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The Long Road to Personhood

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Carl was 45 when he first consulted me eight years ago. Since then he has walked the long, hard road to personhood and to manhood; some of that road truly lay through the valley of the shadow of death. This report is meant to document some of that long road. It is my practice to make notes after every therapy session, and the details in the report are based on those notes.

Carl had a way of presenting himself initially that could look very good. He was a handsome man with dark lively eyes, an extremely energetic and stong manner, a well-formed, strong body, and he was appealing to women. He had completed a Ph.D. when he was very young and was established as a senior research scientist in a large company in the hi-tech business world in New England. He was the fourth son in a family with deep roots in New England. The problems he presented seemed at first glance somewhat nominal, mainly a difficulty in establishing a lasting relationship with a woman.

At the same time, there seemed to be some serious questions about what was going on with him. He sobbed deeply in the first session, particularly about the "craziness" of a brother (Tom) and his mother. There was a history of serious mental illness in the immediate family and in the parents' families. There were indications of mood swings, tumultuous and unstable relationships with women and indications of a severe sexual problem. He'd had periods even in the past few years when he felt he was going to go (and I assumed there still was a deep fear

of going) crazy. He felt terribly driven in his work, terribly tense, and he often experienced sleeplessness. Some years earlier, he'd seen a psychoanalyst for a year-and-a-half without feeling significantly helped. His facial expression was haunted and horrified. His body was extremely tight all over, the pelvis in particular; his lower body seemed boyish, and there was a peculiar prominence to the buttocks which I did not understand but felt sure was significant. Without being able to express exactly what it was, he conveyed that he had a deep sense that something was wrong; he indicated the sexual problem without being able to say it was sexual.

My initial diagnostic impression was of a narcissistic problem with a phallic quality, very deep blocking and denial of feeling, and a very strong denial of a lot of underlying pain and trauma. He identified with the surface persona and was not in contact with his deeper feeling and sexuality. The body tension seemed very profound. We saw Dr. Lowen for a consultation the following fall. Dr. Lowen emphasized the split between the surface persona and the real feelings, the complexity of Carl's personality, and the mixture of elements in it. He encouraged Carl to proceed with his therapy (that it was his chance), and to stay with it for a long time without worrying about the length of time, since he needed time to sort out the deep trauma without forcing it. Dr. Lowen was also struck by the expression of horror and hauntedness; "brooding melancholy," he called it; and he said to explain the personality, one would have to explain the prominent buttocks.

Our second session began a working relationship that lasted. He expressed a lot of negative feelings about some of what I'd said. He'd felt judged, categorized, but he wasn't really sure why he felt that way, whether it had to do more with him than anything about the way I'd been. In my turn, I told him that I'd be willing to work with him, but that he should know a few things about me, and we should talk it over some more. I told him frankly that I myself was working on some of the same problems he was. (We are nearly the same age.) I'm also a youngest child and younger brother, I was certainly dealing

with my manhood, and I'd also had problems of commitment in relationships with women. In fact, although I didn't say this to him at the time, I felt a lot of identification with him, that we weren't all that different in some very important ways. I felt that about all I might be able to do for him would be to help him stay on the same path I was on. The advantage over his previous therapy would be that I could help him work on the bodily level. (When we resumed work the following fall, that sense of over-identification resolved itself and I felt separate.) As I was telling Carl about myself in this second session, I felt that in all likelihood he would have second thoughts about working with me. To my surprise, he felt strongly that he did want to work with me. As the summer break was beginning, we arranged an appointment for the following September. Years later, Carl told me with a lot of feeling how important it was to him to have the feeling of being a "team player." By luck or fate, I believe we established that spirit of team cooperation early on. I'm quite sure Carl felt understood from the beginning. He said he felt safe enough from the first session to allow himself the expression of "a lot of crazy feeling."

When I saw Carl following the summer break he told me what a good summer he had had, implying that maybe therapy wasn't essential after all. I listened and replied that he may indeed have had a nice summer, but, I told him he did not seem grounded at all to me, that he seemed "up," and that he was being glib and glossing over his issues in life. As we worked physically I commented on his breathing distress, and, as we talked more, I commented on the obvious sexual problem, his difficulty sustaining a fulfilling sexual relationship, and the lack of focus on that in his life. He was somewhat shocked and hostile at my response, and also pleased to be challenged so directly, and he did listen.

