

Border Symbolism

My interest in borders and their emotional meaning was prompted by personal experience. I was born in the "Holy Land," also known as the "Promised Land," the "Land of Milk and Honey," the "Land of Israel," or, to the world at that time, Palestine. It was not until age sixteen that I crossed the frontiers of Israel (as it had come to be known) and set out for my first trip to Europe. In the weeks prior to leaving I felt a growing restlessness mixed with fear. By the time of sailing, I could hardly sleep for excitement and for my multiplying fantasies about Europe's wonders. When in Europe, every border crossing stirred up fresh imaginings of the new land to be discovered. Border police, passport control, and customs officials assumed special awe and power. Crossing from one country to another was often accompanied by both elation and anxiety.

I have been intrigued by the roots of this *Reisefieber* (travel fever) ever since. Although I have since lived and traveled in many countries, thus becoming "seasoned," the problem of the inner meanings of border crossings and of frontiers as such has fascinated me. My patients have frequently reported dreams involving several countries or cities, oceans, rivers, bridges, fences, and borders. Then there were the dramatic cases of Israelis illegally crossing the border into Jordan in

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search of the Red Rock of Petra, only to be killed by Arab Legion troops. There were the so-called "mental cases" who climbed embassy fences in search of asylum. There was a potent atmosphere of fascination combined with fear in our everyday references to or encounters with borders. It was time to comb the literature for references to this subject.

As it turns out, there are few direct references to international or other borders as such in the psychoanalytic literature. There are, however, many interesting references to related themes—the unconscious meaning of the earth, of countries, cities, rivers, oceans, bridges. Geographical and archeological exploration has been the subject of a series of essays by Niederland (1956, 1957a, 1959 [see chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this book], 1965, 1971a, and 1971b [see chapters 6 and 7 of this book]). Concisely stated, his main observations are as follows. The features of the earth (*Gaia*) unconsciously symbolize the anatomical and sexual secrets of the early mother (*Urmutter*). To the little child these are at once powerfully attractive and very frightening. In unearthing the secrets of the land and discovering "virgin" territories, the explorer acts out his early infantile wishes of exploring his mother's body. Rivers, the cradle of civilization, not only are sexual symbols by virtue of their flow but also unconsciously represent the sister who is an avenue of access to the forbidden mother, as the river is into the sea. The sea often symbolizes the mother (in French the word for sea, *la mer*, is a homonym of *la mère*, mother). The mixture of attraction and fear is due to a revival of incestuous drives from the oedipal stage. Niederland cites numerous and detailed pieces of evidence for his interpretations based on linguistic analysis, study of explorers' and voyagers' diaries and other records, analysis of old *mappaemundi*, and of the cartographers who imagined them, as well as dreams involving such aspects of geography.

Thus in the case of rivers (Niederland 1956, 1957a, and 1959 [see chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this book]), there emerges a striking similarity between the words and feelings used to describe them and those used about feminine sexuality. In the case of the famous archeologist Heinrich Schliemann, his fer-

vent explorations were a lifelong search for his dead mother as well as proof that he was not his dead brother-namesake, who had died a very short time before Heinrich was born (cf., Niederland 1965).

In the case of America as well as of California, there existed many stubbornly maintained fantasies of their being Paradise Islands full of eternal bliss. They derived from the primitive but powerful infantile fantasy of a utopian life without pain, restriction, or frustration of any kind, for "a kind of eternal infancy lived out in happy lands where the narcissistic, oral regressive wishes can be gratified and where the existence of Death itself can ultimately be denied . . ." (Niederland 1971a:467 [see chapter 7 of this book]). Indeed, as Niederland tells us, both the continent of America and the state of California were originally pictured in world maps as *islands*. They were described in fantastic terms similar to those used by Plato about *Atlantis* or by Thomas More about *Utopia*. The name America itself was an error which persisted. It was a feminization of Amerigo Vespucci's name by a young misogynist German cartographer. The reasons for the persistence of the error may have to do with the maternal phonetic associations of the name (Am, *Mer* suggesting "Ma" and mother). Thus many immigrants to America had fantasies of its being like a great good mother taking them in her embrace. It is noteworthy that all six continents, as well as most countries, have feminine names.

