

## Trauma and Race within an Analytic Relationship

**Walters JA\***

Psychoanalyst and Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College of the City University of New York, USA

**\*Corresponding author:** Janice A Walters, Psychoanalyst and Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College of the City University of New York, NY, USA, Tel: 914 830-3140; Email: janicewalters177@gmail.com

**Conceptual paper**

Volume 4 Issue 5

**Received Date:** October 14, 2019

**Published Date:** October 24, 2019

**DOI:** 10.23880/pprij-16000229

### Abstract

This paper illustrates some of the issues that psychoanalysts face when their work is between persons from a culture and race that is different from their own. Theoretical explanations for race are outlined. The paper further illustrates the ways in which race became entangled with coping mechanisms that developed as a result of severe trauma and abuse. Further, the paper focuses on the transference and countertransference that took place between a white, female analyst and a 34-year old black, male analysand over a two-year period.

### The Theory and Experience of Race

Race can be defined in several ways. Van den Berghe [1] suggested that race occurs when a group is socially defined based on physical criteria including skin color and facial features. From a biological perspective the only meaningful racial categorization is that of human [2]. Van de Berghe [1] suggested that race is constructed as a result of messages from the social environment that have their basis in differences in physical characteristics, specifically skin color. These messages together with the meaning individuals attribute to them, result in the development of a category labeled race, which includes information about the self in relation to others.

Racial assignment begins early in development, when we are exposed to information about people who are different from ourselves. However, this information is often inaccurate or only partially accurate, leading to preconceived judgments, that is, prejudice based on race [2]. Piaget [3] helps us to understand how this happens. He suggested that when a child is exposed to information, internal cognitive structures called schema, are used to organize this information. Therefore, we acquire internal representations of the social meaning of our skin color. Tatum [2] has argued that both people of color and whites develop categories that lead to stereotypes about the

other group, as well as internalized stereotypes about their own group, which often lead to internalized oppression. For Piaget [3], these internalized representations in the form of schema are modified through the mechanisms of assimilation and accommodation. Exposure to people who are from a different race can lead us to reevaluate our perceptions and to make changes. Thus, during development we acquire an internal working model in which race is a prototype. This is the basis by which we interpret our experience of others, and ourselves and the basis from which we relate within an interpersonal world.

Tatum [2] has argued that prejudice alone does not fully explain racism. She cites David Wellman's [4] belief that racism is a system of advantage, which is based on race and leads to discomfort. She further asserted that for this reason, people prefer to think of racism as a particular form of prejudice. It is easier to live without prejudice than it is to live without one's advantages in life. Further, advantage based on race often elicits envy and either a desire to belong to, or disdain for the advantaged group, represented by white skin.

My experience growing up in Australia left me with a homogeneous representation of race. Therefore, my experience with the social meaning attributed to

differences based on skin color in the United States was minimal. My new exposure to racial diversity expanded and changed my perception of race, however, I was not fully prepared for the ways in which race would enter the therapeutic relationship. The following case raised many questions for me and sparked my ongoing interest in understanding the meaning of racial differences, particularly within the analytic relationship.

I believe that our prototypes do influence our relational world, and this is particularly so when the categories are racially constructed and bring with them advantages and disadvantages based on race. However, the optimist in me would like to hold onto the notion put forth by Sullivan [5] that our humanness is of the highest priority therefore the human prototype should override racial divisions. I am not suggesting that we should ignore the social meaning of race but rather that as humans we have many commonalities that transcend our racial differences. To ignore the meaning of race would risk missing the injustices that individuals have faced because of their skin color. However, adhering to prototypical differences risks perpetuating the vicious circles referred to by Wachtel [6]. When I reflect back on this work, I can't help but wonder how much my experience or lack of, or alternatively, my need to focus on humanness influenced the ways in which I addressed the racial issues that surfaced within the analytic relationship.

