the table. I was saying: Can you take out what you know and put it in the dish? It was strange, it was unclear whether it was what you know or part of your brain. I feel tired, thickheaded, irritable. I’m irritated with Sally. She and Phil came in at two in the morning. Phil went in the bathroom. Sally didn’t close the door, and my dog, who’s a trained watchdog, bit him and woke me up. I don’t want to work.

83:2:2 A: Is there some way in which you feel I’ve disturbed your rest?
83:2:3 P: It’s stuff I don’t want to talk about, deal with, work at.
83:2:4 A: Does it go back to yesterday, to your curiosity, your sexual interest in me?
[These interventions address Nancy’s explicit statements of reluctance to open her dream and her current affect state to exploration—a paralysis of curiosity. My inquiry is an attempt to link her disturbed sleep and current affect state to the previous hour.]
83:2:5 P: Ultimately, it’s what it resolves to. I don’t want to face it. That’s the truth!
83:2:6 A: In your dream you position yourself as unable to deal with the question before the class.
[This intervention attempts to demonstrate to Nancy how she has represented the aversive motivation in her dream and thus to invite associations about her felt opposition or incapacity for exploration.]
83:2:7 P: [nods] Now I don’t want to. I don’t know if I can. I don’t want to get close enough to knowing what the issues are. I want to escape to the garden. I’d like to be in a pretty place. One thing I think about is sexual thoughts. None are right. Never. Some worse than others. In a strange way it’s okay to have sexual fantasies about Christ. He represents perfection and is immaterial, so there’s no way to act. It’s safe.
83:2:8 A: As compared to my physical presence, so near?
83:2:9 P: Yeah. I want to be angry with you. I feel it’s wrong. Perverse. My lying here on a couch talking to you about sexual fantasies about you. There’s no way I can make that okay. I don’t know what to do. It can’t be okay.
83:2:10 A: Does it have too much the sense of incestuous feelings?
[The transference situations that had been opened up in the previous hour are now reopened; my first intervention refers to the triggering of excitement, my second to the triggering of guilt.]
83:2:11 P: Not necessarily. I guess that must be what I think. It wouldn’t with someone who would be appropriate. You are specifically not—that’s the incestuous part. Not a clear distinction between fantasy and action. I’m being seductive when I don’t mean to be and when I mean to be, I’m not. I’ve reasoned myself into a trap, but my brain has shut down.
83:2:12 A: Back to your position in your dream?
83:2:13 P: Yep. Do I mean to be overtly or covertly seductive in here? Trying to seduce you? [sigh] If I say no—me thinks she doth protest too much. I don’t want to be overtly but covertly I do. It’s a minefield here. Best to not do anything [crossing arms].
83:2:14 A: Put yourself in a state of empty paralysis?
83:2:15 P: I feel trapped.
83:2:16 A: Trapped?
83:2:17 P: Nothing I can do that will be right and even doing nothing is wrong. There’s no way to make it okay. My very being is wrong. Confusing. Labyrinthian. Paradox—trying to be seductive and I’m not, I’m not then I am. Weird. I’m supposed to know what I am doing. Be responsible for it all. My actions, my desires, my responses. Clear I can’t control it.
83:2:18 A: Trying to structure it as a metaphysical question?
[These comments describe the nature of Nancy’s aversive withdrawal, inferred from her verbal and gestural communications. The sequence of my interventions oscillates between attempting to invite further content associations and recognizing the aversive response that follows those attempts.]
83:2:19 P: Keep us as far from the reality as possible.
83:2:20 A: Focusing on the brain brings it closer to body but still pretty far.
[This intervention constitutes a breach with the previous relatively successful attempts to remain closely attuned to Nancy’s immediate affective state. It was a push from me to address the additional meanings of her dream and represented my impatience, that is, my shift from an expectant exploratory motive to an aversive mild frustration.]

83:2:21 P: Again I feel trapped.
83:2:22 A: By me, then.
[This second reference to feeling trapped alerts me to the impact of my pressuring her. In her first expression of feeling trapped, she related it to her internal struggle with guilt, in her second to a struggle with me. I have unconsciously been drawn into an enactment in which seducer-seduced roles become confused, and with this confusion, responsibility becomes actualized as an issue in the analytic relationship.]

83:2:23 P: Um-hm. You know where that leads—connecting brain to body, the dream to here. What do I want? I want you to take out some part of you and share it with me [slofically]. We immediately have something very explicitly sexual and if you can make it my fantasy—it’s my problem. You don’t have responsibility. It’s all mine. I’m the one who started it. That’s what happened with Matt. I’m the one with the secret desire to flirt with you. You don’t have to take responsibility. My brother didn’t. I seduced him. In here I’m trying to seduce you. If you act, you have no responsibility. Whatever I do, talk, be quiet, squirm—it’s always mine. You can do what you want, feel what you want.

83:2:24 A: Your sense is of being trapped in a situation that seems manifestly unfair.
[This intervention conveys both an empathic understanding of her inner state of feeling unfairly trapped and an ingenious denial on my part of my responsibility for my participation in the role enactment.]

83:2:25 P: What do you mean seems? Is! I’m so angry, when I think about it, it frightens me. I don’t want to think about it.

83:2:26 A: How angry you feel toward me is what frightens you.
[Nancy picks up on my ingenuousness, reacts now not with withdrawal but with aversive antagonism, which frightens her. My intervention recognizes her immediate affective state.]

83:2:27 P: Yes. I want to kiss you. No, castrate you—that would be worse, you’ll know what it feels like to be on the other side. My father’s favorite story was about Socrates going to the top of Mount Parnassus to praise the gods for not being born a woman. There’s nothing worse—being blamed for 99.99% of all the vile acts and being utterly incapable of changing that. So the other half of the world can carry out whatever acts it wishes free of response. It’s better to not be bright enough to understand it. [very animated] It’s a double-edged sword—what my dad was saying about me being a girl wasn’t because he didn’t like me but because he thought I was the cause of all the sexuality. He treated me like a boy by developing my mind so I was stuck with the notion of [the] way things are for girls clearly enough to understand it. You’re the same.

83:2:28 A: The same double-edged sword?
[This final intervention is intended to indicate I have followed the significant associations in which she has attempted to explore many of the obscure representations of her dreams, the relations between mind and body, male and female, and the inability to integrate the two “edges.”]

83:2:29 P: Exactly. I have to see it and there’s nothing I can do about it! [she left crying angrily.]

4/23/83 Thursday

83:3:1 P: Well, I was pretty mad yesterday. I come back, lay down, and I get mad again. I don’t like to be mad. It’s so overwhelming. What is going on in here is we all the responsibility and you get all the fun [chuckling]. Getting so mad about taking all the responsibility destroys the possibility of my living at peace with the world. A fundamental injustice between men and women. I have two choices, deny that it’s real, or if it’s real, I have to accept it. I don’t like the feeling of being manipulated, which is how I feel in here. Not only male-female but the way I see things in general. I feel like I have one foot nailed to the ground while I struggle to do things and the rest of the world moves about freely. [mildly angry] I had a dreadful thought about you yesterday. My brother would examine things—pull
the wings off a fly and watch it squirm and get pleasure—
that's what you are doing! You're part of it. You can
do nothing about it but make the best of it by making
your living off it. I feel like a real misogynist. Before
this when I got really angry with you I could tie
myself down [crying] by reminding myself you seem
to be a decent man. If doesn't help now. You look
benign.

83:3:2 A: Could that be a part of the problem?
83:3:3 P: That you look benign.
83:3:4 A: Yes—if my very presence and my benign appearance
invite your interest and curiosity, that becomes a part
of the problem?

[A temporary minor disruption of Nancy's sense of trust
had been precipitated by the role enactment. Nancy attempts
to deal with “the fundamental injustice” first with humor,
then with anger and an accusation of sadism, and finally,
with distress. My first interventions are aimed at exploring
what I think may be the most promising entry into her
response to my contribution, as she experiences it. I do not
take up her slip, “misogynist,” with her implied self-hate.]

83:3:5 P: [sobbing, wiping away tears, getting tissues, returning
to couch] I feel we are back where we were yesterday
when I got mad, feeling trapped. I don't like the feeling.

83:3:6 A: Such a deep feeling of unfairness it's hard to shake or
move along with?

[This follow-up intervention notes my awareness of the
affect triggered by the previous interpretation.]

83:3:7 P: It destroys my life. What I was thinking yesterday,
driving home from here, I hate you for being a man
and at the same moment I'm working so hard to be
like you. [Nancy may now be picking up on the misog-
ynist theme] No. I don't want to be like you. I want
to be me! But if I don't try to be like you, I feel I
have to knuckle under. I don't like anybody—you, me,
anybody. The women who don't seem to notice this
problem, and the women who have, haven't dealt with
it any better than I have. Everything I do works against
me. I can't turn to anybody. No one I trust. [sobbing]
I look back at the work we've done, it looks like a big
farce. Well, okay, she's following the line.

83:3:8 A: Following the line?

83:3:9 P: Falling into line—saying okay, I agree—it's all my fault.
I should change. I start everything. I have to take
the responsibility. I'm responsible for all my feelings
and all of yours. I'm responsible if I fall down the stairs,
if you get a headache. If I walk into the bathroom
and you are there, if you walk in and I'm there. [These
are references to memories. The first occurred when
her mother reacted to the patient's falling down the
stairs by getting a migraine headache at the trouble
her "awkward, clumsy" daughter had caused her.

Instead of concern for her possible injury, Nancy had
to apologize to and nurse her mother, applying wet wash-
cloths to her head in a darkened room. The second
memory is of Nancy entering the bathroom, which
was not allowed to be locked, when her father was
there and his shocked anger at her and, that when her
brother came in when she was using the toilet she was
told to shut up and not make a fuss.] I'm responsible
for Matt doing it with me [masturbating] and if I
didn't let him anymore I'm responsible for his going
off and doing it with my friends [sobbing].

83:3:10 A: Like it's as though your actions and feelings are the
only ones that are factored in?

[My use of the conditional “as though” is rhetorically appro-
priate in that Nancy, to make her point, has resorted to an
exaggerated overstatement. What I did not consider at the
time, and therefore could not have worked with, was the
likelihood that my failure to acknowledge in either hour
that no attempt had been made to consider a more fair
distribution of responsibility may have contributed to her
use of exaggeration out of desperation to be understood
empathically.]

83:3:11 P: It makes it easy to understand why it is so difficult
here—what's going on with me is the only thing factored
in.

83:3:12 A: That it creates for you such a pessimistic view?

[This intervention reflects the patient's affect state within
the sequence, but I again fail to pick up on “why it is so
difficult here.”]
83:3:13 P: I can only survive. I can't live, love, act. Only insulate myself. May be what I've done so well. I want a cigarette. I dreamt about smoking.

83:3:14 A: Smoking fits both wanting comfort and the hopeless death idea? [After a long struggle, Nancy had given up smoking in the second year of the analysis. In this reference to a desire to reverse a gain pridefully attributed to the analysis, I feel intuitively that she has invited me to return to the familiar ground of wish and guilt-punishment.]