The following week he told me that he had been depressed most of the week. I worked with him physically very strongly this session, using the stool, grounding, lying on the bed both quietly and with kicking. He talked about his tensions especially as he felt them in connection with his work life. They were

very deep: the chest and torso were very tight. As the respiratory wave started to move downward as he lay on the bed, his abdominal muscles would spasm; and he was very frightened. "This is what I came for," he said regarding the energetic work. Working with his body in these first months gave him relief and hope. At the same time there was frequent anger with me. He would usually express this and it would then be finished. He'd usually feel that his anger at me came when he had to face something painful. He felt the therapy "cornered him," but he felt "seen."

The pattern of these two sessions characterized our work actually for many of the early weeks: confrontation of the denial and image followed by experiencing the depression and fear. A strong feeling of being special was part of the image. For example, he was "better than" his brothers in one or another way. I contradicted him on this, saying that in fact they were better than him: they were manly enough to have married and two of them had families; he hadn't been man enough to do that. This, of course, stirred up a good deal of anger. He accused me of holding out a "bioenergetic model" in which he should be out "fucking women." With the bodily work he was able to let down and he trembled. Dealing with the image, the specialness, and the denial, immediately brought him into contact with the way in which he felt inadequate as a man.

The terrible difficulties of Carl's childhood oedipal situation and their effect on him were apparent from the beginning. Carl had married Dorie, the woman he'd lived with for three years, when he was 37. He insisted, however, that they not "sign the papers" and also that it be an "open relationship" in which he would have the prerogative of affairs with other women. On these uneasy grounds, the relationship did not last. Following some gestalt therapy work, he "broke free" for a period, falling in love with a woman he had passionate feelings for, in a way he felt he never had with Dorie. He went to California with her, from where she left him a year later. He learned subsequently that she had been bisexual and had left him to be with a woman.

A year after that he returned to his job in New England, feeling the need once again for Dorie to help keep him from falling apart. Not long after this he came to consult me. He said that he was always afraid to "get close" to Dorie, to be "intimate, to be committed," but what he was really frightened of was not at all clear.

As he entered more deeply into therapy in the course of the first year and beyond, he found himself having less and less interest in pursuing women. He had an occasional affair, and with one married lover he found great pleasure on the rare occasions they would get together. What felt to him like his declining excitement, interest, and ability to be sexual gave him a great deal of anxiety. However, it clearly was a function of his letting down and calming down, and of relinquishing the narcissistic and phallic images. I kept encouraging him to trust his body and his actual experience.

Following the two sessions described above, Carl told me the outlines of his oedipal triangle. He was very clear in describing his mother's seduction, that she compared him with his father and he "won," that his father was an "incompetent" man, that he (Carl) got a "big head" from this. But his mother also made him feel very dirty about sex, and conveyed remarkably confusing and contradictory messages about sex, even telling him that women were inferior to men. She made him feel terribly guilty, as with, "You wouldn't do that to your mother." (Did that mean he shouldn't have sex?) So he felt cut off from his sexual life, and learned to cultivate and present his softer, soulful feelings for his mother and women. He couldn't be aggressive. He felt his mother and father had no sexual relationship, that his mother was anti-sexual anyway. His father was also a terribly rageful person. As blind fate would have it, from the time he was an infant until he was an older boy of seven, Carl slept in a bed that was separated from his own mother's bed by no more than a wooden door. He spent his infancy and childhood listening to his father raging at his mother and her trying to sooth and quiet him. He still has no memory of overhearing parental inter-

course, but there could have been no escaping it. He said that he “identified with my mother and . . . wanted to strangle my father.”

Carl was the fourth boy and last child. Where the other boys were just two-and-one-half years apart, he came five years after the next oldest brother. His mother was apparently fond of telling him she didn’t raise him, she just put him “behind” the brothers, and let him follow them. He did indeed do this, in particular attaching himself and modeling himself after the second son, Len, in a sense the family prince. This son did everything close to perfectly, and Carl adapted himself to him closely, right into his adult years, collaborating in his work with him on major projects where Len was the leader. He once described his experience of Len as if he were looking through a windshield and Len were plastered all over it; every perspective was seen through this relationship. To Carl, Len seemed to do everything right. Len’s way of being was Carl’s key to survival, and accordingly, Carl was “organized around” Len.

