The Bookmaker's Stepdaughter or How the Mafia showed up at My Group
Compliance and Rebellion in Group Therapy By Diana Kerievsky, LCSWR
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At the last group conference at the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health on "Dealing With Conflicts Between Connectedness and Individuation in Group Psychotherapy," two ideas were posited, one by a patient and one by a therapist, which caught my attention. These ideas helped to clarify two issues which I have been struggling with and which I examine in this paper. The first issue illuminates the early developmental crisis, "separation anxiety", which occurs during the separation-individuation phase of rapprochement (Mahler 1975, p. 209, 292, 230) and which leads a patient to begin to hide what Winnicott called the "true self," (Winnicott 1965, ch. 12 pp. 140-152) and develop what Wolf and Kutash call the "submerged personality" (Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 5). The second issue relates to the meaning and purpose of group therapy, which may be characterized by a mandala.

The appearance of compliant and rebellious behavior in the group challenges me to differentiate when these expressions are signs of a positive regard for the self from when such phenomena are really security operations (Bacal 1990, p. 44) which act as a protective mechanism to keep the members of the group and the therapist at bay and removed from underlying, more vulnerable feelings. When is the appearance of being loving and supportive authentic, and when is it a means of protecting a frightened sense of oneself while mollifying both the self and the other into not feeling abandoned or being annihilated? Working with patients in combined (Brok 1984) treatment, who reflect aspects of submergence, I will (1) review the early development crises which help to create this type of personality, (2) use clinical material from my individual and group practices to illustrate the difficulties experienced by the "submerged personality" (Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 9) patient, and show how "compliant" and "rebellious pseudo-ego" (Op. Cit.) "sub-groups" (Agazarian, 1992, 182) formed. Compliance and rebellion are two ways in which the "true self" or the "authentic ego" ([Lindenman, p. 105 in Wolf/Kutash, 1991]) protects itself. I will also illustrate, through the experience of two group members, the negative and positive aspects of regression. (3) I will conclude with a discussion of a mandala, and why I believe it is a metaphor for the meaning and importance of group therapy as a therapeutic tool in helping the individual find the "me in the we." (Kossoff 1991, p. 151)

A patient, in a one-way mirror, said: "When I was in school, I remember that I did not want to sit at the front of the classroom with all the smart students who were so good and wore glasses and seemed so nerdy and I did not want to sit at the back of the classroom with all the stupid students who were throwing spitballs and didn't seem to give a damn about anyone." I thought that she had expressed the essence of an existential dilemma, where neither conformity nor rebellion are appropriate. She does not know her identity. To comply is to submit to social pressures which reek of defeat, surrender and humiliation, while to rebel, which can initially feel quite powerful, inevitably makes one vulnerable to abandonment or annihilation.

> Kaplan (1973) suggests that dreams reported in therapy groups "revealed the preconscious or implicit communication in the group." (Schlachet 1992, p. 197)

The following nightmare was reported in the 39th session of the group, about three months after J

had left the group and after I had returned from a one week vacation:

C's boss was buying a pool from a man for 7.4 million dollars and he asked C to check this man out. C felt this guy was a con-artist. She was at the pool in a bikini and there were other women hanging around. At one point, C flung off her bikini top, threw it in the pool and said "is this what you want?" At that point, C and the other women, who became her allies, like "Charlie's Angels," ran upstairs to an apartment and began to frantically shut down all the light switches to prevent a bomb from exploding. When C awoke from her nightmare she felt terrified that she had just narrowly escaped being blown up. Knowing there were three angels in the TV series "Charlie's Angels" and that there are three remaining members in the group, R said, "are we Charlie's Angels and if so why are we helping C shut down all the lights? What are we all afraid of?"