83:3:15 P: That's right! I might as well. Another strange thing is this is all related to your going away. For the last 24 hours I've been very aware I won't see you for two weeks. I had real ambivalent—not ambivalent, I want you to go! To not have to come here and talk. Out of sight, out of mind. As long as you're here I have to deal with whatever my unsuccessfully repressed fantasies are.

83:3:16 A: Absent I'm not an invitation for your fantasies and feelings?

[With the partial restoration of an idealizing transference that has taken place, Nancy associates to her preconscious concern with my anticipated two-week absence. My intervention responds to her association by linking absence with stimulating presence.]

83:3:17 P: Right [pause] I'm not at all certain you're not just an awful human being. Who are you? Am I doing the right thing by coming? Can I trust you? Yet I find myself not wanting to be separated from you. Whatever you are it's better than being alone. I hate myself for that. I hate you for not being one or the other—good or bad. I seem not to be able to deal with the notion you are human, not perfect.

83:3:18 A: In the imperfections you experience me as having, is the one about my going away the most problematic at this time?

[Having addressed one side of her ambivalence about my presence in the previous intervention, I now invite her to focus on the absence.]

83:3:19 P: I don't know. I wouldn't have said that was necessarily an imperfection—I don't want to admit that's it. I did think of it, that's true, but I don't want to admit that separations are as distressing as they are. I get so angry at you and at me. What is wrong is I feel so dependent. Yet I'm frightened when you go away. I want to hang on so tight. I want to say you aren't worth that allegiance. I'm so mad. It catches up again and again. I'm no better off. You let me be—or don't stop me from being so dependent. I think with a sick feeling in my stomach of what happened in January or February when you were gone. I pointed out the student to my friend, told her she's the girl who cheated.

83:3:20 A: You're feeling I'm responsible for letting you down.

83:3:21 P: I'm going to say my problem with your being benign is I try to trust you—things will be okay—and they aren't, and then it's my problem.

83:3:22 A: We also looked at your feeling I cheated. I tempt you to trust me and then I go away.

[In these two final interpretations, I return to the theme of my share of the responsibility as she experiences it. I respond to her memory of a previous absence during which she acted "irresponsibly" by gossiping about a student of hers who had cheated. The analytic work at the time exposed the view of me as one who cheated—a tempter who takes no responsibility—exactly the type of men she often became involved with. The meaning of "tempter" crosses between her father and brother as sexual tempters and her mother as tempter for dependent attachment. My final interventions are open-ended to invite associations to either sexual or dependent attachment wishes. Nancy's response was to access her strong feeling of anger at her mother who, in the little girl's view, invited and frustrated her attachment needs and whose emotional and physical absence resulted in Nancy's seeking the males for contact without the watchful protective eye of a mother.]

83:3:23 P: [crying] I'm the one who has to stay and take care of things while you're gone. Make mistakes. I hate you for going away and doing that. [she was crying, then getting tissues.] The same way I hated my mother. I have a vision of getting up and throwing everything in this room at you. A barrage of stuff. That's what I'm doing right now.

83:3:24 A: Our time is up.
83:3:25 P: You're out of Kleenex. [Referring to her crying] I hate this. [smiling sheepishly] Especially without having my sunglasses.

12/6/85 Wed.

[Nancy entered the room smiling pleasantly and enigmatically.]

85:1:1 P: Well, Karl finally asked me over for dinner. He did it so diffidently—as if he were merely paying me back for having him over. It was weird. Then I got weird, too, saying, “Well the only time I’m free is next week.” I didn’t want to be too enthusiastic. He was acting as if he was unsure I’d want to, although I think I made it clear. He was being cool so not to make it a “date.” [Her enigmatic smile referred to the secret—“Karl asked me out.” Karl is a fellow student who has shown an interest in Nancy. “Diffident” is a loaded term referring to a transference early in the analysis—I had been so diffident in broaching sexual matters it gave her pause to not shock me or breach some standard of “etiquette,” but if I was at all eager or earthy I would scare her off (by being too much like her father and brother), so she knew I couldn’t win.] I know I give the impression that I’m so busy it’s hard for anyone to make it into my time. [pause] Both of us are being weird about the whole thing. He was saying he was paying me back, so I should say “Okay.” I’ll accept it as that and let things take their course.

85:1:2 A: You’re saying you have to resist the temptation to get excited?

85:1:3 P: Yeah. I think that’s accurate. On the other hand it’s fun to get excited—I wish I didn’t have to restrain that. Staying calm and waiting to see is more reasonable. It’s a good way to do it, but can’t I ever get excited? Maybe I could be a little and still wait and see.

85:1:4 A: You’re saying you could be excited, but temper it?

85:1:5 P: What’s temper. [pause] I guess that’s it.

[My first intervention is to attempt to tell her how I am sensing into her affect state. I offer an affect descriptor—excited. I was unaware at the time that I had switched from her term—“enthusiastic.” My aim is to get her response. If “excited” is off, I will alter my approach to follow her lead. If it is on, she and I will be aligned to work further. In addition, I understand more than the latent affect of excitement by her attempt to “restrain” herself, to protect herself from something that she fears will have an undesired consequence. In my next intervention, “temper” fails to capture her meaning as she is developing it. She is mildly startled, but is compliantly acquiescent and then goes on to make her motivation clearer.]

85:1:6 A: Do you have any thoughts about your voice when you said “means nothing”? Was it the deep voice of pseudo superreason?

85:1:7 P: You’re hearing my tone as saying it’s reasonable to deny that it means anything?

85:1:8 A: I’m wondering why you would cast it in the deep tone.

85:1:9 P: It’s the opposite of flying off into fantasyland. I’m not sure. My “reasonable” tone? When people are nice to you, it doesn’t mean they care about you—they are only exhibiting good manners. It’s my mother saying to me: Don’t take it personally. Or if someone is rude, it’s the same. It’s nothing to do with you personally. Don’t fly off into fantasyland. People can use an angry tone or a pleasant tone and have no meaning behind it. It’s true, but couldn’t I have some reason to believe maybe he’s interested in me, wants to know me better [slightly plaintive tone]?

85:1:10 A: Do you hear Mother as inclined to eliminate that? [To better sense into factors affecting her affect state I inquire into her “tonal” affect expression, which was relatively dramatic. She accepts my guidance that she associate to it and identifies its source and meaning. I could then have responded to her “couldn’t I believe” as a request for reassurance from me in the immediate exchange between us. I chose to stay with the venue she has picked of hearing her mother’s voice actively present.]

85:1:11 P: I think so. Mother’s “Don’t take it personally” makes me into a nonentity, as if I have no personal effect on people. I’m not noticeable. Being affective is in my
head. Effect? Affect? I'm not sure I arouse affect—emotion—plus or minus. It reminds me of my mother's anger at my aunt [paternal relative]. I'd visit—clean for her. She'd give me money. We'd sit and talk, have a Coke. Mother would only see it as her using me. I thought she was being affectionate. As if nothing about me was worthy of being affectionate about. I end up feeling very small.

85:1:12 A: Insignificant?
85:1:13 P: Yeah, and insecure [pause] I can say to you, I do think there is reason to believe Karl is interested in me and I in him. It will be interesting to pursue and see what's going on [pause]. If I put myself in the mood of the deeper voice “means nothing” [pause] then I will not be. I will make myself unavailable, make it hard for him to get to know me. It's what I did . . . about time—I'm so busy. I know I can find the time, but he might not know. I'll make it impossible for him to get through.

85:1:14 A: Like an impenetrable wall?
[I offered a paraphrase of an ambiguous body reference—partly in response to her stiff body posture on the couch, partly to her ambiguous phrase “impossible to get through,” and partly to an earlier phrase, “it's hard for anyone to make it into my time.”]
85:1:15 P: All the way, saying to myself: Here I am trying to be friendly, flirting a little. A double message.
85:1:16 A: One message to yourself and one to him?
85:1:17 P: I hadn't thought of it that way. But that's what it ends up being. Even if I send both messages and he's a nervous receptor, he'll chose that.
85:1:18 A: Which gets us back to the inclination you see in him to be different.
85:1:19 P: Right.
[Nancy does not pick up on the invitation to explore the body sensual-sexual aspect of the problem but, rather, chooses to remain in the relational domain. I follow her lead with another ambiguous word—“different.”]
It's interesting because it brings to mind how frustrating it was for me when I thought you were different. When I first came here, I felt I couldn't trust you if you were being so careful in what you say. To trust you I needed to feel you were in command. Your being careful not to put ideas in my head, not to impose, was very frustrating. I realize now, your not taking things for granted means you do understand in a way that's more truthful about what it is I'm trying to say . . . I guess. It's frustrating because my inclination is to push through things. Take off and go. I don't like to go slowly. My steamroller approach [emphasizes with a gesture]—mows down the opposition.
[Nancy is now exploring the meaning of immediacy and impulsivity as contained in the other voice: the first-step-into-marriage flighty tone as it impacts on the fit or match-mismatch experience she has with me; that is, my deliberate manner and cautious expressiveness pointing up a contrast to her desire to rush ahead.]
It's funny, I don't like it that you were right. Because what I like about you is your real sincere gentleness, comfortableness. It's different from my flapping around. I hate to have my way be exhibited as not so good.

85:1:20 A: You appreciate it in me but you have a reaction when you compare?
85:1:21 P: It's nice for you, but it's not the way I am. Or the way I want to be. So there! Pugnacious [with humor]—I say, I have to leave Washington in a couple of years so we have to get this work done. [talking fast] So come on. I realize that if I do the work every day, follow it and let it go where it has to. But it's so unlike me. It's so hard to do. What we were talking about yesterday—whether I'm going to be able to avoid the sexual issues—so my way is to come in every day and immediately talk. It's my wrongheadedness, but I can't ignore it . . . as you said yesterday, at least one or two times in therapy I was able to avoid it—me and the therapist too.

85:1:22 A: And it's a big worry whether I will facilitate your avoiding it here?
85:1:23 P: I worry if I'm not talking about explicit sexual material I'm avoiding. I go back to last week—talking about John and living with him. I was saying I felt guilt, there's something wrong with it. Strange. I can't remember what I felt but as a result of our talking I feel it's okay—a strange friendship but okay. Oh, I was saying
I was attracted to Jim, but it's wrong because I'm using it to avoid others who are more possible. [Nancy has three housemates: Jim, who is planning to become a priest; Mike, who is sexually provocative; and Sally, with whom the patient often fights.]

Since then I've stopped feeling attracted. I like him, but I'm not wishing he could be something he's not. What's worrisome is my being attracted physically but not really [pause]. It's hard to explain. What I want him to be is an appropriate partner for me—attractive to me, attracted to me. None is the case ... talking about Mike going around the house with no clothes on. How it angered me. Jim was staying in his pajamas too. His are not as revealing, but I think it's funny it didn't bother me the way Mike did. Both were exhibitionistic. Mike was trying to get a response. Sex, anger, something. With Jim, it's a way to test.

85:1:24 A: Test?
85:1:25 P: The safety of our friendship. See if these aren't big issues. Brothers and sisters in a house. Sally too—we're not as intimate as brothers and sisters are. Jim is saying: When you're a Christian with strong values, these issues don't come up in the same way.

85:1:26 A: But there is the overload of brother and sister in your experience.