In the early months of the therapy, perhaps for more than two years, Carl dealt with his relationship with Len far more than with his father. Len was the important one, and he kept presenting his father as insignificant, even as one more of the brothers, no more important than the others, so that there were five brothers, not four brothers and a father. Besides, father was incompetent, impotent; Carl was the one who had “won” with his mother. This picture of Carl’s father was in implicit contradiction of the information that was presented on his father’s rage and Carl’s feelings upon overhearing the parental bedroom scenes. It was only later that Carl’s terror and rage in relation to his father emerged and he could see the true impact of his father on his development. The relationship with Len was an alternative to a horror. It was thus an adaptation in the service of survival, and it supported Carl’s denial of that horror into his adult years. This was one of the complexities of Carl’s personality.

From the perspective of Carl’s childhood development, the web of family relationships seems exceptionally complex. In ad-

dition, before Carl was a teen-ager, the brothers had all left home. He describes himself as being left alone in an old house with two “spectres.” His discovery of masturbation illustrates what life was like for him in his teen years as well as his underlying sexual fear. He discovered it one day by accident, just before dinner. His feelings and the ejaculation frightened him a great deal. Even among his boyhood friends he was known as the one whom you told nothing about sex. When he sat down at the dinner table, Carl began to cry out of fear. Father, in his typical rageful and hateful way, said to Carl’s mother, “He must have done something wrong.”

His brother Tom had a schizophrenic episode and was hospitalized when Carl was beginning college. Years later, in his therapy, Carl understood this as a confirmation of his father’s murderousness. After Tom’s hospitalization, both parents had hospitalizations and shock treatment. When Carl was in his late 20s or early 30s, he “shouldered the burden” of his mother’s illness, signed papers when she needed shock treatment, and later arranged for psychopharmacological treatments that finally stabilized her.

Carl had deep feelings from the beginning of his therapy. However, towards the end of the first year of therapy, the full implications of his childhood story began emerging on a deeper feeling level — with horror, terror, despair, the wish to die and suicidal thoughts. The denial had broken down by then. In the course of the treatment he would have to feel how utterly undone as a person, how deeply hurt he had been by his parents, how utterly devastated and betrayed, how deprived of his birthright as a man. His sexual life as an adult had never come together for him. It was permeated by a sense of shame and dirtiness and by compulsive sexualizing. He told me that during the course of one year, he slept with 25 or 30 women. At other times he was deeply disturbed by his inability to be close and feel excited by a woman who he knew did love him and for whom he had every reason to feel love but couldn’t. Later in the therapy he would speak repeatedly of the “poison” he felt in himself, just above the pubic bone.

As the first year of therapy went on, we went more deeply into the sexual problem, and looking back it is plain to see what a terrible struggle it was for Carl. He alternated between up, optimistic periods during which he'd say he wanted to "go faster" and ones in which he felt fragile, frightened and despairing. His mother's seduction and its effects became more and more clear as he saw how much she had gotten her "claws" into him, and his fear and terror of his father emerged repeatedly.

During this period, as all through our work, about equal time was devoted to working directly with the deep body tensions and talking and analyzing. Carl's feelings were always readily available. His sob was often extremely strong and had the quality of being not just a sob, but a scream of horror or terror at the same time.

The second year of therapy was in this vein too. He was repeatedly looking at the dirtiness of sex, the inability to be with a woman, the drivenness, the inability to let down or let go, the nightmare of his childhood. His father's murderous rage was on one side and on the other was his mother's contradictory and crazy-making seduction and her castrating hatred of sex. In the effort to survive and adapt, he had lived his life as an extension of his brother, and then he was always struggling to feel "parity" with other men. And underlying all were the terrible fear, terror, despair, and failure. So that by the end of that year, Carl's front, the cheerful, optimistic, outgoing, impishly playful womanizer, had broken down, and, indeed, he was breaking down.

He was seriously depressed for most of this, the third, year. There was also a disruption in the flow of our work because Carl left the area for further training and research outside of New England. He did come in once a month to his company and for a therapy session and visits with familiar friends and places. There were regular phone calls during which I could help him manage the depression, despair and the near suicidal feelings that emerged.