> Arieti states: "The child does not reject the parents emotionally or avoid them, but consciously accepts them. He must live up to their expectations no matter how heavy the burden. It is only by complying, obeying and working hard, that he will recapture the love or state of bliss which he used to have as a baby... The child," he continues, "thus feels he has choice, the freedom of retaining the parental love or not. No matter what he chooses, however, he has a hard price to pay: submission or rejection." (Arieti, 1974, p. 465)

"The goal of treatment," Wolf states, "is to free the patient from the tyranny of the negative parental ego" (Wolf, 1957 in Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 57) or, as Hora calls it, the "parental fantasy" (Hora 1985, p. 22). According to Wolf and Kutash, because a "sub-merged personality" patient experienced "good enough mothering" (Winnicott 1965, p.145-146) within his first two years of life, he developed an intact ego. They differentiate a submerged personality in this way from a borderline personality.

They believe that the borderline suffered from poor mothering in early infancy. Such a mother may have been depressed, schizoid or psychotic, and because of this an intact ego did not have a chance to evolve. For them this explains the archaic split in the borderline personality. Because of the "good enough mothering" experienced in the first two years of life by the submerged personality, however, this kind of mother is perceived by the child as the "primary mother." Something happens to the relationship sometime soon after this period where the mother becomes either too dominant or too unavailable for the child. This Wolf and Kutash call the "secondary mother." (Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 8-9) This trauma, according to Margaret Mahler, happens sometime between the 18th to 48th months during what she called the "separation-individuation" phase. It is during the rapprochement sub-phase that the child both "wants" and "does not want" his mother. This is the beginning of what Rank calls "will and counter-will." (Esther Menaker 1982 p. 42-44) Lindenman refers to the patient who becomes stuck in this mode as "ambivalating." (Lindenman p. 90 in Wolf/Kutash 1991). At this time an overly protective mother may send a signal to her child that to individuate would be a threat to the mother's sense of security. The child may interpret this signal as an indication that it is dangerous to leave mother's side; he risks losing her love. On the other hand, the mother who takes the cue that her child is on his way to self-sufficiency and no longer needs her can become unavailable to him too early during rapprochement. This encourages premature individuation which induces fears of abandonment. Such fears can culminate in ongoing separation anxiety. (Mahler, Pine, Bergman 1975).

This is where the "false self" emerges (Winnicott, 1965) Wolf and Kutash in their discussion of the

submerged personality help to explain more clearly just how this "false self" operates. The "true self" (Winnicott, 1965) or "the authentic ego," (Lindenman, p. 95 in Wolf/Kutash 1991) develops both "compliant and rebellious pseudo-egos." "The authentic ego," in its psychological drive to survive, complies by aggrandizing the mother and debasing the sense of self (Menaker, 1953, p. 219-220) in the hopes of reacquiring the "primary mother." (Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 9) The "rebellious pseudo-ego," (Op. Cit.) is the "authentic ego's" way of "not being swallowed" and it rages at feeling it has to submit itself to "the dominant other" (Arieti 1974c, p. 468) "in order to retain its love." (Wolf/Kutash 1991 p. 9)

Before I describe the group with which I work, I would like to share some of the ideas from the work of Ian Suttie, whose contributions, Bacal tells us, preceded the works of Fairbairn, Guntrip, Balint, Winnicott and Bowlby. Klein wrote contemporaneously with Suttie. His views were not appreciated as fully as hers, since they represented an epistemological break with the traditional psychoanalytic theory of his day; consequently he was ignored by the psychoanalytic community: Finally, on the requirements for effective therapy, Ian Suttie's work was described as follows:

> "His basic underlying view was that the final goal of treatment was to rehabilitate the patient's capacity to reestablish companionable, 'feeling-interest' relationships with his social environment. The dissipation of hatred is the precondition for such reconciliation. The nexus of the analytic process entails not the discharge of ambivalent affect, but the process that allows it to occur; namely, the patient's overcoming his resistances. In essence he saw 'love' as the therapeutic agent."[(Bacal 1990, p. 17, 25) quoting from Suttie "The Origins of Love and Hate, 1935)]

This statement summarizes for me the meaning and purpose of group therapy and why it is an essential therapeutic tool on the individual's journey to wholeness.