### Theories of Race

Psychoanalytic theories have explained race within the analytic relationship in different ways. Freud [7] argued that a considerable number of people could be bound by love as long as others are left to receive the manifestations of their aggressions. The intrapsychic drive model categorizes and perceives of black race as a symbol of libidinal and aggressive instincts, the other to which Freud referred. Using this model, some have argued that white therapists based on stereotypes toward their black patients have feared that their patients were aggressive, impulsive, and lacking in insight, and that black patients' self-depreciation is a result of their equating their skin color with unconscious instinctual fantasies [8]. Others Goldberg E [9] Schachter & Butts [10] have raised the question of whether black patients would transfer their instinctual impulses and wishes onto their white therapists, or whether they would resist doing so because of the color barrier.

Clarke [11] suggested that to interpret the meaning of race, we should use Kleinian splitting and projective identification to understand those psychological

mechanisms that operate within racism. Projective identification involves the forcing of unpalatable parts of the self into some other in a process that becomes a lived experience. This provides an insight into the way in which the victim internalizes racism through the mechanism of introjection. Altman [12] also suggested that black and white racial categories result from projection and introjection. He stated that the opposite race creates a category of people who are not me, into which one can project unwanted psychic content, such as aggression. Members of the other racial category then introject this.

According to Altman [12], during interracial therapy, there is a complex moving back and forth of projective identification in which race is the focus. Bion [13] builds on Klein's projective identification suggesting the concepts of container and contained. The recipient of projection acts as a container of feelings, such as fear, hatred and anxiety. Ogden [14] suggested that pressure is exerted, unconsciously designed to coerce the recipient of the projection into experiencing him/herself and behaving in a way that is congruent with the unconscious projective phantasy.

Rustin [15] argues that the mechanisms of psychotic thought find an ideal container in racial categorization. The object of the projection becomes inferior, repellent, and a container with which to detoxify our own self, something to be excluded and persecuted. For Rustin [15] these mechanisms include the paranoid splitting of objects into loved and hated, the suffusion of thinking processes by intense, unrecognized emotion, confusion between self and object due to the splitting of the self and massive projective identification, and hatred of reality of truth. Splitting leads to the segregation of objects into all bad and all good categories. The bad, the other is idealized, becoming larger than life, threatening and destructive. In racism, exclusion and destructiveness ensue in defense of the self, against the other [11]. The perceived threat becomes demonized in society to the extent that no good can be seen: The stereotypical image develops creating a threat from the black otherness.

Stolorow R [16] caution us that using projective identification to understand racial issues in analytic work may minimize the room that is available for the analysts own preexisting vulnerabilities to cause unpleasant and painful feelings in him/her. Thus, the patient is blamed for the analyst's vulnerable feelings. From the social constructivist perspective, transference is a product co-created by the subjectivities of the analyst and the analysand [17]. I believe as Altman [12] suggested that the feelings, attitudes, biases, preconceptions and

prejudices that both analyst and analysand bring to the analytic relationship provide important analytic material. The challenge is to recognize, acknowledge and explore these within the analytic relationship. In this paper, I will use black and white to refer to those internal representations that were unique to this case. I, in no way want to suggest that these are representative of race in general.

## The Case of Batman

### The Initial Encounter

I found myself in an unfamiliar place when the analysand who I will refer to as B, was referred to me after he became overwhelmed with sadness during a psychology class. Ogden [14] suggested that crises are a way of reestablishing unmediated sensory closeness and are events that bring analyst and analysand together. B's emotional crisis triggered by a discussion of child abuse brought him and I together in ways that I could not have anticipated.