When he returned the following fall, he was still seriously demoralized, and when he learned that Dorie had taken up with another man he felt even worse. It was another year of deep pain, fear, and desperation for him, all the while struggling val-

iantly to break through and understand what had happened to him. Even now there were often moments of denial and disbelief that he could feel so tense, so awful, so despairing, and so driven and unable to give up the struggle for long. He still seemed heavily armored to me.

The work focussed on his despair and its sources in his mother's seduction and his father's murderous rage. His own rage had broken through too by now, and he was often angry with me for having to experience his underlying feelings of failure and sexual inadequacy. He was frightened by a constant pain and aching in the pelvic area. This was the only period that he considered stopping his work with me. At the same time he was just beginning to feel the possibility of "parity" with other men. He didn't feel quite so much like the little brother, trying to catch up, never as-good-as.

By the end of the fourth year of our work, Carl was emerging from his depression. He had started dating again, and had had some nice sexual relationships, even if for short periods. The layers of the family horrors continued to emerge at the same time. During one session, I worked quite deeply in the jaw and pelvis. A secret emerged. He had spied on his mother to see her taking her bath and had been terribly excited and frightened.

Following this, the memory of his earlier years in the bed next to the door by his mother's bed emerged more strongly and with more feeling. His father would "bellow" at her, and "I was afraid he'd kill her." He was terrified of his father, never knowing when his father might lose control and kill.

In addition to spying on her, he was also special to his mother. He was the last boy, the one to save her. The parents didn't love each other. His mother had sacrificed her true love to marry his father, and her own father had committed suicide. She was never sexual, he feels, and his father was never fulfilled with her. A haunted mother thus appealed to an intelligent, sensitive son. "They hated each other. It was a grotesque Charles Adams House."

A rather bizarre complexity emerged, adding to the terror and horror of his night-time experiences. His father would come in to put Carl to bed and to play with him. He would get

Carl excited, tickling him, telling him exciting stories. And when he would kiss him good night he would put his mouth completely over Carl's nose and mouth, so that Carl couldn't breathe. He would hold this so long Carl would feel panic, his head would spin as if he were going to black out, and he would be sure he was going to die or go crazy. In a later session Carl was not even sure that his father didn't stick his tongue in his mouth. This awful experience mingled in his mind with the other awful impressions of the night about what was happening in the next room. His earliest sexual "education" then was an awful confusion of life threatening images colored by his father's rage and the threat of death. As a child he would lie knotted up in a tight, tense ball. Profound tensions on the sexual level thus started extremely early and went very deep. He recalled a dream from childhood. A large bear is chasing him and he is howling with terror, certain the bear is going to kill him.

Soon after this session, Carl's lower back went into severe spasm. He was in pain and discomfort for months, really the better part of two years. Nevertheless, his spirits continued to improve and he continued to date. The injury forced him to slow down. As to Carl's speed, "I hit the ground running," he often said, meaning that he was already running when he came out of the womb. He had saved his own life with athletics. Even though he had been a small boy, he'd been a top athlete, and in college he won three varsity letters each year. He was extremely quick and strong. From the time he was a little boy he had been in constant motion. He always truly loved sports.

During our fifth year I took sabbatical leave from my practice for most of the year, seeing him infrequently. He felt strong enough for the break and that he didn't need me, as he might have even a year earlier. The few times we met in the fall allowed him to feel he was on a good track and to continue comfortably with the break. In the spring I saw him a few times again. At that time, he was feeling his sexual difficulties very poignantly. He was "a cripple," he felt, and "something was wrong" sexually. He was in pain from his back. He was in despair. He had

suicidal thoughts—of killing himself in front of me. He felt better after a few sessions. He was also seeing a woman whom he liked, and he was being forced to relax because of his back.

When we resumed regular sessions at the beginning of our sixth year of work, the dark, disturbing, haunting and frightening feelings about sex were immediately present. In one of the few dreams he had reported in his therapy he had gone into a strange house, the tip of his penis was cut off and swallowed by women. Of an attractive woman he knew, he said, "She could do anything she wanted with me. I'd be like a puppet dangled on strings. I'd be trapped, swallowed up." And he had the feeling of a dark, sexual secret in the family.