The Therapist and The Group:

> C. Fred Alford states: "One can neither work nor play nor theorize with chaos. Pure chaos is pure terror" "...The group as a whole risks crushing the group, holding it so tightly packed that its members' individuation is discouraged, as they have no opportunity to confront and act out their terrors. Individuation must pass through chaos and confusion." (Alford 1995, p.133, 135)

Working with a number of "difficult" patients, (Pines 1975) whose early childhood experiences were replete with chaos and confusion, many of them were understandably resistant to entering group. They were so traumatized as children that they needed to remain in a safely merged dyadic relationship with me. Coming into group, they feared, would mean being forced to repeat their troubled childhood experiences. One patient put it this way: "I know, once I get in that group, I'll never be able to leave it." Thus, with my caseload of "difficult" patients, it was not easy to find several ready to join group.

From my experience in the group program at the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, however, I was very eager to begin combined treatment. Seven months into the first year of the program, and

with the help of my supervisor, I began a small group practice with four patients one year ago. Two patients were eager to begin, while two patients were reluctant.

J, a 30 year old police detective, had been in treatment with me once a week for four years and was positively inclined toward being in the group. J's mode of being in the world alternates between feeling either he had to submit or to dominate in his relationships with peers, authority figures and especially women. One of the only ways he could feel "truly" aroused was to force his girlfriend to dress up in a provocative manner and pretend she was having sex with another man while that man treated her in an abusive manner. The reason he finally came into therapy, he told me, was because he once found himself, when he had to report to a male police officer in charge, anxiously stuttering while addressing his sergeant as "mother." A childhood memory which J reported seems to indicate a trauma suffered sometime during rapprochement. He recalled feeling very special to his mother; they adored one another. Sometime later J began to sense that something had gone awry. He remembers repeating to his mother "mommy, I love you." He kept trying to reassure her that he was still the good little boy she used to love. He remembers being in a supermarket with her and selecting a toy blue boat which he was very excited to get. When they got to the checkout counter, he remembers his mother giving the boat to his younger brother. His relationship with her was never the same again. She became the "secondary mother."

L is an unemployed man in his late forties. I have been seeing him twice a week for three years. He is an artist and designer who suffered a psychotic break about ten years ago. He lives alone, on SSI benefits, and is on psychotropic medication. As a child L was left in the hands of his frightened and narcissistic mother and his brother who is six years older and who brutalized him, while his father was off traveling the world selling toys. As a child L remembers lying in a carriage wanting the top to come down so he could see out. L may have felt this way because he sensed that he was not being seen by his mother. As a child, L would dress up in costumes and enter his parents' bedroom to entertain them while they were watching late night television. He was a child prodigy who painted and played many musical instruments. When he painted, his mother would enter his room unannounced and tell him to put more blue in the paintings, because that color would go better with her decor. His mother would take L out of school so he could go shopping with her. She was dominant and intrusive (later on his bisexual forays may indicate his over-identification with her and his longing to feel closer to and internalize his absent father). When there is an empathic failure, L sometimes tells me he feels like a small child who is sitting isolated and alone in the corner of a large cardboard box. L feels boxed in and he has tried to get out of it by developing several alter-egos.

> Wolf and Kutash state: "Such a person will often also include some alter egos that are the diametric opposite of early figures as a defense for his submerged ego. These internalized others are not projected in transference but introjected as alter egos." (Wolf/Kusash, 1991 p. 71)

The need for alter-egos has subsided since entering treatment. Though rebelling by living alone in a disheveled manner and by not working, L remains in a symbiotic relationship with his mother. The goal of group therapy is to help set him free from these two compulsive modes of being in the world.

R, is an immigrant, (Marlin 1994) orthodox Jewish woman in her late twenties, working in the

medical field, who I have been seeing twice a week for two years. She was hesitant to join group because she feared she would meet somebody she knew. Her "rebellious pseudo-ego" (Wolf/Kutash 1991) manifests in ambivalence about marrying and her inability to sustain a relationship with a man. Her mother abandoned her at the age of four months, for a year of daily stays in a hospital for some medical condition. R has always felt that she was the cause of her mother almost dying. She has also thought that it is she who must die in order for her mother to live. R, who was taken care of by her Aunt, who also had a number of her own children, remembers being in a crib in a room which people would walk through "to check," she said, "that she wasn't dead." R sometimes fears that she will have a psychotic break. Menaker states that "masochism is an ego defense against psychosis." (Menaker 1953, p. 216) R's "compliant pseudo-ego" (op. cit.) manifests as a compulsive caretaker which suppresses her own needs and feelings. R has great difficulty separating from her family and finding her own identity. This is her goal in group therapy.