My initial observation of B was a light skinned, softly spoken, polite, articulate man with a very engaging smile. He stated that his reasons for coming to therapy were 1) his concern about his potential aggressiveness, which he presented as road rage, 2) his concern that he could replay his past in his marriage, and 3) his longing for his mother's love. My first thoughts were that I was a white woman and he was a black man, leading me to ask him how he felt about our racial differences. His response was that he felt confident that because of my professional status I would not let this be an issue. At that time, I agreed with him. After all, we were two people who were more human than anything else as Sullivan [5] stated. During this first session, B's need to tell me about his painful childhood experiences caused me to direct my attention to his story and away from the differences in our skin color. As I reflect back, I am aware that I was often blind to the ways in which race was impacting the analytic relationship until it became so obvious, I was forced to pay attention. I believe that my blindness was partially due to my experience, or lack of experience growing up in Australia or the fact that B and I colluded to keep race out of the analytic relationship.

### Racial Splitting of Self and Other

Memories from B's childhood brought tears and despair. My reaction was empathy and anger toward the injustices of his family, the black community who encouraged harsh discipline, and the broader society that

turned a blind eye on child abuse. B's experience of the world based on his family's behavior and messages that *"no one will love you like your family"* (B) led to his internalization of the world as a dangerous place. As I listened to his painful childhood experiences, I found myself struggling with my own countertransference. I was feeling hate for his abusers and was struggling not to stereotype the black community as perpetrators of hatred and abuse. I found myself thinking about the conflict between my own white parents that caused me much childhood pain. However, I was grateful that I had been nurtured in a way that B was not.

Klein [18] argued that when a child experiences the threat of fantasies of annihilation in which the self is in danger, good and bad are separated, and danger arises from the lack of definition between the two. According to Klein, the young child's fear takes the form of fantasies of persecution requiring the child to defend the self by splitting the world into good and bad objects. Parts of others are taken into the self through the mechanism of introjection and become split and idealized, resulting in a distorted perception of the other as either excessively good or persecuting and dangerous. B's internal and external world was split into symbolic representations based on his experience of good and persecuting objects with race as the differentiating category. For him, black represented both internal and external otherness, an embodiment of hate, destructiveness and danger causing him to experience an alienation from himself and his external world. For B, having black skin required violence, aggression, sexual promiscuity, and destruction. His childhood experiences were dominated by hate and fear. Love was something to be longed for but not forthcoming.

While my countertransference brought back my own childhood trauma, my internal representation of whiteness contained both abusing and nurturing sides. For B blackness represented violence and destruction with an absence of love and nurturing. Being white was idealized and was represented as being educated, intelligent, and caring. Altman [12] suggested that when minority group members feel socially devalued, they may disown and project onto the dominant group qualities such as intelligence and competence and feel depleted of these characteristics themselves. This was B's experience.

### Self-Preservation

During our sessions it became apparent that B had organized the trauma of his childhood in ways that allowed him to defend himself against destructive internal and external objects. Horkheimer and Adorno

[19] argued that we project on the world experiences and qualities that are part of ourselves, as if they are part of someone else. When the feeling is bad, the projection becomes paranoid. They further argue that the paranoiac cannot accept his own instincts, so he attacks others, experiencing his aggression as that of the other and therefore perceiving others as threatening and dangerous. B lived every day defending against the possibility of attack from within and from a dangerous external world. This required continual vigilance on his part.

B also contained within himself a sensitive, cultured side that longed for validation and love. His sensitive side was initially encouraged by his mother, but ultimately rejected by her and his black family making him the target of abuse within the family. He quickly learned that blackness meant exposure to annihilation and destruction. B's idealization of whiteness allowed for the acceptance of his sensitive side. I wondered if this was the reason that he chose a white, woman analyst. Despite the fact that I wanted to work with him, on intake, I asked if he preferred that I refer him to a black analyst. His response was "*this was perfect and just what he would have chosen*" (B).

### Early Trauma

B was one of three siblings, the second son followed by a daughter. His mother's disappointment that he was a boy caused her to keep his hair in long braids until age three. As he relived childhood and young adult memories, I understood the origin of his persecuting objects. His home was filled with chaos, violence, and constant threats of annihilation. His father abused his mother, brother and himself. He recalled images of waking up to his father beating his mother with blood splattered all over the walls. His father often took him and his brother to the dark basement that B referred to as the "*torture chamber, with the torture light*" (B) and on one occasion B was forced to watch as his father hung his brother, naked from a line and beat him. He could not remember if he received the same fate but thought he may have. He recalled repetitive beatings for the slightest infraction, and he had developed a capacity to listen vigilantly for any minute sound that signaled impending abuse. His older brother was both his abuser and his protector.