In thus explaining the symbolic meaning of the various geographical features of the earth and the unconscious conflicts involved in their exploration, Niederland has contributed to our understanding of psychohistorical phenomena. Friedman (1952) has similarly studied the unconscious symbolism of bridges. Again briefly summarized, Friedman's main point is that the bridge is a sexual symbol, specifically of incest.¹ The bridge symbolizes the penis which unites the mother with the father, and also the obstacle which must be crossed on the way to the mother (or father) by the child of the opposite sex during the oedipal period. Broken or incomplete bridges often appear in the dreams of patients with sexual disorders. The very crossing of a bridge becomes a phobia in some pa-

tients with unresolved oedipal conflicts. Moreover, the distal side of the bridge may symbolize the unknown, the dangerous country, at times the devouring mother, at other times the womb, and yet at other times the new stage of life about to be crossed over into and entered. Thus bridge dreams occur at times of transition in life.

Friedman examines in detail ancient mythologies to show that

. . . the same ambivalence which we observe in the neurotic attitude toward the bridge and his fear of the other shore must have existed in the human mind since the dawn of civilization. . . this ambivalence reflects nothing else but the longing to reunite what had been divided by the act of creation, the longing to re-establish a *unio mystica*, and at the same time the fear of defying the very act of creation. Creation is division. The mythologies of many cultures contain the concept that creation is a disruption of the sexual act. . . (1952:61).

Thus Friedman continues, we find in many cultures the lore of reuniting, by means of a supernatural bridge such as the rainbow, the divided sexual partners: the earth and the sky, Uranos and Gaia, Odin in Valhalla with the earth, etc. These are all clearly symbols of father and mother as seen by the child who wants to disrupt their sexual act and then reunite them. God creating the world by dividing or separating the sky from the earth-water (Genesis 1:6-8) is a symbol of the "omnipotent" child's wishes. Friedman cites the myth of Charon bridging the river Styx with his ferry and collecting tolls. By the river on the Hades side lay the three-headed monster dog, Kerberos, guarding the entrance to the infernal regions. The Hurons too have a myth of a dog guarding a tree trunk which spans the river, Death. Among the Zuni, the "other world" is called a womb. The fantasies common to all these myths involve a return to the mother's vagina and womb with all the powerful attraction and terrible fears those wishes arouse.

While not dealing directly with borders, the essays by Niederland and Friedman shed important light on their unconscious significance. They suggest that the two countries or

territories on the two sides of a border unconsciously symbolize early parental figures. Thus, crossing an international border for a man may mean crossing the incest barrier into the mother. It may also mean a search for a bounteous early mother who will unconditionally accept and embrace the child. Migrants in search of a new place and a new job, immigrants in search of a new country, sky-jackers heading for the hospitable land which will grant them asylum have fantasies which are very similar to early infantile wishes concerning the mother. When the host country does not accept them with "open arms," they are often severely disappointed or extremely angry. When the problem is primarily oedipal, the excitement and fear involved in crossing a border obviously derive from the same feelings about incest.

However, borders not only symbolize such interpersonal barriers. They also may symbolize internal boundaries. Schossberger described a trip through then still divided Jerusalem two years earlier with David Shakow. When near the border he began to speculate on its special emotional meaning: "One is led to consider man's fascination with limits and demarcations dividing people into 'thems' and 'usses' as possibly being projections of those inner perimeters to which the ego limits its range" (1968:3). Indeed the tremendous fever of excitement felt a year later after the Six Day War of 1967, when the borders were eliminated and Jerusalem "reunited," along with the fear felt by those crossing the old border for the first time, may be compared with the excitement and terror accompanying the discharge of impulses from the id through the barriers of the ego and superego. In this respect the crossing of the border symbolizes transgressing against moral commands or trespassing into forbidden territory.