Another member is C, a woman in her early thirties whom I have been seeing twice a week for five years, and who was also enthusiastic about beginning group. Ulcer-ridden and afraid to leave her mother as a child, she had a recurring nightmare. She was standing on a pedestal, in a white dress, unable to move while the pedestal was rotating slowly. She saw things spinning out of control, all around her, and she believed if she remained very still, she could keep this chaotic environment from "entering her." (This may be an allusion to incest). As the baby of the family C was afraid to leave her mother's side. She felt she had to be a friend to her mother. C may have felt this way because she remembers being frightened when her mother would get upset and lock herself in the bathroom. C's mother also tried to commit suicide when C was very young. C is overtly compliant, and covertly rebellious. Her outward demeanor is that of a "miss goody two-shoes," while secretly she picks up men, preferably black, and compulsively acts out sexually. When she started to perform oral sex on men at the age of sixteen, C seemed to actualize a childhood underground tunnel fantasy (her way of escaping, i.e., getting off the pedestal, while she thought her mother wasn't looking). She found a secret way (she felt she had to hide her love for her alcoholic father from her mother) to get what she thought to be her hidden and dark needs met. She unconsciously believed that the only way she could get a man to pay attention to her was to get down on her knees and crawl, beg and suck her way into somebody's heart. A creatively talented fashion designer, C complains that she feels like all she is is a highly paid administrative assistant, while she keeps working and trying to please her seductive and uninvolved male boss and her demanding female manager, her "negative parental egos." (Wolf, 1957 in Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 57).

> "The tragedy that emerges," Arnold Rachman asserts, "is that the individual is emotionally drained of his creative energy by the ambivalence experienced between complying and rebelling." (Wolf/Kutash 1991 [Rachman, "An Oedipally Conflicted Patient" page 218]

The initial goal for C in group is to become aware of the self-protective maneuvers of her compulsive "pseudo-ego" (Wolf/Kutash 1991) and how they prevent her from living in a more authentic and meaningful manner.

> Wolf and Kutash say that "the submerged [personality] is bound to unfreedom (Menaker calls it "unlust") by his ambivalently compulsive pseudo-egos. To achieve recovery," Wolf and Kutash state, "the group members help the submerged patient to achieve freedom."

(Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 74)

At the first group meeting J, who formerly wore his gun protruding from his waist to all his individual sessions, locked it up with a chain inside the vanity under the bathroom sink. We had discussed this possibility at an individual session, and though he was reluctant to part with his gun, he nevertheless agreed. My supervisor said this was an important sign of trust. He preferred, however, that the group members not know this because he was concerned that if someone got upset they might try to retrieve the gun. Before group began, he asked me whether any of the group members had a history of violence. I assured him they didn't. A few months later, after J described a harrowing incident which occurred on the subway, where he had to make a decision whether to shoot someone, a repressed memory surfaced for L. Shaking, he told the group that he just remembered that he had shot someone when he was twelve years old. It seemed he was all alone and he thought someone was trying to enter his house. He got his father's shotgun and shot at the person, scaring him away. Everyone in the group was shocked to hear this revelation, including me. J's reaction, however, was to begin grilling L, as if L was a suspect. I became very concerned about how L was feeling and it seemed to me that the way J was treating him could re-traumatize L. L had thus far presented himself as quite a timid and mild mannered guy and J had treated him like his schizoid younger brother, whom J had dominated in childhood. L seemed to be intimidated by J, as he had been by his older brother who mercilessly beat L. When L related his story, J was completely taken off guard and became frightened. The fear that someone could be violent in the group became manifest. Such terror could take place at any time in J's household. Thus, J became a law enforcement officer which allowed him to carry a gun with which he could protect himself.