B described his mother as "*seductive in gold boots and hot pants, but trashy and destructive*" (B). She abused him well into his adult years. She hit, criticized, told him she wished he had not been born, took his money and made clear that no one would ever love him as his mother did. He associated her to the mother in the movie "*Mommy*

*Dearest*" (B). B found support in his aunt who gave him love and responded to his sensitive side. She also introduced him to culture at a young age. She came to his defense causing his mother to forbid him to spend time with her. She died when he was a young boy leaving him with an internal emptiness and a forbidden part of himself in the form of his more vulnerable, cultured side.

B struggled to be the "*good boy*" (B) in the hope that he would gain his mother's validation and love. Up until his sister's birth, his mother encouraged him to express his feminine, more sensitive side. Once she gave birth to a daughter, B became the unnecessary child; his mother told him she only wanted a son and a daughter. She rejected the feminine qualities she had encouraged leaving him to feel abandoned. B spoke of the ways in which his mother continually prodded him to take on the abusive ways of his father and brother. His failure to do so, further alienated him from the family. He represented their own hatred for the characteristics they ascribed to whiteness and he became the target of the family aggression and abuse as he was denied love and belonging.

Freud [20] spoke about mourning and its relation to depression. When a loved one is introjected inside our self, this person becomes part of our identity [21]. The loss of the loved one whose image has been internalized causes the self to be diminished, that is, a part of our self has died. B lost his aunt to death and his mother through her rejection of him. As I listened to him telling me that he could not celebrate his birthday because he had no right to exist, I also felt lost, helpless and inadequate in my attempts to give him new life. When an individual focuses on restoring the presence of the object instead of giving the person up, the person is likely to become preoccupied with the question of what failure or sin drove the loved object away [21]. This was B's focus as he asked me every session what he could do to be worthy of his mother's love.

### Early Treatment

B brought me poetry written during his years of abuse. My horror at his words and images of violence, rage, anger, loss, and hopelessness caused me to question my judgment about my safety. Despite this, I assured myself that my judgment was sound. B told me that he did not bring the sexual poems because they might frighten me. In one poem, B said, "*to not know is better because being smart means having to see and become less powerful.*" Bion [22] speaks of having thoughts that cannot be known. It made me wonder if this poem symbolized his decision to



keep his white side which was represented by being smart, knowledgeable, sensitive, and vulnerable hidden. Further, to acknowledge that he was a victim of child abuse meant the loss of all hope. It took almost a year into the treatment before he was able to accept that he was abused by his family.

As an adult, B lived in a state of vigilance, listening for any sound that might indicate a potential attack. I could not help but think this was the explanation for his high blood pressure that was of medical concern. He expressed fear that he could have within him his father's violence and his mother's *"cutting tongue"* (B). He feared his own potential destructiveness and described incidents during which he had *"blackouts"* (B). Fear of attack alerted the dissociated black side causing him to defend himself and leaving him horrified at the consequences of his aggression. During these descriptions, I experienced flashing moments of fear that the analytic relationship could trigger such a blackout. Perhaps this is an explanation for why I may have colluded to keep the black side out of the room. Despite these moments, I saw the person sitting in front of me as a sensitive, vulnerable, and pained individual. I was identifying with the white side he wanted me to embrace. I was aware that I could not help him to reenter the family to gain his mother's love. I was driven by my own need to be the new and good object that would rescue him from his destructive family [12]. Altman [12] speaks of the danger of this stating that both old and new objects have to be engaged for deep analytic work to be accomplished.