I shall here use a patient's dream to illustrate both meanings of the act of border crossing. The patient, a twenty-two-year-old Israeli college student, related the following dream:

I was swimming in the Red Sea at the beach of Eilat. I suddenly felt a strong undertow dragging me across the border into Aqaba [in Jordan]. I got real scared. I knew if I fell into the hands of the Jordanians they would torture me, castrate me or kill me as an Israeli

spy. But at the same time I was curious to see what Aqaba was like. It was so near Eilat and yet in enemy territory! I struggled but I was swept ashore on the other side. Suddenly two fierce *Beduin* came running at me. They had long robes on and curved knives stuck in their belts [the patient used the Arabic word *shabrieh* for the knives]. I tried to run away and make for Israel. The *Beduin* chased me. I was scared to death. I saw some people waving at me from across the border in Eilat. I ran at them with the *Beduin* at my heels. Just as I was crossing the border back into Israel I awoke in a terrible fright.

The patient produced the following associative material: Aqaba reminded him of Lawrence of Arabia taking that city from the Turks during the First World War. This involved the old guns (cannon) of Aqaba and the Beduin whom Lawrence had led through the Nefud Desert which he had been told could not be crossed. The feelings of the patient about Aqaba were both fascination and apprehension. He also remembered that Lawrence was a homosexual. The patient associated Jordan with the Red Rock of Petra. He had been envious of the "heroes" who had gone there even though they were killed. Eilat, on the other hand, brought to mind peace, quiet, a warm climate, coral seen underwater from a glass-bottomed boat, beauty, and happiness. The Beduin he associated with cunning, fierceness, cruelty, even savagery; he recalled that Beduin soldiers castrate their victims after killing them. On the other hand, he thought of their legendary hospitality to strangers: "They treat you like a king while you are in their tent; once you leave they're liable to kill you."

The associations made a fairly obvious dream still clearer. Aqaba symbolized the various aspects of the patient's mother: the powerful attraction (undertow) to her, the wish to explore and take her (sexually) as Lawrence had done (militarily), the fear of the phallic mother (cannon), the feminine and homosexual traits the patient feared in himself because of his relationship to his mother (Lawrence), the fear of retaliation, castration, and death if he invaded the mother.

Since Israelis are in fact prohibited by law from traveling into Jordan both by the Israeli and the Jordanian governments, the wish to cross the border clearly represented a wish

to transgress the prohibition which, in turn, symbolized the incest taboo. On the other hand, Eilat and Israel symbolized the good mother, the accepting, warm parent. Israel also represented the therapist: the patient in a sense wished to run away from the therapist yet wanted to be accepted back into the safety of the therapist's office. It was a haven of security in much the same way as the early mother. The patient's father was represented by the punitive Beduin (serving the King of Jordan). There was a deep fear and mistrust of the father. However, the Beduin also represented the fear of the therapist since the "tent" association indicated that the patient, while feeling secure and "royally treated" in the therapist's "tent," had a deeper fear of him which derived from earlier fears of the parents.

At the same time, the fierce Beduin symbolized the patient's own aggressive and sexual impulses, as did the undertow. The Israeli-Jordanian border thus represented the barrier against those impulses erected by the ego. Crossing over into Jordan meant for the patient losing control of his drives, while making it back into Israel symbolized gaining control over them. In Jordan the impulses were on the rampage, murderous, while in Israel they (Beduin) are well in hand.² The punitive aspect of the Beduin may have stood for the patient's severe superego which threatened death for his incestuous designs.

This border dream is only one example of the powerful unconscious emotions associated with boundaries. Jewish tradition and culture are replete with dramatic references to the theme. The word "Hebrew" or *habiru* derives from the root meaning "to cross over," signifying that the Hebrews had come from across the river.³ The frontiers of the Holy Land were endowed with special significance. The most striking legend is that of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52), who had transgressed against the Lord and was therefore forbidden to cross the border into the Promised Land, and had to content himself with standing atop Mount Nebo in Moab (present day Jordan) and "see the Land but not come into it." Here the oedipal triangle is re-enacted with God playing Father, Moses playing Son, and the Land symbolizing the Mother. The He-

brew language has expressions such as *zeh ovehr kol gvul* (literally, that crosses every limit) for an extremely "bad" or intolerable behavior.