[Nancy had brought into focus the issue of sexuality in the "home," but was talking diffidently with circumlocution—
I opted to be specific as an encouragement, but without pressure as the hour was coming to an end.]

85:1:27 P: Jim acts as if he's clear about what he believes. He wears pajamas that are not revealing. Not jocky shorts and no shirt.

85:1:28 A: Like Mike?
85:1:29 P: And my brother, who didn't act as if there was any distinction.

85:1:30 A: Hm.

12/7/85 - Thursday

[Nancy arrived four minutes late.]

85:2:1 P: My washing machine overflowed again and I had to clean it up. [pause] When I left yesterday I thought it was a good hour but still something is wrong in the background. Papers of my students were lost. I took care of that. Then, like an idiot, I didn't check the garbage disposal and the washing machine overflowed. The other thing is, I haven't paid my bills. I can, but barely. I don't know what's going on. I left yesterday after a good session. I told myself I have to relax, to take things as they come, to look at them with you, and everything will be okay. Now I'm back in a big panic [sigh].

85:2:2 A: Your sigh?

[Nancy is repeating a familiar pattern of gaining understanding in an hour or in a week's work and then becoming panicky in response to an external or self-instigated stress. We thought of this pattern as sometimes her way of assuring my continuing interest—if she is okay, I'll happily leave her to look after herself. At other times, the panic over money or school work or a laboratory error served to block entry into her sexual problems. I determined to work with her immediate affect—the sigh—and follow her associations to learn which motivational system was dominant.]

85:2:3 P: I'm so perplexed by the student papers disappearing. It's true it was late when the students handed them in. A lot of people were around me as I gathered them up. I don't think I was careless. One was lost there. Then two others said they put late papers under my door. It's perplexing. Does it have importance?

85:2:4 A: The importance you're observing is that you feel so disturbed by it, you can't follow the plan you set for yourself yesterday.

85:2:5 P: I tell myself I can't be responsible for students putting late papers under a door in a dorm. [sigh] I told the one student she could either reconstruct her paper or I'd average her other grades. She said she'd redo the paper. She's not aggressive the way the other students were. I made my decision they'd have to turn in new papers. But I can't let it go. I stay worried and insecure [sigh]. It's so routine for me to do this stuff. I'm angry I don't not do it. It's a cop-out but I'm aware you'll be gone next Wednesday [I had told her some weeks before I would be away]. It's hard to get into a pattern of working with so many stops and starts.
I have to recognize that’s the way it is. You have to go away. I do too and can’t come four times a week. I have to accept it and work when I can. That sounds reasonable, doesn’t it? [pause] But I’m so unsatisfied, incomplete, anxious.

A: Would you feel so unsatisfied, incomplete, if you follow the plan you described?

P: I would feel more complete.

A: I would think so.

[From many prior experiences, I recognized Nancy’s temptation to respond with such aversive intensity to any separation or mishap that a chaotic affect state would result in making exploration impossible. After the prior work, she formed a plan to react emotionally but not chaotically. We both knew the choice at any moment hung in the balance and this is what I was addressing, somewhat too indirectly.]

P: [pause] I don’t know. Maybe it’s a cop-out. [pause] I left yesterday and Karl called. We arranged next week. He said it’s okay if you’re too busy. I said I know I seem to be but I don’t mean to. We talked. It was nice but uncomfortable. I realized how hard I make it for a man to approach me. Michel [the man with whom she had had her first orgasmic experience] had to grab me in the hall, I’d ignored him so. I stay so busy. I think about talking to you. The problem is, it seems decadent.

A: Decadent?

[Nancy had opted to resist the plunge into self-pity or narcissistic rage. She reopens the subject of how she puts men off, quickly refers to talking to me, and mentions the enigmatic designator “decadent.” Throughout the remainder of the hour I am puzzled by how talking to me is “decadent.”]

P: Something pleasurable and helpful. It’s painful and good for me—that’s not decadent. What if I could come in my three days and talk about how things are at home with Jim and Sally [her housemates] and it would become clear and get worked out. Then it wouldn’t have the onus of being miserable, awful, dirty, uncomfortable. It would be fun and I would have the time to do what I need. That’s decadent—too good to be true. The other term I think of is “mental masturbation.” Dr. Moser [an internist] used it when he told me I shouldn’t go into analysis. He said “Why buy a Cadillac when you only need a VW, and besides, it’s mental masturbation.” That’s a hip phrase. It applies to the pleasure of talking with you. It’s self-arousing and self-satisfying.

A: Um-hm.

P: It’s funny. Before I said that, it was as if I were going to say something awful. But it’s true. Talking to you is self-arousing and self-satisfying. It’s not the same as masturbating because something comes of it. That’s what Dr. Moser would deny. [pause] I’ve been noticing a bump on the ceiling, like a nipple. I associate to people’s bottoms. I’m not sure why I’m still interested. [pause] As farmers we produced milk. I was talking to Jim about how difficult it was for Mother to be generous to me. She was a few times in later years but not before and I had nothing to give back. Every time I talk about women’s soft bottoms, I get back to Mother and not being able to cuddle, nestle, or nurse as a baby. Or snuggle. I told Jim I’ve come to terms with it. I regret it. I hate that she couldn’t nurture me. It comes up because what happens here in a decadent way is I talk to you about relationships with people. Without your nurturing me, you are helping me to grow up.

A: And that’s, as you said, both pleasurable and helpful.

P: So it’s not decadent! But it seems decadent in contrast to what I’m used to.

[Nancy has identified a beneficial experience in the treatment as the source of her feeling of decadence. Symbolically, talk between us provides sensual nurture satisfaction and facilitates her growth. Yet she senses that some shame or guilt evoking moral transgression is being committed—as implied by “decadent” (reminding me of Freud’s concept of moral masochism), if she is not plunging herself into suffering.]

I sense there is something wrong with it. It means I’m dependent, weak. The way in which Jim and I take care of each other is nice. He’s having end-of-semester terrors, but helped me with the washing machine overflow. That’s not building dependence, it’s taking care.
Clinical Exchange

me, and being able to make progress in a number of other areas but feeling depressed. If everything is in order, then she has no excuse to avoid problems she needs to deal with here. I indicated the need then to talk with me about her sexual problems, as she had begun to do last week. She became physically limp and still and silent. I asked what she was experiencing.

85:3:1 P: Fog. I feel I'm in a fog when I try to think about my sexual problems.

85:3:2 A: Can you penetrate the fog to sense any of the factors? [I asked a question that was ambiguous, in that she could associate to the fog or to the sexual problems. She chose the latter.]

85:3:3 P: Being in my parents' bedroom, observing their sex and being confused. Getting enemas. The sexual activity with my brother. Being banished from my dad's lap. Being banished always from Mother. Never being able to snuggle or cuddle with her. [This had the quality of a recitation of lessons learned, but at the same time of lifting out of repression the results of a great deal of prior analytic work that appears and disappears into the fog. It is noteworthy that her enuresis is omitted.]

It has all taken on the same character—of being bad, naughty. I got the enemas because I was bad—didn't go to the bathroom—and I was bad because the enemas gave me a lot of stimulation I liked. I was banished from Dad's lap over stimulation—my bad response. I couldn't be close to Mother because I was bad—it was put as dependence but I don't know what it was. It wasn't that. [Her tone is a mixture of being troubled and guilty, of being both serious and facetious.] Everything sensual is all bad. Touching, masturbation, looking at myself, hugging Mother, squirming in Dad's lap. All ends up being bad—wanting to stick like glue to Mother. Not going to the bathroom. Teasing Matt, getting into sexual activities with him. All problems. My play with Margaret and the dolls doesn't seem so problematic—it was just 10-year-old stuff. What does it mean that I don't think it was problematic?
85:3:4 A: Can you describe it?
[It's a question with a question that is in fact a suggestion—the purpose being to fill the narrative envelope by moving from the too general to the specific, from the already said to the new.]

85:3:5 P: We were playing with our dolls, being mothers trying to breast-feed, although of course we didn't have breasts. We were holding the doll against our breasts and feeding it. Another day we were worried about breast cancer, checking out our flat chests [laughing] at eight or nine. I don't remember much sensation. I was interested in my body. We had fantasies of being in love with movie stars—mine was Perry Mason, I was Della Street. We played doctor. One was sick, the other came to listen to the patient's chest and stomach. We had play stethoscopes. We were undressed partially. It had nothing to do with genitals. It all had to do with our nonexistent breasts [pause]. It was not dirty. It was clean. There were no secretions. With my brother, it was his ejaculation that was sick, gross. As you said before, in the play with Margaret we were equals. My brother would rub against me. Against my leg, my stomach, until he had ejaculations. I felt very dirty and used.

[This added considerable richness of detail. It was stated with feeling but without a sense of becoming overwhelmed with revulsion, as in the past.]

85:3:6 A: You didn't have a sense of being appreciated for yourself but for the purpose you served?

85:3:7 P: Women often talk about being angry about being receptacles. In a sense, that's what they are—just a place for men to get rid of their excitement without having to do with the being of the person. I'm angry at men for taking women as receptacles. I'm angry at women for being vulnerable enough to let it be carried out and, worse, to invite it.

[The patient is airing deeply felt hurt and anger but is doing so with a circumspection that removes the issue from herself.]

85:3:8 A: And that makes you feel bad about yourself, that you were inviting it—the alternative of being unnoticed was such a painful choice.

85:4:1 P: I'll spend five minutes complaining about the process and then get to work. It's like any work. I have to talk a bit at a time and I hate it. I think I should be able to be brilliant and wonderful and not have to work. I had dinner with Karl. It was awkward at first. Then it was okay and a lot of stuff came up. I don't want to deal with it. I like it better when all this is under wraps. When I left Tuesday, your last statement made me feel bad. It's a deplorable situation when a woman lets herself be used as a receptacle. You said what I did as a kid. You men blame everything on women [a tone of pseudo-outrage]. I don't want to be teasing Jim or have to think about it. I got over being angry at you. It's true to say I invited that response. No. It sounds defensive, but it's not true. What you said was the alternative was so painful—not teasing. It's hard to feel it now, but on Tuesday I could, that I couldn't survive the isolation. I couldn't—physically even. It was too much. [pause] It seemed so real. It was true to me at the time. It's no longer true. I don't have to be isolated, and if I did, I have the strength to deal with it. Then I didn't. It's a sad state of affairs, the way things were [sigh].

85:4:2 A: Your sigh is your feeling about the “sad state of affairs”?

85:4:3 P: I was thinking what could have changed it. A lot of things. But they weren't there. My mother wasn't there to watch over me. She just wasn't there ... I was thinking on the way home what you said puts it in a different light. My anger toward my brother was mitigated. He had no supervision, no rules or guidance. We were all there together. [sigh] I don't like the way he treated me. I really don't like him. I can see he was a kid too—a kid supported and maintained to have the idea he could do whatever he wanted ... After dinner with Karl—oh, it came up in a dream about Jim. I was nervous how Jim would be. I hadn't told him I was going out with Karl, although he knew Karl called. Jim came out of the room and I worried he'd be jealous. That's how it was in the past with my family—jealousy.
Clinical Exchange

85:3:10 A: Do you want me to call attention to the longings that were so strong for you as a child?
85:4:11 P: My immediate response is to say no! Don't. That's stuff I don't want to touch [playful tone]. But if I don't, they'll keep coming up misplaced into an adult context, won't they?
85:4:12 A: Yes.
85:4:13 P: Okay. So let's start with Number 1. You can go ahead and state it if you want. [giggling] I can't.
85:4:14 A: A longing to have somebody else take the lead and the responsibility?