### Adolescent and Young Adult Years

B described his adolescent and young adult years as dominated by sexual promiscuity. His erotic desire was split by racial categories. The internalized mother *"seductive in gold boots and hot pants, but trashy"* (B) represented his desire for the *"dark, sleazy world of the bad girls"* (B). His attraction for older women with wisdom and grace from whom he could gain the mannerisms and cultural experiences he longed for appeared to represent his aunt. Many of these women were married and his belief that their husbands did not treat them well led him to take sadistic pleasure in ensuring that they knew about and envied him.

B told me that he desired white women. Both his grandfather and father dated white women and his father left the family to father a child with a white woman. B disapproved of the way in which his father treated this woman and cut off contact with him. The family secret and shame lay in the forbidden, white grandmother. B had

few memories of his grandmother but spoke of her red hair. She was the hated object and he was denied the opportunity to know her. B was led to believe that his attraction for white women would result in his alienation and bring hatred and destruction to the object of his desire. He experienced this when during adolescence, a young white woman's father beat her for seeing him and his mother threatened to kill any white woman he dated.

B's fear that his sexual promiscuity would send him *"to hell"* (B) led to him marrying when he was in his early 20s. His wife was of African American/Haitian descent. He described her as a virgin, *"uncontaminated by the bad girl world"* (B). She helped him to leave his abusive family when he made a suicide attempt. Their marriage was at first a secret but later they married with others present. B referred to himself as the *"Cinderella"* (B) of the family, rescued by his wife. He proclaimed her to be the *"love of his life"* (B) and expressed concern that his insecurity caused him to hold back creating tension in their marriage. However, within this relationship he was free to express his sensitive side while she played the role of the planner and decision maker who kept their environment tightly organized.

### Batman Emerges

Hoffman [23] questions the polarity of fantasy and reality in his belief that fantasy always accommodates reality and that there is no perception of reality that is not filtered through, if not enhanced by fantasy [24]. Soon after treatment began, B came to sessions dressed in black, wearing a black shirt and baseball cap with the yellow batman emblem on it. He spoke freely about the batman side of himself. Batman represented his outer black skin, the superhero whose role was to sublimate the internalized black hatefulness in the service of preserving goodness and love. Under the disguise of the batman cloak also resided the secret, sensitive, vulnerable white man Bruce Wain who needed Batman's strength to protect him in the service of fighting hate and destruction. B spoke of spending much of his early years hiding from his abusers in the dark cave, his room. He also retreated to his cave during his sexually promiscuous years. Batman hid and protected the vulnerable white side as his aunt had done during his childhood. While home alone, B continued to live in the dark. He turned out all lights so that he would not be seen and listened vigilantly for potential attackers. During one session, B became anxious at my suggestion that he might be able to give up Batman. He said that he could never do this because he would be left *"naked"* (B) in the world. This reminded me of the

incident during which his brother and possibly he was stripped naked and beaten in the dark cave, the basement.

B spoke of a dream during which he was hypnotized so he could fly. After many attempts and falling from buildings, he finally succeeded. He associated this to being pushed into a swimming pool as a child and getting to the surface encouraged by the image of a white robed person. I wondered if the white robe person represented his white analyst whom he believed would save him from potential drowning.

B assigned me the role of Batwoman. For him, I was the professional whose role was to solve his problems. His wife was Robin, his partner and companion, who lived with him in the bat cave. The women of his early affairs were the Catwomen, the *"bad girls"* (B). He spoke of a dream in which he saw a woman with big cheeks and a smile like his wife, but fair skinned. I suspect that this dream was an indication of things to come within the analytic relationship.