In the Old Testament again we have Jacob's struggle with the angel (Genesis 32:23-32) after crossing the river Yabbok. That struggle resulted in a name change for Jacob (for the significance of name changes, cf., Falk 1975-1976). His new name was Israel, more correctly Yisrael, which means "will fight God." The struggle with God upon crossing the river, and Jacob's having "seen God face to face and lived," again hark back to the struggle with the father (or the superego) upon crossing the incest barrier—the river symbolizing not only the barrier but also the sexual impulse. One might mention here the fascinating story by Bialik, Israel's national poet, entitled "Beyond the Fence," in which the fence between two neighbors' homes produces numerous wishes, fears, and fantasies in a little girl. The fence in this story has much the same emotional meaning as a border. Another famous literary instance is Kafka's *The Castle*, in which the young hero has a powerful fascination with entering the forbidden castle but never has the courage to actually try, thus forever living with a feeling of the castle being inaccessible. However, he does have an affair with the boss's mistress.

The Holy City of Jerusalem was very frequently likened to a woman in the Old Testament, especially by the prophets. Thus we have ". . . put on thy beautiful garments O Jerusalem the Holy City for henceforth there shall no more *come into thee* the uncircumcised and the unclean . . . loose thyself from the bands of thy neck O Captive daughter of Zion" (Isaiah 52:1-2). Elsewhere we have "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her all ye that love her . . . that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory . . ." (Isaiah 66:10-11).

Interestingly the Temple on Mount Moriah, where it is believed Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac, included a *kod-desh hakoddashim* (known in Latin as *Sanctum Sanctorum*) into which the High Priest alone could enter. One might speculate that in the unconscious of the multitude, the High

Priest symbolized the infantile image of the father, while the Holy of Holies (forbidden to all others) stood for the mother's sexual secrets. The Holy of Holies indeed contained the Ark of the Covenant (the Holy Ark), which was so holy that anyone touching it would be killed instantly. Crossing the border (the entrance) to the Most Forbidden entailed Death. Similarly we find in Peking the Forbidden City. The privileges of Kings, Emperors, and High Priests were thus forbidden to the common people in much the same way as the privilege of the Father, enjoying the mother's sexual favors, is forbidden to the child. Crossing the border to these forbidden pleasures was the most severe transgression, but it also promised the most exalted fulfilment.

Finally, from the psychohistorical point of view, it is instructive to note the "expanding frontiers" of our world in the last five hundred years. Geographical frontiers, the "edge of the world," were once endowed with a forbidding, awe-inspiring character. In the ancient world, Scylla and Charybdis marked the monstrous end of the known world. Scylla was the devouring monster. Charybdis the whirlpool. One can recognize without much psychoanalytic effort the infantile fear of the devouring mother as well as that of the sexual whirlpool within her vagina and uterus.

During the last centuries, fantasies of the New World as an island of bliss and sunshine gave way to harsh realities confronting settlers in America. The westward-moving frontiers of America itself had a special attraction for settlers, again mixed with menace. Gradually, as the edge of the world no longer existed, with most or all the surface (and undersurface) of the earth explored, geographical frontiers gave way to conceptual ones: the breaking of the sound "barrier" was a dramatic point in the struggle of man to free himself from Mother Earth.

The achievement of "escape velocity," the orbiting of the earth, and finally the breaking away from earth's gravity completely and the landing on its moon (itself a "satellite" orbiting the earth)—all these can be viewed as frontiers which have been crossed in an attempt both to explore and to break away from the "pull" of the earth, much as a child gradually breaks

away from his dependence on his mother. The astronauts set out to enter and explore the realms of primordial Kronos, fearing his wrath yet eager to defeat him in much the same way as Zeus did in Greek lore when he defeated Kronos (his father) with the help of Rhea (his mother). Indeed Kronos himself had done the same to his own father, Uranos, with the help of his own mother, Gaia, and had then married his sister, Rhea. The oedipal fantasies, maternal ties, ambivalent feelings about border crossing, and the symbolism of the frontier can thus be seen to repeat themselves in the exploration of outer space.

Notes

1. These symbolic meanings had been mentioned by Freud (1933) and by Ferenczi (1921, 1922 [see chapters 1 and 2 of this book]).