[The interchange has taken on a playful quality. I was a participant in the mood state but I addressed the issue that seemed to me most immediately manifest in the intersubjective context.]

85:4:15 P: That's not so bad. Seems pretty normal for a kid, huh? So what's another? One thing that's clear is wanting to be close to people, treated tenderly and affectionately [pause] [sigh].

[I could easily pick up on the theme of wanting a positive attachment experience—the frustration of her mother's stiffening when Nancy reached for her leg, as in a model scene that had been worked with extensively. The desperate seeking of intimacy with the other available family members—all male—was a natural consequence. Nancy's long silence may have been an expectation of this familiar theme being reactivated.]

Are there worse ones that are more scary? These don't seem so scary.

[I assumed the patient to be saying she was ready to deal with a new problem area.]

85:4:16 A: One longing might be to explore things that are unknown and scary.
85:4:17 P: Right. And not to have to do it alone.
85:4:18 A: Yeah... and a man's crotch could be just such an area of curiosity and interest.
85:4:19 P: It seems reasonable that it would be [giggle]. And breasts and bottoms—everything that's covered up I'd want to understand [sigh].

85:4:20 A: Your sigh?
85:4:21 P: No way to do that that doesn't make me feel depraved. It makes sense. A child wants to see adult bodies and
her own body. To do it and get rid of fears. My parents feared an interest in my body and others would lead to depravity. I don't know what it would be.

85:4:22 A: What form could the depravity take?
[Nancy is using distancing speech forms—"A child wants" rather than "I wanted." I could have commented on this, but I chose not to, assuming she would use more direct speech as she became more comfortable with this "unknown and scary" area of exploration.]

85:4:23 P: Yeah. I don't know. [pause] For Mother and me, being covered always. I never saw my mother's breasts until she was in her 50s. I could say I never saw my father naked but in tight revealing jockey shorts. And the time he got so mad because I walked in on him in the bathroom and stood staring aghast at his genitals. It makes me mad. There was nothing wrong with him not locking the door. It was me. And now I have this interest. It has become very important, everything now has a sexual genital flavor.

85:4:24 A: And seems to retain the flavor of either "it's your fault" or "it's not your fault, it's the fault of someone who won't take responsibility."

85:4:25 P: That's what it had. What am I supposed to do with that? [argumentative] That's the way the messages came across to me.

85:4:26 A: In your dream, you do parcel it out in a clear fashion. [Nancy had been associating in a relatively free, open fashion. Then her anger mounted and she became mildly provocative. I had the choice of either directing her attention to her argumentativeness with me as a recrudescence of her anger at her father (something I had done many times in the past) or trying to get more work done in associating to and exploring the meaning of her dream. As the hour was drawing to an end, and a weekend break was coming, I chose the latter.]

85:4:27 P: Yeah. What are you suggesting? I could have as a kid? Or I could parcel it out now and I'm not?

85:4:28 A: How does it sit with you?

85:4:29 P: I don't think I could have as a kid.

85:4:30 A: Um-hm.

85:4:31 P: I think I could now. But I get caught in it. I did when I left Tuesday. I started thinking, "it takes two to tango."

Then I lose it, and I'm back to "it's all my problem." Then I think, "kids need adults to learn." It's a real problem for that not to be available.

85:4:32 A: Yes.

85:4:33 P: I can take responsibility for wanting to know about everything.

[Nancy begins to sort out her thinking, how she goes back and forth with blame. She identifies parental responsibility in a general sense—"kids need adults." I affirm her recognition of this and she shifts to the personal pronoun in saying, "I can take responsibility (for her curiosity)?"]

I was a very curious little girl. But curious isn't perverted. If it becomes perverted, it's because something is wrong.

85:4:34 A: Out time is up.

85:4:35 P: Let me say one more time I hate this work [good-naturedly]—the work I love to hate.

[Nancy returns to the resentment toward the analyst that remained unexplored when I chose to return to the dream.]

10/1/87

87:1:1 P: I haven't made any progress on the question, at the end of the week, of why I feel like I have to face a sense of moral failure if I can't be friends with Jane. I know that right now I am very depressed. I don't know why I feel so bad. Over the past several months I've gone back to being chronically constipated. I feel I have to do something, force myself. At Saturday evening's service, Charles presided as minister with his friends in a thanksgiving for his ordination. It was very moving. I felt good to be a part of the group. Charles made a good decision to become a priest. But I was also very struck that Jane and her kids took presents to the altar. They have a special relationship with him. I got depressed that there's nobody in the world that I'm special to. Wanting so much to be special was part of the cause of the trouble with Jane. I'm ashamed. But I'm not special in an intimate way with anybody. I'm lonely and depressed to the point of being frightened. [After starting with a timid tone, she is now speaking in a full voice] It's ironic that in the middle of the service I'd be so aware of feeling alone. I reminded
myself I have lots of friends who love me. [Her arms are at her sides, held stiffly] I was overcome with hopelessness nevertheless—a fear I'd never be close, always on the fringe.

87:1:2 A: Would that feeling pressure you want to try again with Jane and your aunt?

87:1:3 P: Perhaps. I do feel a devastating aloneness and I feel it as a consequence of my own actions [she rubs her eyes at intervals throughout this sequence]. It's so hard for me to be outgoing, generous, and gregarious. It wasn't always. Only recently. My need to revitalize my attempt to be friends with Jane is part loneliness and part guilt. It's so hard for me to put myself out and I have to do it. What do I mean by that? After the service, I had to work the next two days. It was 8:30. I was tired. I wanted to go home and eat and rest. But I went to the reception for a little while, let people know I care. We talked on Friday about my getting myself paralyzed. I feel bad and get paralyzed. We talked about my wanting to do that to keep myself from doing things that are hard to do.

87:1:4 A: What are you thinking of that's hard to do? [I have been listening to Nancy, perplexed as to what she is getting at. I am convinced, that her distress and her feeling of disappointment that she isn't important are authentic, but the references to herself as not being outgoing or generous, her mea culpa, arouses my skepticism. I want to try to follow her as open-mindedly as I can in these early moments of the week's work, until I get my bearings.]

87:1:5 P: Going to the reception. At the time I felt the warm thing to do was to stay and talk. But I couldn't. I felt guilty when I went home, berating myself for being weak. Later I thought that you and I have talked about my having to have certain of my needs met first before I can feel friendly.

87:1:6 A: Yes.

87:1:7 P: And I was tired, hungry, headachy—and I needed to get up early. If I go into a social situation that way I say and do things I'm not happy with. Then I go back to being paralyzed. Not before I go home but after when I feel bad and can't come up with other ways to let people know I care. [pause] I feel really uptight.

87:1:8 A: What you said on Friday was that it was clear to you that Jane and your aunt operate to be one up on you and that's not a friend. Then you stated, "Oh, it's me, what I do," then you became paralyzed.

87:1:9 P: The paralysis was to avoid drawing the conclusion it's not a friend who does this stuff.

87:1:10 A: Yes.

[I believed on Friday that Nancy had arrived at a degree of clarity about the nature of these competitive relationships, which were replete with their self-righteous put-downs and her own 1) aversiveness to acknowledge the aggressive contribution of the other and 2) martyr-saint receptiveness. Now her expanded awareness, so difficult to arrive at, was once again scrambled. I chose to remind her of it straightforwardly—in the hope she could self-right and restore the cohesive state she had achieved. Her initial response was hopeful.]

87:1:11 P: I had breakfast with Jane and concluded she is not a person I want to be friends with. That's all there is to it! She doesn't bring out the best in me. Just the opposite—gossip and complaints. It's tiresome. I was glad to have it happen, to be reassured. I get it clear, and then it falls apart. Again and again. With my mother, my aunt, Jane. Anyone I think I don't like. [She places her hand over her mouth] Them [her hands explode outward]! I never said before I don't like my mother. I said it with Jane. But there it is!

87:1:12 A: As though it should be unsayable?

87:1:13 P: Is that it? I'm not just saying something about them, but about me too.

87:1:14 A: Which is?

87:1:15 P: That I don't like someone.

87:1:16 A: That you—you are capable of not liking someone.

87:1:17 P: It gets thrown back to me. That I'm not capable—a slip—that I am capable, I'm open to criticism, that I'm like the other person. If I don't like Jane's being whiney, then when I'm whiney or critical I'm open to being criticized, and [said humorously] we both know how I don't like being criticized. What does it say if I say I'm not capable of not liking? That I'm a saint—and have no mind. I don't want to take the responsibility of saying I don't like someone.
Chapter 3

Clinical Exchange

87:1:18 A: That you could feel that way.
87:1:19 P: I don’t want the consequences. She doesn’t like, she criticized, let’s criticize her. If it’s fair for one, it’s fair for the other. I don’t want to not like people—my looking-for-sainthood side.
87:1:20 A: Do you have a saintlike feeling that you value? [The disruption marked by Nancy’s depression and mild fragmentation of thought in the initial part of the hour ended with my clarification about the gains made in the Friday hour. Her difficulty in acknowledging her resentment and her attempt to maintain a saintlike image similar to her mother’s was then explored. My question was intended as an invitation to her to go beyond an intellectual recognition of her seeking sainthood and avoiding criticism to sense the probably elevated feeling of moral superiority.]
87:1:21 P: I have an uncomfortable feeling when people—others—are being critical. I don’t like it. People at the laboratory criticize the docs and I get into it. Let’s call a spade a spade. But what does it say about me? I don’t want to say anything then.
[As Nancy has ignored my question about the feeling of saintlike superiority and returned to her aversiveness to be seen as critical, suggesting to me this is the issue she is more motivated to explore at this time.]
87:1:22 A: Back to feeling paralyzed—retentive and paralyzed.
87:1:23 P: Perhaps the problem with my saying I don’t want to not like people is that it’s too bald a statement. When I’m being critical of a doctor, it’s not that he’s a bad person, or a bad doc, but that it takes him such a long time to trust the techs. The way he treated me was menial and he does it to other people. I’m uncomfortable with the inclusiveness of it. Am I backing off now?
87:1:24 A: Is the difference you’re getting at the difference between a total attack on a person’s whole self and a specific action?
87:1:25 P: What I do is a total attack on a person. Others do too. Then it comes back to me as inclusive and we’re dead in the water.
87:1:26 A: The whole friendship is dead in the water.
87:1:27 P: Yeah. Yeah. That’s the whole point. I come home from breakfast with Jane and say she’s just critical and whining and I don’t want to be her friend.