During this fall, however, he had established the first quiet and enjoyable relationship with a woman since I'd known him, and by winter of that year, I noted that there were signs of peace of mind more than ever in his life. The struggle, however, was far from over. His despair was still present and very deep. He experienced even more deeply his father's hatred, his ever simmering rage, and his wish that Carl had never been born. "Something is wrong with me, something sexual," Carl would say. He still felt he had poison in him.

His sexual trauma opened up very deeply in the course of this year's work. In one session he experienced with intense fear and horror what it was like to have slept next to his mother's bed. It was as if he had slept with her all those years and had actually been a part of the parents' marriage, his father's raging at her and everything else. "No one knew what I was carrying." He felt as if he'd go crazy in the session. Afterwards he felt this was the "key" to his therapy, that he could see a "hole at the end of the tunnel." More such deep material emerged in the following weeks. "My mother crawled inside me." He was enraged at both of them for what amounted to their molesting him in his sexual development.

Memories of his sexual excitement about his mother finally broke through. During one summer especially, he stayed with her in their summer home, while his father was back in the city.

He can't remember if he was alone with her or whether Tom was there, too. In any case, he was absorbed in his excitement about her. He spied on her. He felt he could have slept with her, that she was on the verge of it. There was tremendous excitement. The excitement was fused with a feeling that this was bad. At the same time, he was aware that his father was like a bomb that could go off at any moment, annihilating Carl and perhaps everybody. We could now well understand the depth of his fear of his father. I believe the feeling of poison must be understood in light of the incestuous genital excitement and how bad that felt.

The powerful catharsis of these memories opened up deeper feelings in his body and about himself. He felt dirty, "grotesque horror, associated with a painful helplessness," — that is what it was like to feel that dirty. "I felt like a smelly, stinky vegetable, and that's what I do to women . . . a wretched puky disgusting kid." These were the kind of feelings he expressed. He felt too that it was in a way "wonderful and painful and very scary" to have such a deep awareness of "right down here."

Subsequently he talked about his childhood sexual obsession, about the "taboo around this thing that was enormously exciting and could possess me. And my being frightened by it all." He was overwhelmed by the feelings. He would fantasize at night, in part about his athletic events (but about more than that, as we learned later), and would become enormously excited. He would have to roll back and forth to spin his head, to try to discharge the excitement and get some relief.

I would roll back and forth, spinning my head, for as much as 20 minutes or a half hour. I would exhaust myself and then I could go to sleep. This had to do with highly charged thoughts and feelings. I was a very charged up kid and young adult with no place to take the charge except into my sports. I felt as an adolescent and young man absolutely no indications that my father and mother enjoyed sex and that they thought it was bad. I could not have had the slightest comfort with the feeling all my life — no comfort whatsoever with my sexuality. It was too scary. I had strong, strong sexual feelings as an adolescent in bed and felt terrible about them.

On this and many other occasions, Carl expressed the way in which he was overexcited by his mother, an excitation that both felt wrong and could not be discharged. I believe it is this overexcitation and frustration that suggests an energetic explanation for the pronounced buttocks. The energy is pulled back from the genital, piles up in the buttocks, and is held back there where it creates a charged build-up. To tolerate the unbearable frustration and fear, sensation is eventually cut off, leaving a severe stasis; and a deep tension and pressure for release is created.

A period of despair followed these sessions, but within another month, Carl had calmed down, and I felt a true turning point had been reached. Not only was there a softening and self-acceptance, but there was also a genuine movement now in that direction. As if to confirm that impression, when we resumed in the fall for our seventh year of work, Carl had taken up with Ann, a suitable woman for him. He has stayed with her these past two years. While the relationship has been difficult for him, as well as her, he has continued to calm down and to allow himself to learn what it is like to have a more real and ongoing relationship with a woman.

By the fall of our seventh year, our work had a decidedly different quality. There was "progress without tumult," as he said. Being with Ann was "easy." He liked having the regular sexual relationship even though he constantly complained of "not being excited." He felt he was "on first base." He felt he was doing well, he felt very deeply in contact with himself, and he felt he knew himself. At the same time, I kept returning the focus to his profoundly conflicted feelings about sex and sexuality and kept working to help him connect more with the lower half of his body.