2. Jordanian Beduin are on "their side" and dangerous, while Israeli Beduin are on "our side" and tame.

3. This etymology is not universally accepted. W. F. Albright, in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1965), supports the view that the original word, "apiru," could only mean "dusty," referring to the condition of the early Hebrews, who were known to their West Semitic neighbors as semi-nomadic caravanners (which is, after all, a concept metonymically allied with "borderers"). [Note by Jacob A. Arlow, M.D., editor of *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1974.]

CHAPTER 12

Border Symbolism Revisited

In a previous chapter (Falk 1974 [chapter 11 of this book]) I discussed the unconscious meaning of international (and other) borders as it comes through in dreams, fantasies, travel experiences, and psychopathology. At that time I was unaware of a paper by Babineau (1972), who, from his vantage point as a psychiatrist for the U.S. Army in West Berlin from 1967 to 1970, had occasion to see many bizarre cases of border crossings from West Berlin to East Berlin as well as in the more usual direction, from East to West. He gave clinical discussions of three cases of compulsive border crossers, all of them "restless and peripatetic paranoids," one of whom was Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of President John F. Kennedy. Babineau was convinced that there was

a group of disturbed persons who cross borders in a driven and repetitive way. They have usually previously attempted flight—something one can do in one's own country (Cawte 1967). Now they are seeking more drastic means to resolve personal conflicts, namely the transfer of allegiance . . . this may amount to prolonged visits, emigration, defection, or—in a military setting—desertion.

Babineau identified the following emotional themes in compulsive border crossers:

1. Idealization and denigration: the new country is idealized, the old one denigrated and repudiated.

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2. Search for identity: changing one's nationality and citizenship by naturalization as a citizen of the new country in an attempt to relieve feelings of inner insecurity and diffuse identity.
3. Flight from persecutory feelings: the wish to flee authorities or other persecutors (in one's paranoid fantasy) and find a haven in the new, good country. "The more the accuser is the superego . . . the less likely the chances for successful refuge."
4. Flight from intimacy: flight to a place "sufficiently foreign, so that the dissimilarities in language, customs, and ethnic origins put up automatic barriers to intimacy."
5. Flight from depressive feelings: emigrating to another country "to remedy low self-esteem, hopelessness, depression and the feeling of being completely cornered . . ."

Babineau concluded that

crossing an international border is a complicated psychological experience. On a spectrum describing the normative aspects of this behavior, the ordinary tourist would perhaps be placed at the midpoint. At a far end of the spectrum is a group of restless paranoids, traveling compulsively and seeking by physical flight to be rid of one psychological state and to be catapulted into a newer, better one. Distant reality has a way of looking more malleable than the local intractable variety.

It is striking that in his classic book on borderline adolescents, Masterson (1972) describes the acting out defense as the predominant defensive style among borderline patients, and in the case of the compulsive border crossers described by Babineau, even though they were diagnosed as "paranoid," acting out was the hallmark of their defensive style: crossing borders to escape intolerable feelings, rather than struggling with them (in psychotherapy, or otherwise). Other defensive styles described by Masterson as prominent among borderline patients are the obsessive-compulsive and schizoid defenses, the passive-aggressive acting out defense, flight, and heterosexual clinging. Flight, especially, is the cardinal de-

fense among Babineau's compulsive border crossers. As to the feelings behind those defenses, Masterson cites "the six horse-men of the apocalypse"—depression, rage, fear, guilt, helplessness, and emptiness, all of them part of the feeling of abandonment. It is clear that most of the feelings and defenses found in the borderline patient are also operating in the compulsive border crosser.

Masterson's developmental view of the borderline patient is based on Mahler's ideas about psychological symbiosis and individuation (Mahler 1952; Mahler et al. 1975). Briefly stated, she thinks that every infant starts out in an autistic phase of being, then quickly enters a phase of psychological symbiosis with its mother (or mothering person), from which it must again be psychologically "born" by a process of separation and individuation. When the mother, because of her own lack of separation and individuation since infancy, reacts with panic and rage to the infant's natural attempts to separate and individuate from her, the infant feels abandoned, which gives rise to depression, fear, rage, helplessness, guilt and emptiness—indeed to a horrible feeling of non-being or non-existence. The only way the infant can escape such unbearable feelings is by splitting (the mother into a good mother and a bad mother, as in *Snow White* and numerous other fairy tales), denial (of the mother's "badness" and of its own feelings), and clinging to the mother for dear life, thus giving up its individuation and returning to the symbiotic relationship. In later life additional defenses determine the clinical picture: acting out, reaction formation, obsessional defenses, projection, denial, isolation, detachment, and withdrawal of affect (Masterson 1972:23). As Masterson so well puts it:

The abandonment feelings then recede into the unconscious where they lie submerged like an abscess, their overwhelming but hidden force observable only through the tenacity and strength of the defense mechanisms used to keep them in check.