87:1:28 A: The difference between not liking her complaining and whining and saying Jane is just a whiner.
87:1:29 P: But she is just a whiner and complainer most of the time we are together. It’s less if other people are around.
87:1:30 A: Are you experiencing a sense of being criticized by me?
[Her last comment struck me as argumentative and, on reflection, my comment to her sounded sanctimoniously critical—more preachy than empathic.]
87:1:31 P: Your tone was [pause] um [pause] I’m not sure how to say it—sarcastic. No, heavy-loaded.
87:1:32 A: Yes. I loaded one side of it.
[I recognize and accept (wear) her attribution. This has the immediate effect of confirming her “reality” of our intersubjective context. It is too near the end of the hour to examine any further implications.]
87:1:33 P: Right. So, I guess I do feel criticized. You were saying something that I was saying, but you loaded it differently, so I do feel criticized.

10/3/87

87:2:1 P: [She hands me a check.]
87:2:2 A: Thank you.
87:2:3 P: I balanced my checkbook after paying my bills. I had the wonderful experience of something left. Not much, but it was wonderful. I thought of paying you a higher fee, but it’s not really possible in the foreseeable future. I know you have not asked me for more and I appreciate that. What I want to say today is—I won’t let it go as an issue. If you need more money, I will leave it to you to tell me. It’s like the special attention I get from the dean. I’m aware of it, appreciate it, but I’m not sure I’m worthy of it. It makes me feel uncomfortable. [Her earnest tone suddenly dissolves into a self-conscious laugh as she says] Aw shucks. [We both laugh] Thanks [playful.]
87:2:4 A: You’re welcome [playful.]
87:2:5 P: Now on to other stuff. I had a lot of trouble sleeping last night. I ran into Sean. He’s being ordained in May. We were chatting and he invited me to go to a
play. I told him I'd like to if I can get off. He called last night to tell me the date. Then I started feeling weird. We are just friends, so what's the problem? I wouldn't want to go with him if I didn't find him attractive and interesting. The danger is that I want to be special to someone. I think I can go with Sean if I don't put stuff into it, neither of us thinks should be there. I have to be clear—I do want to be special to someone and am trying to be, but Sean is not the one. In the past the way I handled it was to avoid. I wish [with feeling] I were going with someone sexually attractive, like Brian, that I could be intimate with. It makes me sad [sigh]. It's come up before that I'm attracted to men who are not available. Now it's priests. It used to be others. I can use this to get a man I could be with. I feel guilty with Brian. Why? I think it's an overstatement, but if I'm not sure about the sexual component I should just walk away. That's why I haven't been able to work it out—I walk away, I don't know how to think about it. I wish you'd help me now. Ask me questions. Help me.

87:2:6 A: Give you a lead to follow?
[He's carrying over on her own, using the understanding we had gained about her difficulties with flirtatious but unavailable men. My impression is that she is primarily asking for affirmation—to know I am here rather than for specific "help."

87:2:7 P: Yeah. Yeah. It doesn't seem problematic to be friends with a man or a priest—or that I have to sterilize the relationship by acting like I have no awareness of sex differences. I need to set limits.

87:2:8 A: We were discussing that you had concluded that the only way to set limits or regulate is on-off.

87:2:9 P: And that's not true. But you see an infinity between.

87:2:10 A: Um-hm.

87:2:11 P: And that's the trouble. It seems to me that I'm confused about what I'm regulating. I think I feel I'm regulating my feelings. You would say, "You don't regulate your feelings." Feelings are your feelings. You look at them. You recognize them. Feelings change. But with any hint of sexual attraction, I say, "Turn everything off, turn the other way."

87:2:12 A: Lest?

87:2:13 P: Lest I lose control. Become so attracted, I seduce them. As I say that, it's not just an issue of Brian and Anthony [priests]. It was with my brother and dad. All men I'm not supposed to seduce. It extends to all men. For two different reasons. Dad, my brother, Sean, you—because it's inappropriate. If I act seductively, it's an attempt to break that down. With Dad and my brother—they are unable to withstand that temptation. Seduction might work! My power to be enormously attractive. My strength. They are weak, susceptible. The other side comes from Mom, to want to be attractive in any form to men is selling your soul. I can't be independent, on my own without needing a man, nor my own person...I was thinking, coming here today, about what kind of clothes I'm wearing. Jeans and a baggy shirt say something.

87:2:14 A: What are you suggesting you're saying?
[We worked with the Eve-seducing-Adam theme (model scene) extensively in the past. She brings it up now with an ironic twist that I hear as "I know and you know that they sold me a pile of crap that they were crafty enough to believe (in their self-serving way) and that I was fool enough to accept then and feel guilty about to this day (it's part of my concern about being a moral failure)."
Alternatively, she was bringing up for the first time a reference to her mother's belief that she was selling her soul in being attractive. In preadolescence this had to do with chasing after her brother, in adolescence to how much of her body—arms, legs, cleavage—she allowed to be exposed. I surmise she is trying to move toward something particular now and I ask an open-ended question to encourage her further associations.]

87:2:15 P: I'm not sure. If I'm talking about being attractive to Sean, I don't want you to get aroused. So I'm unattractive. What I wear is important. At times I want to look good to you. Most of the time, I want you to think I'm taking care of myself. Besides I want you to like me, approve of me. That's enhanced if I'm dressed [pause] not femininely [pause] that's part of it. Something we've never talked about is my wanting to be special to you. I haven't thought about it much.
87:2:16 A: Can you say more about this feeling?
87:2:17 P: I see it as theoretical. I'm not aware of feeling it—like I did Saturday night at mass. Wanting to be special to someone. I think it's you, but I don't have a feeling for it. It's just an idea. That's funny, particularly in the light of what we started with—my appreciating your special treatment of me with money. Being special [sigh] carries a feeling of something that's a problem. It slides into sexual... warmth. That feels problematic. So I can say I appreciate and get uncomfortable, make a joke—aw shucks—it's a way of not being attuned to what it feels like to feel special.

87:2:18 A: Umm.
87:2:19 P: Not that I never feel it. I just don't feel it here. When I leave a session, I often feel how special you are to me. How affectionate, how much regard and esteem I feel for you. My regarding you, not you me—and not here.

87:2:20 A: Are you emphasizing both the experience, which is very important, and your distancing?
87:2:21 P: When I thought about money last night, I came to grips with not being able to pay you more. I leave myself in a position of being beholden to you. Not that I was special—like with the dean. Part of the problem we haven't talked about was to be special with a man is to set up the potential for real problems of a sexual nature. My grandfather seems right here!

87:2:22 A: Um-hm. [This reference to her paternal grandfather brought back into focus an early idealization experience with a person whom she felt was her concerned protector. He would chase her brother away and enjoyed her spending time with him—like her father, who was struggling with the farm and her mother, who was depressed and often ill. He had not been mentioned for what seemed to me several years. I was interested in how she would relate him to this context.]

87:2:23 P: I was special to him and that was a big problem for Mother. She thought he was a dirty old man. I thought it was because he didn't bathe often and spit tobacco. He was ripe smelling.

87:2:24 A: Any thoughts beyond that now?

Clinical Exchange

[The dirty old man phrase is obviously ambiguous, raising a question of sexual involvement, even abuse, that had not, it seemed, been suggested in earlier discussions.]

87:2:25 P: I don't know, there were a group of men—neighbors, a man in the church—who gave me attention. They fussied over me. I thought I was their little friend. The fear in the back of Mother's head... It wasn't completely bizarre, she needed to pay attention. If that's the case [with rising angry indignation], why in the name of Hell didn't she pay the same attention to my brother?! Because the men were old? She saw it where it wasn't and didn't where it was [sigh].

87:2:26 A: Your sigh? [Her anger has faded into a somewhat defeated resignation.]

87:2:27 P: It was a big mistake.
87:2:28 A: Yes.
87:2:29 P: It was reasonable that she paid attention, but what she wanted was for me to think there was something wrong with my being friends with them. And I don't think it was wrong when it was limited to affection.

10/4/87

87:3:1 P: I realized, after you requested I come at 1 o'clock next Thursday (because you have to be out of town on Friday), my readiness to do it even at the expense of a friend. I asked her and she said fine, but I said yes without thinking would it be a problem for Sue. It came up today with a student who asked if her parents could sit in the class. I said okay and got to class and found other people there too. I was nervous to make a good impression. I did okay, but it pointed up to me.

87:3:2 A: How almost automatically you tilt in the direction of saying yes?

87:3:3 P: Yes. You know I'd try to be accommodating, but I know you wouldn't want me to not keep an agreement to do you a favor. I don't like the automaticity of it [reflectively]. You're right. Not at all [with emphasis]! [pause] My sister-in-law called to tell me Aunt Tina is not doing well. She's becoming forgetful.
I'd written to her last week, and I'm glad I did. [pause] It brings up all kinds of feelings. Some I don't like. If she died, I'd get an inheritance. I don't really want her to die. I would like things to be better financially, but they aren't so bad. [pause] I might have commented on her ambivalence, but I didn't feel it was either necessary or where her main feeling was. I thought it better to listen further to sense the feeling.] I hate it that she's alone. Nothing I can do.

87:3:4 A: Can you say more about that?
87:3:5 P: When you are old and frail, it's not good to be alone. I know what it feels like to be alone. I'd hate it if she died alone. Uncle Henry said he wanted to be in his own house and die there. When he died, I felt terrible. I missed him dreadfully—but that's for me! The situation with Aunt Tina is different. I won't miss her, I don't think.

87:3:6 A: Is that hard for you to feel? [Based on her general feeling that it is necessary to position herself with the morally correct attitude, I want to acknowledge that she is taking a stand based on her aversive experience and that to do so is difficult—aversive to her.]

87:3:7 P: It's hard for me to say, and it's sad... I think about whether she leaves me money or not, I'm glad I don't need it. If she doesn't, it will be hurtful in what others will think. Because she's family. As you said, I'm her sister's daughter. I used to feel she had an obligation to me, but I don't think that any more. It will just be sad and hurtful—another reminder she has no obligation to me and that she felt none. It's unfortunate. I keep wanting to make things different, but I can't.

87:3:8 A: And that's very frustrating. [I was trying to select out the thread of her dominant affect, which was on the edge of her awareness.]
87:3:9 P: Yeah. How can I say it's frustrating and that I'm at peace with it? They don't go together. Am I kidding myself? I don't think so.

87:3:10 A: Does having written Aunt Tina last week help you to feel more at peace?

87:3:11 P: Yeah. I did think it was the best I could do in a tough situation. In the past I'd have felt obligated to go there and take care of her. Now I feel it's not appropriate, but I do hate for her to be alone. She's 80 and won't live much longer. It brings up my greediness. Life would be easier for me, but I'm not willing to do something to ensure I get something.

87:3:12 A: And what you may have been willing to do at one time or another for money is a very loaded issue. [I am aware of a subtheme that touches on a major trend in the work—her withholding her payment to me, her recurrent constipation, her acceptance of her brother's bribes for sexual favors, her acceptance of her mother's bribes to give up her rebellious hold on her mother with her enuresis. I want to offer Nancy the opportunity to open that issue in any form she chooses—or not to—as her trust—aversiveness balance dictates or it is a dominant theme of the moment.]