B spoke about a dream during which he was in the school courtyard when a white cloud came down causing his mouth to hit the ground and a tooth to break. He reported seeing blue and white. His association was being in the school bathroom when a janitor cornered him, and he escaped. The following day dressed in blue and white, he was playing shuffle ball when a big guy in a white shirt knocked him over causing his mouth to hit the ground. This brought associations of discrimination and abuse when as a child he was called names and had things thrown at him from a school bus filled with white children. He had also been both abused and a perpetrator of abuse during his early school years. It seemed to me that his perception of the world was that whether the outer skin was black or white he was going to be attacked. There was danger no matter which side of him was exposed. Despite this, he spoke of his high school years during which he and his peers dressed in slacks and tie, an image he described as the G-Q image. He said that this image kept the violent students away from him. I suspect this outer layer also kept his hatred, potentially destructive side hidden and well contained. My association to the white cloud was his white analyst who he feared could cause him to fall and break parts of himself.

### Response to Trauma

I experienced B's paranoia when he came to a session walking with the assistance of a cane following a knee injury. He was extremely anxious about his vulnerability and his inability to defend himself and his wife *"to the*

*death"* (B). He proudly demonstrated his solution pulling a huge dagger out from inside the cane. I struggled to contain my fear at the sight of this deadly weapon. After the session, I wondered if he was testing me to see if I could contain his dark side. I think I succeeded but for me it didn't feel that way. He reiterated his need for Batman to defend him from such vulnerabilities.

### Longing, Loss and Guilt

As the treatment progressed, B continued to long for contact with his family. His final alienation occurred when his grandfather left him his estate to safeguard as well as a sum of money. The family accused him of *"conning"* (B) them out of their inheritance. He struggled to honor his grandfather's faith in him, but this caused him much pain.

B's initial goal for treatment was to save his mother from what he referred to as her *"rat invested environment"* (B). He had hoped I would help him to fix his undesirable self so that he could gain her validation and love. He now faced a conflict between his desire to save his mother and his wish to save himself. He had gained awareness that he could not change his mother and that to reenter the family would mean living as the hated, black male or as the abused, sensitive child. His analogy for his situation was a screeching car coming to a screeching halt. He expressed feelings of powerlessness and failure. He began to experience loss as he realized he must save himself. In a dream he stood by a pole in the dark basement while his brother, sister and mother changed places moving around him. His mother faced him, and he told her of his hatred for her. He feared that his hatefulness would send him to hell. He despaired that his freedom meant the death of his mother. He had prayed for her life when she fell into a coma and now felt anxiety and guilt when he thought of being set free by her demise.

In a second dream, B returned to live in the family home and was confronted. He described the windows as bigger, making it easier to see outside. An incoming storm brought big, thick, black clouds. The wind was blowing the curtains open. His mother called him an animal moving aggressively toward him. He told her not to touch him. He also warned his brother to stand back. He packed his belongings and left screaming with tears in his eyes. He associated this dream to his hatred and longing for revenge stating, *"they are the animals, a pack of wolves, after grandfather's possessions"* (B). It seemed that he could now see through the dark cloud that had lingered over him for many years. In a following dream, his mother stole the bond his grandfather left him insisting he meet her demands. He grabbed it and tore it up telling her it

was now worthless. In this dream, his family cornered him, but he was left feeling good that he refused to meet his mother's demands. He described a plant in the corner near the window that I associated to the plant in the corner near the window of the room we used for sessions. He further described the setting as a British loft that reminded him of his grandmother's house. He spoke of trees with long, big branches and a nice breeze. A thunderstorm came causing it to become dark and the curtains to whip. He associated this to the fury brought by his family stating that they don't fit into his world. My association to this dream was that it represented his internal struggle between the split black and white sides of himself. In hindsight, I wonder if this dream also represented his struggle with his erotic desire for his white analyst.

As B worked through the depressive position as described by Klein [18], he attempted to make reparation for his wish for his mother's demise and to mourn her loss. He dreamt that she died, and he viewed her with grey hair at the funeral. His presence brought questioning looks from others. His response to this dream was that she chose to live the way she did, and he was free of guilt. In his dream he shed one tear.