I should like to point out that all of these feelings and defensive operations occur in the compulsive border crossers as well. Babineau's "idealization and denigration" is the equivalent of splitting: as the infant splits its mother into a good

one and a bad one, so the border crosser splits the image of his country (or motherland) into two: the good, embracing, warm, loving, and accepting "new country," and the bad, rejecting, cold, hating "old country." This, by the way, is true not only of compulsive travellers and border crossers but also of countless migrants, immigrants, and emigrants, although perhaps to a lesser degree. Babineau's "search for identity" is nothing but the striving for separation and individuation: the border crosser (or immigrant) seeks unconsciously to relieve himself of the painful (or even unbearable) feelings of abandonment in the symbiotic tie, the feelings of panic, rage, helplessness and non-existence by, so to speak, becoming the child of a new mother (country), who would let him be. The "flight from persecutory feelings" is the borderline patient's acting out defense against the guilt feelings associated with his wish to leave his mother. The "flight from intimacy" is indeed the flight from symbiosis, since the borderline patient knows no intimacy other than that of the unbearable symbiotic tie with his mother since early infancy. Finally, Babineau's "flight from depressive feelings" is almost identical with Masterson's description of the borderline patient's attempts to escape his abandonment depression through acting out defenses.

It is indeed a curious thing that, although Mahler's theories have been around since 1952, neither Babineau nor myself, nor other writers on applied psychoanalysis, have integrated her ideas into the problems of border crossings and border symbolism until now. In my previous chapter (Falk 1974 [see chapter 11 of this book]) I said that

the two countries or territories on the two sides of a border unconsciously symbolize early parental figures . . . crossing an international border . . . may mean crossing the incest barrier . . . It may also mean a search for a bounteous early mother who will unconditionally accept and embrace the child. Migrants in search of a new place and a new job, immigrants in search of a new country, sky-jackers heading for the hospitable land which will grant them asylum have fantasies which are very similar to early infantile wishes concerning the mother. When the host country does not accept

them with "open arms" they are often severely disappointed or extremely angry . . . However, borders not only symbolize such interpersonal barriers, they may also symbolize internal boundaries. [1974:654]

Indeed, the crucial issue of separation and individuation, which, if not successfully resolved in infancy may give rise not only to borderline personalities but even to psychoses, obviously involves inner boundaries. When the separation is halted by the mother's panic and rage, when individuation is not attained because the infant must deny its own fear and rage and cling to the mother for its life, then the psychological symbiosis continues and there are no clear internal boundaries between the self and the mother. Consequently, the borderline individual suffers from diffuse identity, diffuse ego boundaries, and tends to see himself in others in a narcissistic projective identification. The feeling of not having clear boundaries and not being able to tell oneself from others leads on the one hand to a wish to merge with others and to form symbiotic relationships with every significant other, and on the other hand to flee and escape every relationship in which intimacy (that is, symbiosis and non-being) is threatened. I shall take as a contemporary example the political struggle of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) to bring about a reunification of Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic (that is, of Ulster with Eire).

This struggle is very bloody and extremely violent. The border between the "Six Counties" and the Republic is felt to be a malicious design and an inherently evil thing brought in by the British as far back as the early seventeenth century, when Scottish and English Protestants were brought into Ulster after the suppression of a violent Irish rebellion. The British are felt to have evil designs upon the Irish—to divide them, to dominate them, to rob them of life and liberty. In the minds of the most violent terrorists of the I.R.A., a clear splitting exists: Britain is all bad, Ireland all good. The coldness and inflexibility of Britain's "Iron Lady," Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, lend themselves very