87:3:13 P: It sure is. Clearly it was strange with Aunt Tina and Mother. Perhaps Dad too, but less so. Money is a tool to get people to do things they wouldn't do otherwise. [Her speech is becoming freer] My brother has been better at resisting that with Aunt Tina. Matt would say he was more influenced by Dad, who wouldn't do what he didn't want for money, and I am more like Mother. This summer he said he understood how I let Tina lure me because mother had taken money from her for my college.

87:3:14 A: Did it establish in your mind that by your agreement—that is, yours, your mother's, and your aunt's—your Aunt Tina would serve as your sponsor? [This is a new connection worth noting, but it was stated in a mode of unclear responsibility, as very often happens.]

87:3:15 P: I don't think so. It's what Matt thought. I'm not sure it's what I thought. She only gave me money for one year. Nothing else until I came here. She lent me, gave me money. She's given me clothes. [pause].

87:3:16 A: Are you feeling tense?
[Her body posture is stiff, the silence is strained.]

87:3:17 P: Yeah.
87:3:18 A: Any sense of what is contributing to it?
87:3:19 P: I'm groping to figure out what the issues are, or even what I'm feeling. Now that you say that, I'm reminded that you said what I'm willing to do for money has been a problem for a long time. Perhaps I don't like to be reminded of that.

87:3:20 A: Hmm.
87:3:21 P: [less body rigidity] I'm glad I wrote. I don't want her to be so alone. There's not much else I can do. She is alone in her relationship with me. A distance [sigh]. I hear this as an acknowledgment of an aversive separateness—one not to be bridged by an altruistic surrender. I hear her sigh as an indication of resigna- tion, of mourning.] I don't know. Writing to her is also like saying what's that I will do for money. Write occasionally so she can't cut me out of the will entirely. I don't think I'll feel good about any money I get from her.

87:3:22 A: I think you've been trying to say something all hour about how moved you feel by the thought of someone being all alone. [Immersed in the line of thought about money—subservience, altruistic surrender, responsibility for greed—I had also been preoccupied with another affect-laden associative path—"alone." One result of her analysis had been her lessening her ties to her family. Suddenly the word "alone" began to resonate in my mind and I spoke almost as soon as the thought crystallized.]

87:3:23 P: You're right. [crying] Maybe that's it. I know that experience. It doesn't feel good [wiping away her tears]. [pause] Another way of saying I don't like what I did in the past for money is to say I don't like what I did but I can understand it—and the same with Aunt Tina. What she does with money is similar. She's alone and doesn't want to be. Or with people either. [pause] I was going to say I'm sure she's lonesome, but maybe not. Like Uncle Henry. He didn't mind.

87:3:24 A: Is what you're sure of that if you were she, you'd be lonesome?
I felt good when I decided it. It was right after my second job interview. I went home and wanted no stimulus! I worked over the weekend too much—a bad decision—I got sick. I worked three days at Christmas, then went to meetings. And four days at New Year’s. Without blinking an eye. I couldn’t do it.

89:1:8 A: An expectation that was hard to live up to. [I had recognized from her tone her inclination to want to dazzle: “without blinking an eye.” This was a familiar pattern set by her desire to emulate her brother. My comment was designed to focus on that motivation.]

89:1:9 P: The old fast stuff! Whatever I can do isn’t fast enough, good enough. I should promise more, beat myself to do more. If I stay with my routine, pace, rhythm—but the ethicist’s meeting is stiff competition. If I get a job I will be very lucky. That reminds me, I’m leaving here at the end of July. Finishing and going my way. . . . I’m jerky with my talk today. I will have to reexamine that between now and July. When I got sick at the lab I didn’t make a big deal, didn’t force myself to work. I said I’m sick and have to stay home. It brings up what I’m going to do when I don’t have you around. You were here last week and a big help. I’ll keep making my plans for July and talk to you. That doesn’t sound bad. I was careful to not get caught up in the chaos at the hospital New Year’s. I dealt with the problems with a supervisor and it went okay, so why am I in a tizzy? I think it’s a good omen that I’m being honest with people. I told my supervisor, who is my friend and is lazy, that I didn’t appreciate her assigning me work. My brother called and I told him that I was going to use my remaining money to buy a house. He said, “Yeah, like California.” I said, “Wait a minute, you didn’t do well with your money then either. I don’t like your tone—that you can talk to me like I’m an idiot.” He said, “You’re right.” I said, “I do want to talk seriously about the idea of investing.” I was pleased.

89:1:10 A: Yes.

[The scene is set for Nancy’s hard-won ability to be assertive as reassurance for herself in her anxiety about termination. I offer a simple affirmation.]
understand how I am with a man and how I can be. I'm thrown back into old ways, preoccupied with women and eating too much. We were talking about it on Tuesday, that it's the way I have to be in therapy to hang onto you. It brings up the possibility I could have a relationship with you not based on need. Not self-destructive. I do regressive.

89:2:2 A: What do you mean?
89:2:3 P: Not progressive, although objectively things look okay.
89:2:4 A: It's for our alarm-triggering that it's so important to keep the regressive in the foreground.

[I am summarizing the understanding we have arrived at, painfully, after long periods of her remaining in or stirring up disturbed states. Then it was to activate or hold on to my attention through creating anxiety. Now it is to put the planned ending in question.]

89:2:5 P: Yes. I guess. I'm astonished that when I sat down and planned my money and my dissertation, I am right on schedule. My dissertation is a little behind, but I will be done by the end of the year. I've been scrambling about money for a month. I overspent a little on presents for the meeting and I had my teeth cleaned. But I have a margin, so I'm okay. I can do the dieting again. I do have to work at it, but the margin is there too. Getting out of control a little doesn't kill me either. I don't have to get into a flap about any of these things—or get you into a flap. It should be comforting, but it's scary. Be careful what you wish for—I wished to be done here. [pause] [sigh]. I want to be ready to leave you, but I don't want to leave.

89:2:6 A: To be ready adds a lot to your pride, to leave means a loss.
89:2:7 P: Yeah. And I want the same from you. I want you to be ready for me to leave, but I don't want you to let me go. It's another part of the process—to attentively, carefully, be ready to let go of things that ought to be let go of. I ought to want to let go of you, you ought to want to let go of me. No, No. If you have someone you care about, you never let go. That's not sense, but it's hard to give up. Sometimes you can keep contact, but it can't be the same with you . . . I ran into Jim. He invited me to his house with the group. I couldn't
I think he's interested, but too shy to be direct. It's the way I am too. I thought I'd get a ticket for a play and ask him. I know he's not going with Alice now. It's awkward if I'm moving in July, but why not.

[She has expressed her concern about leaving in July on two grounds—whether she will be ready to accept leaving me and whether she will have dealt with her problems with "how I am with men and how I can be." She is now placing the second issue before us in her reference to Jim. Jim is the most recent in a series of men who demonstrate a characteristic ambiguousness with her. She gets caught up in the push-pull of such experiences, repeating her experiences primarily with her mother. I am pleased to have this issue before us.]

I didn't mention it to Judy and Joe. Judy closed up like a clam before. Phil said to do it, that Jim would like it and that Jim's 41—old enough. I know it sounds like I'm just looking for someone to take your place. I could stop, but I have enough perspective that with your help I won't get crazy and it'll be good to look at how I deal with men. [pause] I don't actually expect you to put down what I'm talking about. But I don't expect it.

Let's go into that. How would I put it down? [She makes a direct attribution. I try to "wear it" to explore where she is placing me or I have unwittingly or unwittingly placed myself.]

What are you thinking? I'm leaving in July. "It's stupid to develop a relationship now." Or, "This guy hasn't asked you out and you're building another fantasy. You'll get hurt later—like with Karl." Or, "What do you need with a man? You should be independent." Or, "You don't need anybody else, you have me, at least for now. You're looking for someone to take my place—that's not very loyal." Other things too. "You're too old for him." Judy wants Jim to marry someone who can have kids with him. You could say that. [pause] I don't think you would say any of that, but I don't quite think you wouldn't.

And what would be my motive if I did?

You want me to be largely [sigh] attentive to you.

I don't want to lose you—I want to be possessive. I want you to be loyal to me.

If I think of you as my best friend, you want me to be your best friend. Not a friend to like me, respect me, or care about me. You just want me to be attentive to you. I feel that way about a lot of people I don't like—I want them to like me. It has to do with your ego.

I want the flattery of your devotion, your full devotion?

Yes. That's from my own way of thinking, but also Mom and Dad particularly. Mom was very jealous of my relationship with my aunt and Dad. She didn't want me, but she wanted me to be devoted to her. I have to admit, you haven't given me the slightest indication that you want me to be devoted to you, but my ego would want you to want me to be. It's a sad kind of importance. [pause] It is kind of sad, isn't it?

I infer that she is feeling a need to be reassured that her plight is being understood.

It's sad in the sense you have to resort to that to feel good and to feel pride.

Yes. It's sad in... I see a lot of people caught up in this way.

How?

Mother didn't want me around to bother with me, with my needs. But she didn't want me to go to Aunt Ada (paternal aunt) or Grandpa and see me have others doing for me. This person I want to love me but doesn't. I can get people to love me if they are jealous about me being interesting to someone else. What I need is someone to love me and that and then give it up, but it's hard to do it. That brings me back to letting go of you and finding a relationship with someone where there is reciprocity.

That means that I would have to let you go, and that means I'm not jealous, but that means I don't love you.

[I try to summarize the dilemma she has constructed for herself—and for me.]

That doesn't have to be, but it comes out that way. It's a strange kind of love that won't give me what I
need, desire, and deserve, but deny it to me from anyone else. Tortured, tortuous, and angry kind of love. Which reminds me of sex—tortured, tortuous, and angry.

1/8/89

89:3:1 P: As I was driving over, I thought, I just have to tell you how depressed I am. So I tell you. I told you Monday, I'm using all my energy to take care of myself during the meeting and to manage my computer. I only want to be quiet. Not work on my dissertation, not at the lab or here. I just want to be quiet. I was thinking in the waiting room about what we talked about yesterday. It's the beginning of the year and my birthday is coming up. Yesterday it occurred to me that we might be getting to understand the relationship between sex and the way things get in the sexual realm. Mother didn't want to be around me, but she did want for me to be completely beholden to her.

89:3:2 A: Beholden is worshipful.
[I chose “worshipful” as a descriptor (or metaphor) because as a little girl she had formed a strong idealization of her mother as beautiful and sophisticated—jewellike—and also because something of this early “worship” may have contributed to or been excited by her conversion to the Catholic church. Very occasionally that idealization entered in her vocal tone with me.]

89:3:3 P: Yes it is! Total! Worshipful and [pause] I was going to say “dependent.” Dependent in a certain way.

89:3:4 A: Flattering?

89:3:5 P: Yeah.

89:3:6 A: Do you think that your depressions do that for me? [Following her associations, the hesitant “dependent,” I am led away from either admiration or religious metaphoric expression. Instead, I am brought back to her initial reference to depression. This is a reference not simply to an affect state but to telling me, meaning activating in me a response to need. I want to explore the relationship between evoking a response by idealization (flattery) and by protestations of depression.]
and believe you like me and I have to give it up. You're caught—there is no way you can do anything right. If you want to let me go and marry and grow up—you don't want me to be dependent. And if you did need me and kept me in analysis for the rest of my life, I'd hate you! [chuckle] I'd like your help in leaving, but I want it to be hard for you. It's hard for me, it should be hard for you too. Maybe it will be difficult in a variety of ways for you too. I haven't just learned to trust you, but you've learned to trust me, how to work with me, help me to see things.