At the first session, surprisingly, both J and L were forthcoming when C naively asked them what they did for a living. Prior to the first group J told me he did not want anyone to know he was a cop. L and I had role-played what he would say if someone asked him what he did for a living since he was embarrassed that he was not working and was on SSI. L's answer would be to say he would prefer not to speak about this. In fact, he said if someone pushed him, he would tell them "to go f..k themselves." I asked C, who had been acting like the hostess of a party, trying to break the ice, how she felt about doing this. She said she felt like she had to take care of everyone, including me. I asked her what would happen if she didn't take care of everyone? She said that she would be left alone and abandoned and she hoped by taking care of others that she would be taken care of, but that that usually didn't happen and that her needs were never met. After she became aware of what she was doing, she said that she felt relieved that she didn't have to continue to take care of the others in the group. C then began to speak about her family. Both L and J shared some of their background about their mothers and fathers. L could not get over how much the group members had in common. Idealizing me, L said "well I can see that Diana handpicked us for the group." Toward the end of the session J revealed that he felt seductive toward C. He said he had never met a woman like her. This was probably true and one of my hopes for J was that he would one day no longer be attracted to women like his mother and he would be able to meet someone like C who is a bright and sensitive young woman. C was taken by surprise, but revealed that she too felt strongly attracted to J. I could see why she would be attracted to him; J represented her unavailable father. She was surprised he was so forthright about his feelings, and she quickly felt seduced.

I'm not so sure J was really being forthright, and I was uncomfortable with his way of swiftly letting

L know who was the dominant male in this group. Also, sensing that C and J would be attracted to one another, I reiterated the group guidelines about confidentiality and said we could talk about all our feelings within the group, but that it would be wise to keep them within the room and not act on them outside of it. I knew I needed to create a feeling of safety and containment, as soon as possible, since all of these patients came from troubled families. Before the group ended C said, "now remember, no talking in the elevator."

I had found myself very concerned about starting the group with only three patients, but at the end of the session they all remarked how good they felt about each other and they decided they did not want anyone new to join the group.

The next day at her individual session C told me she was feeling sexually attracted to J but found herself keeping her feelings hidden in the group. She was ashamed of them and felt they should not be presented there. She also felt I was more concerned about J than about her. Transferentially, this reflected her feelings about her mother paying more attention to her older brother. L called and thanked me for encouraging him to go into the group. He was surprised that he had spoken as much as he had. L was surprisingly insightful; he told J that J needed to seduce people to like him because he didn't feel close to his father. He reminded J that J would go to strange men to hold their hand when he was a little boy. This was a wonderful example of projective identification. L was becoming my co-leader.

By the third session J revealed two things about himself, one of which I was familiar with but the other of which came as a total surprise to me. The first revelation was that his girlfriend was moving into his new apartment. J never discussed leaving his mother's apartment with me or that his girlfriend would be moving in with him. As far as I was concerned he was simply trading one mother for another. J needed a minimum of two sessions a week, something he strongly resisted. He never trusted my motivation. I base this on the transference from his relationship to his father who he both idealized and mistrusted. His dead father had been considered a "philosopher/jokester/con-artist," who would rip off his clients, allow his sons to destroy his customers' property, while at the same time providing a place for homeless bums.

In retrospect I must acknowledge that we had difficulty in establishing a working alliance. (Aronson, Marvin 1979) The second "bombshell" which J dropped that night was that he had a hangover. He said he often had one when he came to his individual session, which he said I knew about. Though I knew J drank a few beers with his police buddies, I had no idea he had come to his sessions hung over. His belligerent attitude, which showed no remorse for coming to group while suffering the effects of alcohol fueled my feelings of humiliation and rage. I felt like a bad mother who had put her children in harm's way. Knowing C's father was an alcoholic, I felt she might think I had been irresponsible. I was also concerned about what L would think. C expressed her disappointment in J. She asked him how he could have come on to her if he had a girlfriend moving in with him. She also encouraged him not to come to group hung over.