In one session, for example, he opened up his chest and breathing on the bioenergetic stool, cried deeply, then lay on the bed and kicked. I asked him to let his head hang off the end of the bed, to help him feel a letting go and surrender, and then I placed a blanket roll under his pelvis and worked directly with some of the pelvic tensions. Very deep feelings of terror emerged.

I felt terror . . . felt like I was seeing something—up and down (his abdomen): painful and terror and horror—seeing something too horrible. I don't want to see it, whatever it is. Felt really good to hold my genital and chest afterward. Holding my genital was a way of taking care of myself. When you told me to put my hand on my genital, I felt a very old feeling that was so shameful. . . . My genitals are me. They haven't been me. They've been this thing I've had to deal with—something that was an embarrassment to my family. Genitals didn't exist in my family. . . . I associate my chest with a more tender, soft, loving part of me. Maybe my genitals could be loving too. For somebody who had a family where genitals are shameful, where they don't exist, it's a step to feel they could not only be a part but a loving part. This feels very new.

Following this work, more disturbing feelings about sex emerged, and he was able to express more about the difficult feelings he experienced with Ann. Sex was “haunting and confusing.” He dreamed that he was in water at his house and there was a very large black snake, and he woke up frightened. He was frightened of being “hooked” by the woman. But what did that mean? Was the penis the hook? He talked more about his sexual excitement about his mother and his guilt; and I told him what he was up against. He could expect more difficult feelings and a feeling of going crazy. He said he'd gone too far to stop now. He was afraid of how excited he could get and what would happen if he felt more. “It's too exciting and too horrible,” he said, referring to his mother, her body, her vagina.

He talked more in the next session about his excitement about his mother, how excited he was, how wonderful that excitement was, and also about his constant athletic activity and his rocking himself in bed at night. He was able to express his disdain, disgust and revulsion for women the next time, how they had sloppy orifices at both ends. He had to take care of them. With men it was easier, clearer, better, you knew where you stood; it was clean cut. He was not as at home with women as he was with men. He longed for a good father, a man who could have given him guidance on how to be with a woman.

At this point, this whole deep movement in Carl—to work it out with the men, in the men's world—took the form of his de-

ciding to make a concerted push for a promotion. This made sense in terms of his career—his ability, contributions, and seniority in the company—and his feeling that his particular work should be recognized. From the previous years of letting down, breaking down, and resting, he was rejuvenated. His energy had come back, and his work pace was picking up. He had always been a hard worker and very efficient. He now developed a plan to achieve his goal of promotion; he wanted to be a vice-president.

This movement was both an effort to avoid and an effort to resolve his sexual conflict. It distracted him from his struggles with his excitement about his mother (as his athletics had always done); but at the same time, it gave him the opportunity to work out his deep feelings of fear and inadequacy in relation to men (actually his feelings about himself), that originated in his relationship with his father.

His fear and rage at his father emerged repeatedly in the following sessions. He felt father had “killed” Tom (the brother who became schizophrenic), “killed his spirit and zest for living.” He felt the same murderous feeling had been directed at his mother and himself. He wanted to be just the opposite of his father. We analyzed in detail the implications of this for his identifications. Further, his early understanding of sex was confused by his father's murderous rage. “It was like living with a monster. He was always on edge, tense.”

Powerfully cathartic memories of his mother emerged after this. He introduced a session with,

I want to talk about something weird, a weird thought I've had. I vowed not to marry in order to save my mother from my father. I vowed to be hers. . . . Now that I see this, I feel it is like the fish that hasn't been able to see the water. Everything from the woman is a seduction. I can't say 'no' to any of them.

In talking about his excitement about his mother, he said, “It was excitement—exclamation mark—not period!” I asked him to kick and to say “no” and then to say, softly, “I can't be yours.”

He came back to his excitement and loyalty to mother a few weeks later.

But I'm not supposed to be with anybody. There are aspects of me that are still kind of with her. She told me women, girls were bad. She was glad she had four boys, she said. Men were the superior sex, she made that clear to me. . . . I feel like I took a lot of her inside me. A lot of her pain, loneliness, wanting—I took it inside me. I feel I've been hooked in with her—the word feels appropriate. I feel she put a hex on me, contaminated me. We talked about the poison: she climbed inside me. It feels right to say that. . . . I'm surprised by what comes out of my mouth. It surprises the hell out of me. . . . I have a puzzlement in remembering my excitement about her. It was enormous, just enormous. . . . Enormous. It's not just my poking around on the roof, peeking. It was seeing her breasts, being around her as a young teen-ager and feeling turned on by her. 'Very' and 'enormous' do not capture it. I feel I actively visualized sexual intercourse with her, visualized sucking her breasts and sucking her vagina, in great, specific, vivid detail. It was incredibly exciting. This feels close to the bottom of the barrel. This feels very basic. . . . This feels like the most extreme part of my vitality and aliveness is what we're talking about right now, in its most extreme and purest form.