89:3:16 A: Having attained all that, I lose you.

[Often she works herself up to an angry outburst and then gives a self-conscious chuckle of mixed amusement and embarrassment. This is frequently followed, as now, by a useful period of insightful reflection that I want to follow up.]

89:3:17 P: Um-hm. And having attained that, I'm not miserable all the time. That's got to be pleasant. [pause] I think I said at the beginning, this may help me see how things slide off into sexuality. Here things are clean and tidy. We can talk about different stuff. Feelings are not clean and tidy but ...

89:3:18 A: Are you saying the messages I give you don't have the mix of stay-go, stand up-lean, a date—not a date, if he wants to okay—if not okay?

[From prior work, I am equating “slide off into sexuality” with being caught up in ambiguity. At this point, toward the end of the hour and week, I want to underline this as an area that needs exploration before ending.]

89:3:19 P: It's not always good to clear up ambiguity. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. That's your basic Thomistic answer.

89:3:20 A: You did say my reference to ambiguous flattery was not what you were thinking.

[I take her response—the negation “not always good” and the teasing tone of “Thomistic”—as a gentle rebuke for feeling imposed on—a mild empathic failure. I acknowledge that I had heard her earlier negation.]

89:3:21 P: It sort of was, but I'm thinking of something in a sexual way.

89:3:22 A: Let's get to that.

Clinical Exchange

89:3:23 P: Here I talk in a prescribed way about going out into the world and hoping to have intimate sexual relations with a man, John perhaps. I want over the next six months to look closely at that.

89:3:24 A: Um-hm.

89:3:25 P: Someone mentioned “Beauty and the Beast” as a story of a woman transforming the beast in her mind into something loving and lovely. I'm trying to make that same transformation. I grew up believing sex is an ugly thing.

89:3:26 A: Yes.

89:3:27 P: And I need to make a transformation to something loving and generous. I bring it in here. I don't think what I'm doing is cleaning it up. I get control of it by seeing what it has been. So what I see now that I've talked about it, is that in so far as there has been sex here, it's been verbal. You're encouraging me to talk about it, to think about it. I'm going back to a world where sex has old, destructive, ugly, angry facets to it. I realize that's not what has to happen.

89:3:28 A: Not a repeat of Michel.

89:3:29 P: Or Matt.

89:3:30 A: Yes.

89:3:31 P: [sigh]. Now I'll try to take that back to the issue of ambiguity—and I feel scared to do that. The problem with ambiguity is while I said I didn't like it, I tolerated it all too easily and didn't make a real effort to get things clear.

[I hear her as putting us on notice that before ending we must do more to resolve the debilitating effect on her self-regulation and self-confidence of years of enuresis. She “tolerated it all too easily”—it provided a way to keep her mother involved and concerned, as well as disgusted and frustrated, at a terrible cost to Nancy of humiliation and shame. That she “didn't make a real effort to get things clear” paralleled the lack of clarity about who was responsible for the sexual play with her brother (whom she knew she liked to be with and was important to). And because in his masturbating against her she was, to the best of her memory, totally anesthetic generally, the bed-wetting provided her with a nocturnal erotic life under her sole control but without clarity of responsibility.]
90:1:1 P: When you came in I heard you fumbling with your keys. There was something erotic about it. It reminded me of a friend who graduated from the Ph.D. program. He was so excited, he came home after the party and managed to lean over the commode and drop his keys down. Keys are being independent, like graduating. And that can be much.

90:1:2 A: Both exciting and frightening.

90:1:3 P: Yeah. Being transported back to childhood. Flushing something of yourself down the toilet. It's amusing and frightening. At the lab, the supervisor wanted me to call immediately and ask about when I was going for my interview [for a teaching position]. I got rattled and called. I shouldn't have let her push me into it. Now I'm going February 10th and 11th. So I'll miss two days here at the worst time for me. But I have to live with it. I'll only have the 15th and the 17th and that's the end of my analysis. I have to live with it. Oy. I wish you could see me on the Wednesdays—the 9th and 16th. We'll live with whatever you can do. They do have another candidate who is coming the days I wanted to come. I had the impression there was no one else, but the other person is from their school. I was foolish to think I was only competing with myself, that all I had to do was to keep myself together. Then I got home and found a message from Father Rocco. I knew it would be terrible and it was. [In a droning voice] “Your dissertation will require a lot of revision. There is a significant contradiction.” [normal voice] And I felt I wouldn't be able to do it. [Plaintively] I worry it will mess up the interview. [Laughing] I might as well kill myself now. No! Kill him! Then I got so angry at his message and thought, “I can't go on. I need things to go well. Don't just put obstacles in my way.” I had a dream about being molested. At the lab. A young black guy. He was a technician in the dream. He was acting out anger against me because I'm a woman and white. He had the impression he can get away with it. He comes up behind me and starts rubbing his groin against my leg. I say “Don't do that.” He does it again. I say “Don't.” He does it again. I put my leg against him with leverage. But I still can't get him away. So I scream for help, so the people in the next room will come. He reaches up and grabs my crotch and I really scream. I thought, “I'm glad I did that. I can nail him to the wall.” Then I woke up. In the dream I said “nail him,” like I have a penis—I have power. That is what I think about Father Rocco and the dissertation. He was acting out feelings about my being a woman, his hostility against me. I don't have to make excuses for him. He's an angry, vindictive man. A woman told me, “You are working with the most difficult man on the faculty.” He treats everyone that way. He is an obstructionist and I have to be clear who I am. I'm going to be very positive—emphatic and direct—no more pussyfooting around. I'm not going to let this sidetrack me. That makes me feel independent [all of this said with vigor]. I need him, but I'm going to get him to do what I need. I think the problem lies in a section I had trouble with. I'll ask for help with it from him or someone. If I have to rewrite the whole thing, I will as expeditiously as I can... You're being very quiet. It makes me think I'm missing something.

90:1:4 A: I'm aware of your saying a lot, not of your missing anything.

[As I responded, I suddenly became aware that I had been so concentrated on listening and taking notes that I had not been responsive to Nancy in either nonverbal utterances or body movements.]

90:1:5 P: I'm glad to hear you say that, but usually you say “um-hm.”

90:1:6 A: I haven't and you miss it.

90:1:7 P: Maybe you're weaning me. I really like your hm-ing. [pause] Yesterday after the phone message [from Father Rocco], I felt undone. Then I reconstituted my sense of determination. I'm doing what I'm doing because it's me. I felt a real sense of independence, and that's good.

90:1:8 A: Yes.

90:1:9 P: I had a good day today.
Clinical Exchange

staying centered on your body, keeping your body under control while you experience the exhilaration of the whole experience?

90:1:19 P: Yes [crying].

1/13/90

90:2:1 P: I read what Father Rocco wrote. He's a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He only read a few pages. He complained about phrasing, and it was a quote. Then he asked for something that was there a few pages later. It made me furious. What should I do? Should I ask someone else to be the director? I'll still have to make changes. Will I gain? Steve thinks I will. His readers don't say his is junk, they suggest revisions. My analysis is—I'm not as attentive to details as I could have been while I am working on leaving here. He is a big jerk, but I could make it clearer. I can add a better flow rather easily. I must pay very particular attention to these details, not just the substance.

90:2:2 A: Could you give me an example of a detail?
[Here I chose to request her to fill the narrative envelope so I could try to sense into it with her. I chose not to comment on the affect, which seemed to require no immediate affirmation or exploration.]

90:2:3 P: Let's see. There are sentences with two clauses with an "and" in between. He said it's a grammatical error in that the two parts are not equal. He was so irritable in his comments. I shouldn't have given it to him right after he graded 100 papers. I'd made a direct quote, "cause leads to action," and he slashed it out. "No," he said, "cause leads to effect!" I used an analogy to a mirror. I didn't work it out as well as I could. He said the analogy has problems. He's right. All analogies do. But it is a good analogy. I need to make it more precise. I said, "as light deflects off of a rose." He said, "off the surface of the rose." I'm splitting my day, half for the paper for the job interview, and half for the dissertation. I went back and read the original book to see if I thought my best revision of that problem was accurate. Steve thought it was fine. Rocco said he can't comment because it wasn't clear enough. He said
revisions would have to be by the author, he can't do anything with it. Brutal! My reason for saying I will stick rather than bolt is if I don't get the position—if I do, I don't need him—if I don't, a dissertation with him as director is valuable. I still might switch after the revisions he still wants. I'll have to think about it. Claus would be the one, but he will want me to include a lot of secondary sources and that isn't what I want. I'm not sure it's a gain. Once a person got a finished dissertation sent back by Father Rocco because of the margins. She went to Claus and still hasn't finished a year and half later. The dean might be my second reader, but he's never directed a dissertation. He's nice and concerned. It's not clear going somewhere else will be a gain. If I keep plugging along, it might be best. Steve asked why do I want to stick with him when he told me years ago I don't belong. I did get through my M.A. thesis okay. Am I just trying to prove to him I can do it? I don't think that is very strong. I think I'm trying to get through.

90:2:4 A: You're trying to get your work completed. [She has been considering the nature of her position and her choices in a very measured, contemplative manner, unlike her hyper-emotional approach in the past. I offer a confirmation of her conclusion that she is not in the throes of a rebellious, self-defeating effort like her I'll-show-you-Mother bed-wetting.]

90:2:5 P: Yes. I'm not sure it's better one way or the other. The tiebreaker is his reputation is more impressive. I made my choice and I'm acting on it, but I do feel as if I'm beaten up, that I'm not taking care of myself. He said he'd read it and we'd get together and talk. I see no reason to talk and invite more unrelenting criticism. If I come up with a precise question, it would be better to talk with him about it. I don't want to hear his general complaining. I think I'll use the technique I used when Jane whimpered to me. I meant Nancy, [In a cheery voice] "Oh thanks. I'll work on it and I'll get back to you." I'd like to beat him with a two-by-four. It makes me angry I have to do all this and worry about his being in a bad mood. It's inappropriate. But my happiness is my responsibility. If that's what I have
to do to get a job, it's what I have to do. [pause] I couldn't bear to go to Claus or someone else and have him say he agreed with Rocco. I almost couldn't let Steve read it because I was afraid he'd say Rocco is right, it's a piece of junk. After the revisions, I don't think I'll hesitate to get it to someone else. I couldn't without revising.

90:2:6 A: If you agree, you might want to fix them in any case.
90:2:7 P: Right. But why does going to another director require the same form? If I want to say he's a jerk—a lazy lout—it has to be the same. If I say he makes some right comments mixed with wrong ones and a lot of meanness, I can make the revisions. If I want another director, I can't try to prove he's a total jerk. I have to weigh that fact that I need help and he hasn't provided it on the substance of the problems.

90:2:8 A: So vengeance, however good it might feel to you, isn't too practical?
90:2:9 P: It won't work. The best vengeance is to get my dissertation done and make it good.