In the following session two important things occurred. R joined the group and C told her first dream. R had been very resistant to entering group, because she did not want to be with a "bunch of freaks." She also told me she would commit to group only until July and she anticipated that she would not

continue. She said she believed in brief therapy and didn't think she needed a long term group. J, needing to maintain dominance, quickly began to ask R questions, in what he thought to be a friendly manner. His questions were highly personal. R reacted by firmly establishing her boundaries, which he experienced as rejection. She became his rejecting "secondary" mother, "the bitch," while C was the loving "primary" mother. From then on, two subgroups formed. R and J became the voice of the "rebellious pseudo-ego" "subgroup," (Agazarian, 1992, 182) manifesting the angry warring parents of the group. L and C represented the "compliant pseudo-ego" "subgroup" which manifested the frightened submissive child.

The nascent "authentic ego" began to emerge in the form of "babies" which have to be taken care of. This occurred in the following group dream which C reported: "I was watching a movie about a mulatto girl who did not know her father and couldn't get married because of this. The 'town' wouldn't let her. Then she was driving with her father. There was an accident. She was very frightened. They came upon a scene where three little babies had been in an accident and they were all bloody. She took the babies back to her home." When C woke up she reported feeling frightened and rigid. She had one hand on her breast and one hand on her hip. The feeling she was experiencing upon awakening was an old familiar feeling, one that terrified her. C told the group that her uncle died when she was four years old. He drove into a tree while intoxicated. She remembered she could not cry because her father was crying. She said that a few years earlier her niece put her arm through a plate glass window and bloodied her arm. C ran to rescue the child while C's mother stood there frozen.

This dream is a group dream because the 3 babies represent her concern for the group which contained 3 members (prior to R beginning that evening). The babies symbolize the authentic but vulnerable egos. C said she was very frightened the previous week when she realized J was an alcoholic. She said I did not protect her and that she found herself taking care of J while feeling frightened. J finally saw the impact he had on the group and he apologized to C for frightening her. He understood that he needed to attend group sober. A few months later he finally stopped drinking altogether.

Months later, in the 27th group the following dream (presented by C) was related. It illustrates the "rebellious and compliant pseudo-ego" "subgroups" and the baby metaphor as the "true self" which must be hidden: C walked into a house with a screened-in porch. Inside was a family, a Mafia family. She had a baby which she felt she had to hide from this family. She then walked into another room and there was a large Iraqi family which also frightened her and she had to hide the baby from them as well. While C was recounting the dream R looked surprised when C mentioned that the family was Iraqi because R was born in Iraq. She asked "did you know that I am Iraqi?" "No," C said. J piped up: "I knew you were Iraqi," and he got caught up with how smart he was to detect that fact.

C said, "Please let's get back to the baby. I think I am afraid to bring my baby or child into this family." L nodded his understanding of this. J became annoyed with C that his detective skills were being dismissed. I asked if others felt it was difficult to bring their child into the group. Were there two menacing families in the room which made it difficult to bring the vulnerable side (Livingston 1975, p. 244) of each individual's self into the room? R picked up that she was the Iraqi in the group and J was Italian. L said he was C's baby. Both C and L felt anxious and overlooked when R and J

began to interact. During all this interchange I noticed that J seemed distant. He had been acting this way for the last few groups and in fact said he was bored in the last two groups. This seemed to occur when he is not the center of attention. I found myself feeling annoyed and angry with J when he withdrew and then blamed the group for leaving him behind. C was able to describe her anger at J for feeling blamed by him when he does not ask for help but just withdraws. J regained his momentum and began to duel with R as the two of them went at each other like in a ping pong game. I saw L and C both withdrawing and I found myself urging L, with my hand, to speak up. He then said to J, "I feel you're being defensive," or something to that effect, and J became angry and felt accused by L. R urged L to speak about his own feelings instead of saying he feels J is doing something. This is very difficult for L but he finally said "I feel a little overlooked." I said "a little?" "No", he said, "I feel overlooked." J still began to protest that he was angry that he was interrupted from speaking to R. He did not care about anyone else's feelings. I asked L what he was feeling now. He said "I feel a little intimidated." I said "a little?" "Oh I see", he said, "I am diminishing my feelings." (Kleinberg, in press) "Why are you doing that?" "I am afraid of my anger." J went on the warpath. When I admitted that I urged L to speak up about his feelings, J directed his anger at me for supporting L in interrupting him. I found myself feeling frightened and anxious at this face to face confrontation with J. No matter what I said to him it had no impact. R spoke up and said "now I know how you all feel when J and I are arguing." She said "I feel anxious" and everyone else said they felt that way too. L asked J "do you feel anxious too?" "Yes, but I always feel anxious when I get angry." During this interchange I tried to back off from J to understand what was going on. I realized that the Mafia in C's dream, the intimidation which L was speaking about, was present in the room and that the group had to become conscious and aware of this underlying grip on its members. Otherwise, no one was going to feel safe enough to deal with his or her vulnerability. I realized when C and L stated how frightened they were of J's anger it became clear that J was becoming the spokesperson and container for the rage and intimidation that all the group members felt. J, whose assigned role in his family was to act out the family's rage and then be "scapegoated" (Agazarian in Schlachet 1989, p. 4) for it, his "Bum Rap," as he used to call it, was experiencing an equivalent position as the scapegoat of the group. "Woe be unto the dissenter." Schlachet (op. cit., p.3)