### The Emergence of Bruce Wain

Toward the end of the first year of treatment, B replaced his batman attire with the G-Q image that I imagined was his high school presentation. As in high school, I suspect that the purpose of this attire was to keep the destructive black side out of the room and to engage his white therapist. I colluded with him during this time and perhaps was also happy to keep his destructive side out of the room. I was caught off guard when batman suddenly reappeared. A chance encounter with his sister caused his paranoia and need for his Batman cloak to surface. He became vigilant in his belief that his sister and brother were watching and following him. He anticipated a need to defend himself against their possible attacks, which he welcomed in the case of his brother. I became concerned for his well-being if he should have a "blackout." To my surprise, he expressed empathy for his father whom he described as caring, despite his abuse. His last sighting of his father was pushing a cart filled with cans along the street. B spoke of witnessing his father's decline from a successful, charismatic man to a homeless person, the ultimate destruction caused by his blackness.

### Erotic Transference

Eight months into the analysis, racial issues and erotic desire entered into the analytic relationship in ways I had

not anticipated. B began to speak of his attraction for me together with his fear because of his "crazy history of being attracted to white women" (B). It seemed to me that B's desire for white women had now surfaced within the analytic relationship. I represented his idealization of whiteness, and the secret, forbidden desire in the form of his white grandmother. He referred to my qualities as calm, soothing and intelligent stating that these could lead to a sexual attraction. He expressed concern that his words would frighten and distance me. I asked him if he thought I was afraid of him and he said that he did not think I found him to be scary, but interesting and maybe strange. He was right on both accounts. My response to his question about my being scared of him was to tell him that I was scared for him because of his wish to come face to face with his brother. I was indeed fearful of the consequences of such an encounter. I believe that I may have avoided the real question of whether I was afraid of his sexual attraction toward me.

B continued to speak of me as exotic and sensual referring to my accent, blond hair, and blue eyes. He also believed me to have the grace of an older woman. I appeared to represent his introjected aunt who had encouraged the side he identified as belonging to whiteness. His fear was that I perceived of him according to "black man stereotypes" (B), which he described as "sexually promiscuous, liking chicken and watermelon" (B). They were not my stereotypes for black men. I could think of many white men who could also fit these categories. He quickly assured me that he liked steak, which appeared to be his stereotype for the white world, but again not mine. I attempted to challenge his stereotypes with the goal of helping him to integrate his internal representations based on skin color and replace them with individual human likes and dislikes.

My attempts to work within the transference and to interpret the meanings of his desire were in vain. He told me that he knew what therapists say about transference but that in his case he would feel the same way if he had met me on the street. I again attempted to challenge his split off internal representations asking him how he imagined my white world. His response was about my good sense of humor and wit that he said I didn't use enough. He was right. I was taking the work very seriously as I struggled to contain my own anxieties. During sessions, he continued to refer to me as "pretty with blue eyes; older - older women hold themselves with grace; not trashy; living a quiet life; liking the beach; knowledgeable; sensitive; and a good listener" (B). I fitted the stereotype he held for what it would be like to live within a white skin.

B often remarked that I must think of him as nuts as in the movie *"Nuts"* (B). He noted that my accent was not snobby like the Queen or cockney and trashy. B's struggle with his inner longing and desire brought even more fear that he would be perceived by me according to the stereotype of a frightening black man. He also expressed guilt that he had betrayed his wife who should be the only recipient of his desire. I challenged his idealizations of me asking him about my negative side. I felt better when he told me that I was sometimes unorganized. He was right. I often had to change rooms unexpectedly when one was not available. I was also struggling with my own anxiety related to his expressions of desire.

During each session, B continued to ask about my interest in black men with questions such as *"Have I dated a black man?"* and *"Do I find black men attractive?"* He told me that he regretted that his fear had prevented him from dating a white woman so that he would know what expectations and perceptions of him one would have. He clarified this by telling me he had kissed but not made love to a white woman.