Closely on the heels of these memories, he remembered another occasion on which he was "terrorized" by his father for some innocuous school-boy prank.

His sense of his body deepened following this work; he could feel more the depth of his tensions. It was spring and he was letting down more again, integrating, and feeling much better. At the start of the summer break he reflected on the intense involvement in his company, the world of men, his involvement with Len, and all this has meant to him. He felt a deep relaxation in this last session of the season, and very hopeful.

This most recent year's work saw further freeing from the effects of his early terror of his father, further deep work on his feelings about the dirtiness of sex, and continued support of his relationship with Ann. When I saw him for the first time after the summer break, he seemed to me much more of a person and more manly. He said that he felt ready to "deal with the sexual

issue, now that everything else was out of the way." He felt that he had made great strides in being a man among men. In fact, he was "up there with the big boys."

At one point, after I had listened to some of this talk about the "big boys," I said, "Why are you so impressed with these guys?" This led to the question of what it means to be a man. He still seemed to have some phallic, "up" version of manhood, And, as if aside from all that, he still felt he wasn't enjoying Ann as much as he might be and would like. These interchanges led to an interesting expression of his negative transference. In his view I was a kind of hermit: I lived out in the woods like one. (I, myself, was impressed with how much of what he knew about my life was being ignored in this perception of me as a hermit.) So I couldn't help him with this world he was "enmeshed in."

Then he "accidentally" missed his next session, something most unusual for him. He came in a few weeks later saying how excellently everything was going for him. Sexually, things were still the same with Ann, however, not much excitement or longing to be with her. I went back to the "Hermit Helfaer" theme and his missing our last appointment. What emerged was his condescending attitude towards me. I was a hermit, a "priest," i.e., not really a man. Maybe I could help him with hanky-panky matters like sex, but I could be of no help to him on the real life issues of a man—like being "up there with the big boys."

The condescension was a latent negative transference. Its emergence freed a deeper layer the following week. What emerged was a self-criticism and self-hatred that found expression in a hateful tone of voice like his father's. This voice told him in the harshest tones imaginable just how he was not a man. Carl saw that even though he had determined to be just the opposite of his father, his own attitudes towards himself were based on his father's hate for him. More immediately, Carl saw that he had interpreted his own therapy in terms of his father's harsh, judgmental, castrating, and hateful attitudes. "You're in a sexual therapy, and you still can't get a hard-on. (This was not

even true.) You're not a man. You still prefer to go off to your office and work quietly by yourself." He was standing and had spontaneously begun raging at himself in his father's tone of voice. I asked him to continue, and as he did so, saying these things and much more; I nearly cried I was so startled at the horrifying harshness of it. He cried deeply.

Repeatedly this year, his work has come back to the early terror of his father. A few months after the session above, he had what he subsequently called one of the most powerful sessions of his whole therapy. He once again recalled with powerful catharsis his early terror of his father and his father's abuse of him. "I was beyond fear. I was utterly terrified. Everything that happened later was filtered through that terror."

When we ended for the summer this year, I felt Carl was freer than he had ever been. On the bodily level, the changes continue in terms of the gradual softening of the profound tensions, and concomitantly, the gradually increasing ability to let down and slow down. He finds more pleasure in the process of working without feeling so driven. There is still work to be done. He can continue to let down, connect more with his lower body, and work out the deep tensions in order to have more pleasure. I have no doubt he will continue. He has been deeply committed and has worked with his body on his own from the beginning. So, while there is still more of this long road to walk, he is no longer, to anywhere near the same degree, walking in the valley of the shadow of death or the haunting, tragic darkness of his family past; and a friendly companion is sharing some of the road with him.

I trust that I have conveyed the courage, fortitude and integrity with which Carl is walking the long road to personhood and manhood.