> Agazarian, speaking about the scapegoat, asserts: "The person speaks for his own issues, and also speaks for the group." "It is at the same time, an expression of the group's need for one of its members to bear the burden of some noxious thought or affect, and of that individual's compulsion to adopt the position of being the shunned bearer of those feelings." (Schlachet 1989, p.4)

I pointed all this out to the group. J protested that he did not understand what I was talking about; "what is this container?" Yet soon after I said this he said, "you know I feel a lot better now. I have a lot of anger and rage in me and I have been trying to hide it, you know, to be a nice guy. This has been my secret." The Mafia, in fact, showed up in a dream which J reported a couple of months after group started. In the dream he went to a family's home. There was a wife, father and three children. He was with Johnny, a twelve year old kid, on a bike. J was helping the family build a steam room. (J, who built his own Jacuzzi and steam room, says he feels very relaxed after a steam bath.) Johnny wanted to leave, but J didn't. J followed him. Johnny turned left. J went back to the house with the family. He felt good being there with them. He then found himself in bed with the mother (i.e. the wife). (J thinks it might have been me.) He felt very intimate with her and almost on the verge of sex,

but it didn't happen. He then realized that the husband was in the next room and he thought he better leave. He met the husband as he was leaving and the husband said "goodbye J" in a very sincere manner. The way the husband spoke to him meant a lot to J. (J told me he felt the husband in the dream was my husband. Since I work out of my apartment, he reported once meeting my husband who he felt spoke to him in a respectful and warm manner.) J then went outside the house. There were wooden steps which were actually like boards and in between there was an opening for a 1000 foot drop. He had to watch his step. He felt he could fall through one of the openings at any moment. His keys fell, but they did not fall through the gaps. He bent down to pick them up and he saw other individual keys and he began to pick them up, one at a time. He felt he could not retrieve his keys but he carefully placed the other keys on the top step so the other members could retrieve theirs. (he thought that they were the keys of the other members in the group. He also felt he was helping the other members understand themselves). At that point, Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci, from the film "Goodfellows," showed up. They pointed guns at J. Then a wooden board fell down the 1000 foot drop. They started to intimidate J and he felt frightened. They were both menacing and joking at the same time, (these symbols seems to reflect J's internalized threatening and angry objects his mother and jokster father). When they put their guns away, J pulled out his and pointed it at them. They then said, "ooh, aah" as if mocking and not believing that J would shoot them. J then curses at them and says, "I'll blow your head off." But he doesn't.

Unbeknownst to the group, this therapist grew up in a home which had actual ties to the mafia. So when this metaphor surfaced in two members' dreams, I was taken aback.