90:2:10 A: Hm.
90:2:11 P: It's interesting. Steve's questioning why I have stuck reminds me of Mother telling me you have this problem and that problem and you don't do this right or good enough. The other problem you and I talked about is why I have to fail to prove Mother wrong [to show her up as a bad mother]. The very best vengeance for [me with] Mother is [my] living a happy life and not proving her wrong. Being happy in spite. Vengeance doesn't have to be denied, does it?

90:2:12 A: Denied?
90:2:13 P: I was hearing that the vengeance I was trying to wreak was wrong! No. It's impractical, foolish.

90:2:14 A: You may well feel like proving her wrong, but to do it now would be to demonstrate that it's her negative opinion that is wrong, that you can lead a happy, productive life.

90:2:15 P: To do that requires I separate from her in a very important way.
90:2:16 A: Hmm.
90:2:17 P: I've not done it. I say, you owe me this. In a reasonable world Rocco would recognize that, but I have to
stop expecting it of him and being disappointed. I have to just say he's wrong but not to stay tied up with him or he with me. His being wrong is only tied up with him. Does that make sense?

90:2:18 A: Yes.

[Nancy is breaking very important new ground here. Desperate clinging in the face of lack of support or absence has always proven too strong as her anxiety would mount. Her other aversive response would be to prove that the failed parent was “bad” by being a failed child. She is definitively identifying an alternative path.]

90:2:19 P: I've been shouting all day, been very worked up [said calmly, with self-acceptance].

1/14/90

90:3:1 P: Yesterday I said I didn’t think I was taking very good care of myself, although I think I am. I might be coming down with a cold. I didn’t run this morning. It could be allergies. For some reason I am mad with Jim. I realized it when I was talking to Jane. He is arranging a party for me next week and he hasn’t told me yet. What does my anger at Jim have to do with my taking care of myself? Jim takes care of himself. What I’m angry about is that Steve said, let’s do something for your birthday. I said I’d like that. We could go to dinner someplace—Jim, Steve, and I. Good. Then Jim said Jane will give a party. I think they conned Jane into it to save money for Jim. Neither Jane nor Jim has mentioned it to me. Jane apologized when we were talking. She said it was largely her idea, and I felt better. Perhaps I’m too hard on Jim. Oh, I finally called Father Rocco. I didn’t tell you yet. He was more conciliatory. He told me George was giving a class I should go to. I felt it was criticism, then I thought, “It’s not such a bad idea. I could learn from George.” I told Father Rocco thank you, that some of his comments were helpful. I’m anxious to move along and have my job interview. Rocco said he would be back in touch soon. What I want is an honest, direct okay. What does that have to do with Jim?

90:3:2 A: Both are disappointers?

90:3:3 P: That's interesting. I hadn't thought of that. How I'm disappointed by Jim. He remembered my birthday, engaged other people, but never communicated it to me. I don't feel disappointed, I feel angry. I was disappointed not to have a small, quiet dinner, but a noisy party. But why get so angry about being disappointed?

90:3:4 A: “Jim takes care of himself.”

90:3:5 P: I don't really want him to take care of me, but as he is doing something for me, he ought to consult me.

90:3:6 A: Not make an arrangement that suits his pocketbook and inconveniences Jane?

90:3:7 P: It's not the way I want to celebrate my birthday. A patina of generosity, of caring, under which is lack of caring. Like Father Rocco—the way he softened on the call made me think he realized he’d been a jerk. He said this was the difficult part, but when you get through it... Sounding a positive note. It's his way of apologizing for being so critical. But he doesn't put forth any effort. I can say go to another person and maybe he'll help. But something more fundamental is a way of being radically rule-directed as we talked about before—and angry. Father Rocco was angry. He was saying to me I’m a morally inferior person for handing that stuff. That’s what he was saying. It’s hard for me to see what Jim did. The rule on birthdays is you must do something. Is he being manipulative? I’m circumscribing and not getting it—back to taking care of myself. A part of me says to take good care of myself is not to take this reasoned position with Father Rocco and the dissertation, but to vent my anger. Vengeance!

90:3:8 A: Stamp your feet?

90:3:9 P: I feel that way. By my stamping my feet, everyone can see my displeasure. But by not returning his call for several days, I was saying some comments were helpful and some were not. I want to say, “Don’t be mistaken by my response that I’m buckling under!” That sounds like pride.

90:3:10 A: Hm.

90:3:11 P: It's a big problem. I'd rather have my pride, vent my pride, show my pride, than have my dissertation done? I don't feel I'm taking care of myself because I'm not
seeing that my pride is assuaged. It's a terrible conflict [chuckling], having to be so reasonable and logical and sensible.

90:3:12 A: You say, chuckling.
90:3:13 P: It feels so inadequate. I must show him how wrong he is. This is where I converge with the two of them. It's my desire to maintain moral superiority. They tell me I'm a sloth for not handing in my dissertation. I'll show you you're a sloth for not helping me. Back to Mother and you. I can see what's reasonable and the end looks appealing, but the cost to my pride is too high. We were saying all along the way I maintain my pride is through the position of being morally superior rather than getting my dissertation done and being reasonable. I hate your guilt.

90:3:14 A: Does it make me morally superior?
90:3:15 P: No, it reminds me of when I won't be here. I don't assume you disagree with me. Perhaps I should. I assume I'm saying what we've been saying.

90:3:16 A: Yes.
90:3:17 P: I don't need you to say mm-hm to know I'm correct [crying], but I sure like it.
90:3:18 A: And you're saying you will miss it very much.
90:3:19 P: That's what I'm saying. I just remembered a dream. I will miss you and that interaction—but you, too. I dreamt about Betty, who is pregnant. We were hanging out, talking. She looks beautiful, glowing. She delivers early, but everything is okay. She's up soon. She planned early enough that everything is okay. She's calm, self-assured. The way you are calm and self-assured. I wouldn't use the word “beautiful” for you. It seems funny for a man. Implicit is that I'm not calm and quiet, but in a sense I can be that too. Perhaps not with quite the serenity. I can get on the same road [laughing]. Another snatch of a dream. I'm masturbating, but not really—with my breasts by touching myself. It's kind of chaotic—“searching” is the word. With my hand I brush past my breast again and again.

90:3:20 A: Something we've never talked about.
90:3:21 P: It fits in with talking earlier in the week about sexuality and my being able to have sexual relations that would be fulfilling. I can't achieve it by myself. Coming to me, to my breast, and moving away. It connects with the notion of serenity and comfort. With self-fulfillment—what Betty and you embody. Knowing what you want and how to get there and fulfilling it. Babies come early. It happens. But you prepare for that. I know what that means in terms of self-satisfaction. Being able to take care of myself. Feeling comfortable and pleased by myself.

90:3:23 P: Pleased with myself. It's still chaotic but I know what it is. I recognize it, how to achieve it, but I'm not in control of it [sighing]. One has to do with sexual satisfaction, the other, satisfaction with someone else. The other has to do with both. It's funny to think of my having this dream about this mother giving birth and relating it so clearly to you.

90:3:24 A: After you think about how you'll miss me.
[ I had a choice to refer—to the obvious symbolic reference to her “birth” as analogous with ending and with the early but prepared for. I chose instead to address the affect of missing, the sigh, the sadness.]

90:3:25 P: That's interesting. After I think about missing you, it reminds me of how much I missed being taken care of by my mother. My birth mother. And how much I'm being taken care of by you. When I think of my mother, I think of loss in what she didn't give me. When I think of you, I think of the loss of the care and caring you did give me.

2/16/90 [This is the next to the last hour, midway through.]

90:4:1 P: I dreamt I was climbing up a big hill to see the sunset across the lake. I'd seen it before and it was beautiful, but now the lake was almost dry—like a crater. The wind was blowing. The season has changed and it will return again, but now it's not so beautiful. I can accept that. There was a boy stomping around, collapsing the side of the bank. Since it was not full, he might destroy it. I thought I'd better scuttle for safer ground, away from the edge. [pause] The work with you is drying up. The winds of change. The boy was my brother. I have to be careful and not let him or anyone destroy
the work we've done, to put it down. It's hard to see
now how the lake can be filled again.

90:4:2 A: Seasons change and rejuvenate—regenerate.
90:4:3 P: Right. It was different when I went off to college. I
was glad to be getting away, and my parents were glad
to have me go so they could get on with the day's
chores. Here I feel love and affection, and that in a
way you are my best friend—and you are. Now it's
time to transfer all of that to other relationships that
aren't so circumscribed. I'm picturing leaving home on
the bus with the door closing behind me.

90:4:4 A: What are you finding?
90:4:5 P: The hardest thing with you is to get clear and to stay
clear, that you don't feel martyred to have me here or
are anxious to have me go so you can do something
else. That you do get pleasure from my accomplish-
ments, and have empathy for my sadness, that you feel
proud of my accomplishments.

90:4:6 A: That I feel proud of your accomplishments as you have
accomplished them.
90:4:7 P: What do you mean [slightly alarmed]?
90:4:8 A: Not more.
[I am emphasizing her justifiable pride in her actual ac-
complishments rather than her embellishments in fantasy by
dazzling performances or saintliness and moral superiority.]
90:4:9 P: [nods] What am I proud of? Proud that you don't want
to kick me out so someone else can take my place.
Proud that I am being considered for two fine jobs.
Proud of my uniqueness that makes it possible.

Chapter 3

4 Ten Principles of Technique

The topic of technique is tricky. Technique includes procedural rules,
but procedural rules can become authoritarian restrictions. Technique
includes conceptual principles, but conceptual principles can become
arid pedantry. Technique can be taught didactically, but "didactic"
can become lifeless and academic. The task for the clinician is to
maintain one foot on solid, empirical ground and the other foot on
the fertile soil of creativity, being careful that neither foot ends up
in the clinician's mouth.

To the experienced clinician, technique is second nature, informed
by experience and knowledge. Yet, discussions of technique are in
danger of formalizing creativity and subverting the very spontaneity
that is intrinsic to good treatment. Discussions of technique, rather
than enlarging the clinician's perspective, can interfere with estab-
lished, reasonably successful ways of working. The experienced clinician
will recognize in our user-friendly, self-psychological technique both
an attempt to codify what may already be familiar and congenial,
and an attempt to legitimize what is often done, but not discussed
openly in seminars on technique.

To the beginning clinician, technique is the sought-for answer to
the questions what to do, and when and how to do it. Learning
technique provides guidance and may decrease uncertainty. Nevertheless,
technique as a formula can be misapplied and thus interfere with
the inevitable uncertainty with which even the most experienced
therapist must live (Moraitis, 1988; Franklin, 1990; Friedman, 1995).

In that case, technique can mechanize the therapeutic encounter
and undermine the spontaneity we hope to promote.

A number of years ago, one of us (Lachmann) taught a con-
tinuous case seminar in which the sessions of an analysis he was conducting
were presented to the class. The patient told a dream in which she
was playing tennis. After a few comments about her tennis partners
and opponents, the patient fell silent. The analyst waited awhile and
said to her, "It's your serve." The patient then began to talk about
her difficulty in taking the initiative. The class thought the inter-
vention was clever. One of the students in the class was in supervision
with the teacher-analyst. Lo and behold, when her patient fell silent
during a session, she said to him, "It's your serve." Although the