### Anxiety and Guilt

Over time, B became overwhelmed with anxiety and guilt and resisted my attempts to work within the analytic relationship. He cancelled and forgot to come to scheduled sessions. I wondered if my follow up calls to him placed me in the role of the seductive, destructive mother, the old object [12]. After all, I had now become an object of forbidden desire making him vulnerable to potential destruction. After several weeks, B came to a scheduled session dressed in a pin stripe suit. I was totally caught off guard as the image of Bruce Wain stood before me. He had decided to show me the white man under the Batman cape. I can't help but wonder about the pleasure he took from my initial reaction and if this was his way of showing me the side of him that I might find more desirable. After all, I had rejected his batman and his G-Q self. He told me that he had been haunted by frightening, repetitive dreams that he thought would go away. The best he could do was to describe an erotic scene in which he and I took the form of sensual body images. He expressed shame and humiliation that he had betrayed both his wife and me. He again resisted my attempts to work with the meaning of the dream and nothing I could say alleviated his guilt and anxiety.

I did not share his concerns. I interpreted the dream as an indication of progress in our work and as a reflection of his unconscious attempt to provide a bounded surface with the new object, his white analyst as described by

Ogden [25] in the autistic-contiguous position. I associated this with his earlier dream of the white and black face with similar features. I hoped that he may have begun to integrate his own longing and desire across both black and white skin features in the form of old and new objects. However, his desire had brought him in contact with his old objects causing him to experience fear of alienation and destruction. He believed that he had no alternative but to retreat to the protection of the bat cave.

I saw B two more times after this session. His wife decided that she wanted a child and was adamant that they should leave New York. He prepared himself for the impending loss of his home and his analyst. He stated that he could be *"Batman for others but that he could not save himself"* (B). He told me that he needed to be Batman to leave New York and I suspect the analytic relationship [26].

B was unable to tolerate the fear of destruction that his longing and desire brought. He feared for himself and believed that he needed to protect me from the destructiveness of his desire. He decided to terminate prematurely. Despite my request that we meet at least once to process the termination, he was not able to do this. He did not come to our scheduled appointment but sent me a final payment with the following message. *"Thank you for all your help I'm not one for goodbyes, but you probably knew that"* (B).

### Final Thoughts

Altman (1995) suggested that for the analysis to be deep, both old and new objects must be present in the transference. I believe that I represented B's split off whiteness and the new object, that he believed could rescue him from his internal and external destructive objects and validate his longing and desire. However, I also represented his old objects arousing within him a longing and desire that brought him shame, guilt and anxiety and could lead to his destruction. This was more than he could tolerate.

I wonder what I could have done differently if I had been more aware of the impact of race within the analytic relationship early in the work. I also wonder what would have happened if I had not colluded to keep the old objects out of the analytic relationship. Perhaps I led him to a world of new objects without fully addressing the meaning of the old objects or perhaps I did not fully appreciate how difficult it might be for him to integrate what he perceived to be the black and white sides of



himself. These are questions that I will continue to ponder.

I believe that the treatment succeeded in allowing B to work through and accept his childhood abuse enabling him to symbolically mourn the loss of his mother and his longing for her love and validation. Hopefully, this set him free. Unfortunately, the treatment did not succeed in my goal to help him integrate his introjected objects and to accept that humans have both goodness and badness within themselves regardless of their skin color.

When the treatment began, I did not believe that race would influence the analytic relationship in the way it did. As I indicated early in this paper, each of us brings with us to our work a working model of what it means to belong to a race. My work with B has provided me with an experience that has facilitated change in my own racial categorizations and stereotypes. I continue to believe that race should not be the prototype that defines traits such as hate, aggression, violence, sexual promiscuity, goodness and love. B's early messages from his family were loaded with misinformation. His mother's warning that "*no one would treat him as well as they*" (B) while he was a victim of unbearable abuse led to a distorted perception of the meaning of blackness and a projection onto the dominant white world those qualities that he disowned within himself.

I am left with an admiration for B and his struggle to succeed in his chosen profession and to be a good husband and father. My time with B provided me with an experience for which I will be forever grateful and taught me a great deal about race within the analytic relationship.

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