> Schlachet states: "People are not so insulated from one another as we may sometimes construe. This unconscious attunement enables people to behave in cooperative and synchronous ways..." "The group's members identify with the leader, putting him in the place of their own egos, and hence identify both with each other and the group." (Schlachet 1989, p. 2)

> Alford puts it this way: "The ritual of enacting the leader in the end is about enacting a primitive and punitive superego powerful enough to contain and control the group's aggression, which is why it is the so-called bad leader *(a Bionesque term)* who is most frequently acted out. Because, the group seems to believe, only the severest aggression by the leader can control the members terrifying aggression." (Alford 1995, p. 138)(my italics)

A month later, after receiving his promotion to sergeant, J left the group. The group worked very hard, especially R, who had become his sparring partner, to try to convince him to stay. It felt to me that the group very much wanted to save not only J's "baby," but was fighting for the metaphorical life of the group "baby." I found myself moved to tears at how important the group had become for the members and how important they had become for me.

Before J left therapy, he realized a few of his goals, like moving out of his mother's home, getting his own apartment, meeting a woman with whom he is now having a child, and finally being promoted to sargeant. The promotion and the advent of his infant son, along with financial pressures, were J's reasons for leaving. However, I believe that the regression he was experiencing in group, which relegated him into the scapegoat role assigned to him in his family, conflicted with the needs of his

ego to sit in a "high chair." This was a symbol in a dream which he had at his last session. Sergeants sit at elevated desks, and J desperately needed to feel superior. His ego, at this point in time, could not tolerate such regression. His pressing need to dominate and be on top prevailed. In retrospect, I have come to see that I failed to help J define his goal for group. My enthusiasm to begin a group and his need to please the "secondary mother" in order to bring back his "primary mother" (Wolf/Kutash 1991, p. 8-9) motivated J to enter group. Not having fully understood these dynamics, I can now see that he began to feel re-traumatized in the group, in that he felt he lost my love and regard when I began to try to encourage L (transferentially, his younger schizoid brother) to speak up. He perceived me as giving his toy blue boat to L. J had no choice but to leave the group because I was unable to interpret his feelings. His departure, however, came as a blessing in disguise. After he left, the remaining members of the group began to allow more of their "vulnerable feelings," (M. S. Livingston 1975, p. 242) as well as authentic aggressive feelings towards one another, to surface.

L and C's compliant pseudo-egos still dominate their modes of being in the world, but within the last few sessions more genuine feelings are appearing. L, who keeps his "true self" literally "all boxed up" was able to let R know directly how angry he felt about the way he was treated by her. He told her the other day, "You know I feel like smacking you from here to 34th Street." Later, in his individual session he told me it was really 42nd Street, but he wanted to lessen the blow. C was also able to let R know that she felt both manipulated by, and competitive with, her. R, with the help of the group, was able to allow herself to go on vacation, after she saw how she needed to present her going away as a painful experience, because she feared that once she would be out of our sight, she would be easily forgotten by the therapist, leaving C and L to get all my attention. R's transference to the group is that of the "bad mother-group." (Ganzarain, 1991, p. 157) She thinks she cannot let the group know that she will be having a good time when she is away. Seeing her mode of being before her in the group, R's demeanor changed completely, as she became liberated to enjoy her vacation in Florida. In this group, R, as spokesperson (Agazarian 1992) for the "authentic ego" (Lindenman in Wolf/Kutash 1991) helped to liberate the group from its sense of bondage to the "tyranny of the negative parental ego." (Wolf/Kutash 1991)

R, like J, I now see, has allowed herself to come into the group to please me, in the hopes of recapturing her "primary mother" (Wolf/Kutash 1991). Like J, however, she too keeps coming up against the "secondary" one. R has also assumed J's role of the "dissenter." However, the difference between the two patients is that she and I have a positive therapeutic relationship and her strength of ego allows her to regress in a positive manner.

> Saul Tuttman in defining regression states: "There are two opposing implications of this definition: First, the negative meaning: the undoing of progress and perhaps, a deterioration to a fragmented or disorganized autistic archaic state."

This is what J experienced in the group (his 1000 foot drop); because of this he needed to protect himself by dropping out.

> Tuttman continues "Yet there is a second possibility which has positive value: the return to fundamentals and origins which might facilitate a potential reorganization, resulting from a courageous exploration and recognition of the previously repressed primitive now becoming

integrated into a broader and more mature **whole.**" (Tuttman 1981, p. 3 paraphrasing Michael Balint,1968 and Silvano Arieti, 1959)

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