well to this splitting defense: she is the symbol of the "bad mother." When we look at the hunger strikers in the notorious H Block in Ulster's Maze Prison, it becomes clear that their life-and-death struggle was a repetition of earlier, infantile life-and-death struggles: to separate and individuate from one's "bad mother!" Indeed, when some of the hunger strikers' mothers were interviewed on international television, the most striking thing about them was their coldness and their willingness to let their sons die. With Britain and Mrs. Thatcher as the new mother, the hunger striker is at one and the same time struggling to abolish the borderline between the two Irelands (that is, to merge the two mothers) and to do away with the evil mother (Britain), while inwardly he is struggling to separate and individuate from the bad mother, even if the only way to do so is to die. Dying, as well as (and especially) suicide, is in such cases the only way out of an unbearable symbiosis. The fear, rage, helplessness, emptiness, guilt, and depression cited by Masterson as the borderline's "six horsemen of the apocalypse" are all present behind the terrorists' violent acts: the rage, of course, is blatantly there.

The crossing of an international border, then, can be seen as an unconscious repetition of the earliest traumata in life: the trauma of birth (Rank 1924) and the trauma of psychological symbiosis with one's mother (or earliest mothering person) which could not give way to individuation on the part of the infant because of the mother's own panic at being "abandoned" by the child. To cross the border, in the unconscious, means to separate: hence the anxiety accompanying border crossings (separation anxiety). On the other hand, it means uniting with the new, good mother: hence the elation, and later the disappointment. The degree of anxiety, elation, and disappointment will of course depend on how well, or badly, the earliest separation was managed by mother and child.

Winnicott objected to the term "symbiosis." He wrote:

The gradual development of object-relating is an achievement in terms of the emotional development of the individual. At one extreme object-relating has an instinctual backing and the concept of

object-relating here comprises the whole widened range afforded by the use of displacement and symbolism. At the other extreme is the condition that it can be assumed exists at the beginning of the individual's life, in which the object is not yet separated out from the subject. This is a condition to which the word merging is applied when there is a return to it from a state of separation, but it can be assumed that at the beginning there is at least a theoretical stage prior to separation of the not-me from the me (cf. Milner 1969). The word symbiosis has been brought into play in this area (Mahler 1969), but for me this is too well rooted in biology to be acceptable. [1971:130]

Since Mahler's concept involves psychological (rather than biological) symbiosis, and since the term "merging" may be just as physical or chemical as "symbiosis" may be biological, there does not seem to be much point to Winnicott's objection, other than one original psychoanalyst's refusal to accept the ideas of another.

From a psychohistorical viewpoint, the diffuse borders of ancient empires compare strikingly with the generally well-defined and rigidly observed borders of present-day nation states. It is possible that, with the advance of civilizations, human beings have on the whole become more obsessive and compulsive, so that a rigid system of compartmentalization (drawing precise maps with national borders) has been imposed on geography, politics, diplomacy, travel, and any other field of human behavior which has to do with borders. Behind such rigidity lies the fear of loss of boundaries, that is the fear of loss of the self and non-being. Disputes over borders arise in different parts of the world and lead to armed conflict or even war. It is clear that the emotional meaning of one's country's borders, unconsciously, is fused with that of one's own boundaries. To give up territory, however occupied by military force, is to some a great narcissistic loss and injury: hence the stubborn refusal of Israeli settlers in the Sinai to leave their property by April 1982, which they had to do to satisfy the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Borders are not only needed for military security: they are unconsciously needed for the feeling of being there, to overcome the panic of the symbiotic loss of ego boundaries.

A very interesting case in point is that of the national boundaries in Africa. During colonial times, the borders of countries in Africa were drawn up by the colonial powers: British Nigeria, Belgian Congo, French Somalia, etc. Each country comprised a multitude of tribes, among which three or four were usually the largest and most influential. Thus Nigeria had the Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, and Fulani tribes which between them comprised about 67 percent of the entire population. There were about two hundred additional, smaller tribes. The country was divided for administrative purposes by the British into Iboland, Yorubaland, Hausaland, and Fulaniland, letting the smaller tribes share their identity with the larger ones. But large portions of the Ibo, for instance, also lived in Cameroon, which was French administered, and similarly many Yoruba lived in Dahomey (now Benin), which was likewise a French colony. After independence, one would have expected the proud African tribes to reorganize their states along tribal and linguistic lines, so that Yorubaland would have comprised parts of Nigeria and parts of Dahomey, while Iboland would have combined parts of Nigeria with parts of Cameroon, etc. Tribal animosity and warfare continued, but the "national" boundaries laid down by the imperialist colonizers were too sacrosanct to be violated, changed, or tampered with in any way. When the Ibos of southeastern Nigeria rose in rebellion against the Nigerian state, they were violently suppressed, and their state of Biafra lasted only a couple of years before it was re-integrated into Nigeria. Many were killed and many died of hunger and starvation in that war. It is clear that borders, and the territory they enclose, are more vital to human survival, emotionally, than wealth or power. Indeed, it was only recognition by Egypt—the statement "I see that you are there" which had enough emotional value for Israel to move it to give up the whole of the Sinai and to shrink its borders again: for recognition is the unconscious emotional equivalent of the gift of life. It is the very opposite of a borderline, narcissistic mother's inability to recognize that her child is not herself, that it exists in its own right.

Grinstein's (1956–1975) *Index of Psychoanalytic Writings* does not contain any entry on "borders" although it contains many entries on "borderline" personality and borderline states. In this short sequel to my previous study I have attempted to show how international borders, in our unconscious, may symbolize interpersonal and inner borders, and that in extreme cases the crossing of borders evokes the earliest infantile feelings (and defense mechanisms) which are so evident in the borderline personality. Babineau's compulsive border crossers are thus seen as borderline personalities who act out their conflicts by the crossing of real borders. To a lesser extent, of course, the anxiety and elation associated with border crossings are present in us all: for we all had to struggle with the issues of symbiosis, separation, and individuation since our earliest infancy, and the crossing of the border revives those early feelings in accordance with how well (or badly) we fared then.

Summary

This chapter is an attempt to relate Babineau's concept of the "compulsive border crosser" to our present-day knowledge of the unconscious dynamics of the borderline personality and to my previous chapter on border symbolism. It becomes apparent that the crossing of borders, and boundaries as such, has a powerful emotional effect on us due to our having had to negotiate the early phase of separation and individuation in our infancy, and that the less well a person emerged from that crucial phase, the more intense his or her feelings are likely to be about borders, and the more apt he or she will be to act out the earliest conflicts by the actual crossing of borders or immigration. The feelings involved in the failure of separation and individuation (fear, rage, emptiness, helplessness, guilt, and abandonment depression) and the defense mechanisms operating to ward them off (splitting, denial, acting out, obsessional defenses, projection) are evident in Babineau's "compulsive border crossers" as they are in our borderline pa-

tients. The theories of Mahler and Masterson are made use of in this connection. Finally, the psychohistorical perspective is given of border disputes and problems in Africa (specifically, Nigeria), in Ireland (the terrorists of the Irish Republican Army) and in Israel (the problems of withdrawal from the Sinai).

CHAPTER 13

The Meaning of Jerusalem: A Psychohistorical Viewpoint

The city of Jerusalem has a fascinating history. It is called the City of Peace, yet it has gone through thirty-six wars and been destroyed and rebuilt many times. Jews have had a special attitude towards Jerusalem throughout most of their history, thinking of it as the Holy City of Yahweh as well as the eternal capital of their people. Christians have had strong feelings about Jerusalem as the place of the Passion, the Crucifixion, and the Burial of their Messiah. During the Middle Ages there were monumental crusades to seize the Holy City. Muslims too have had special feelings about Jerusalem, from which their prophet Muhammad is believed to have leaped into heaven atop his winged horse, Al Buraq. The Arabs and Muslims call the city Al Quds, Arabic for "The Holy One." There is no doubt that Jerusalem evokes very strong emotions in millions of people all over the world.

I shall skip over the political history of Jerusalem, which is well known to most readers. More fascinating than the political history is the psychological attitude of people to the Holy City through the ages. The name "Jerusalem" means "founded by Salem." Salem, Shalem, or Shalim was the Canaanite god whose name means "perfect." He was the son of the Canaanite father-god El by a woman (Gordon 1961). During Biblical times every major city in Israel was called the

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