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Editorial

In this issue we are delighted to publish the paper, 'Primo Levi and depression', which the biographer Carole Angier gave as our Fifth Annual Public Lecture as well as the Response given by psychoanalyst Helen Taylor Robinson. Angier discusses the depth of Primo Levi's depression, which he seems to have experienced from an early age and which in her view, even more than his experience in Auschwitz, led to his eventual suicide. She describes the influence of Levi's parents' unhappy marriage and his subsequent difficulties relating to women. Helen Taylor Robinson approaches Angier's description of Primo Levi acknowledging that, while biography and psychoanalysis are different disciplines, they share some important elements. Taking a passage from Levi's *The Truce*, the book that describes the journey back from Auschwitz to his home, and drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Robinson weaves an elegant metaphor for an important developmental 'staging post' to manhood. She speculates on the possible links between the precariousness of Levi's 'if this is a man' identity and an unconscious phantasy of a 'murdering Mother bent on killing the Father' with the unspeakable organized cruelty of Auschwitz.

James Fisher in his paper, 'The Marriage of the Macbeths', develops a reading of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* on the basis of his clinical experience of a particular dynamic in couple relationships that he calls the 'shared proleptic imagination'. He elucidates this concept by means of the use of Bion's distinction between a 'Work Group' and a 'Basic Assumption' state of mind and illustrates this dynamic in the relationship of the Macbeths and in a clinical vignette.

Taking Nelson Mandela's mantra, 'The struggle is my life', Ruth Berkowitz in her paper, 'Nelson Mandela, the last hero: a psychoanalytic perspective', looks at both the political and the personal struggles that Mandela has experienced throughout his life. She discusses the key role that the ability to struggle and reflect plays in healthy development allowing for emotional growth and a creative life.

In our Arts Review section we have a paper by David Hewison, 'Art and the human psyche in a changing world', in which he looks at the artistic process by

discussing a paper by Carl Jung and then exploring some problems that art faces us with today such as what is art and how do we understand it. We also have a review by Jennifer Benwell of two photography exhibitions at the Freud Museum, 'The Magic of the Couch' by Claudia Guderian, and 'Head Space: Photographs of Psychotherapeutic Environments' by Nick Cunard. She describes both as capturing something of the form and the spirit of the analytic environment.

We are pleased to welcome, just for this issue, James Fisher as the new Joint Editor of the Journal with Mary Adams while the transition to a new Editor is taking place. We also welcome as our new Clinical Commentaries Editor, Georgie Hardie, and our new Book Review Editor, Martin Kemp, along with new members of the Editorial Board: Frances Bower, Lesley Caldwell, and Ann Scott.

The Editors

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Primo Levi and depression

CAROLE ANGIER

In this paper I focus on Primo Levi's depression. In my book, *The Double Bond. Primo Levi: A Biography* (Penguin, 2003), there are, of course, other themes and stories: about his life and work, his community, his family and friends – especially his friends. Levi was a man with a great gift for friendship and he wrote more about his friends than about himself, even in his autobiography.

Primo Levi's depression is a suppressed theme in my book. Depression is deeply personal and private, and Levi kept his depressions hidden from everyone, including most of his friends, until the very end of his life. These episodes of depression were too important to keep out of my book, but I struggled with the question of how to address them, along with other private and hidden matters, such as his family life. In the end I chose, as Levi himself did, to repress and hide them. My book is divided into a top, conscious story, as it were, 15 chapters of standard biography; and a suppressed, subconscious story, told in 11 short chapters, hidden in between.

In these little chapters the private and delicate matters, including the depressions, are often indirectly told – until the last chapter of the book, in which the suppressed rises up and takes over, as it did in the last chapter of Primo Levi's life. I believe the role of depression in Levi's life was enormous, indeed determining in both his work and his life, by which I also mean his death. I believe, in fact, that it was more important than Auschwitz. This has shocked many people, and many have not wanted to believe it. The idea that Auschwitz killed Primo Levi, even 40 years later, was so obvious and fitting that no amount of evidence was enough to dislodge it – and still is not.

First I would like to look briefly at the influence of depression on Levi's work. Here, too, it was immense; here, too, greater than Auschwitz. Resistance to this view started from Levi himself. People often asked him if he would have written

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Carole Angier is the author of *The Double Bond. Primo Levi: A Biography* (2003). This paper was given as the Fifth Annual Lecture of *The Journal of the British Association of Psychotherapists*, 14 May 2005.

without the experience of Auschwitz. He would reply, with a characteristic combination of pedantry and humour, that he couldn't answer that question, because 'the counterfactual didn't exist' – he hadn't had a life without Auschwitz, so the hypothesis couldn't be tested. But he always implied that the answer was 'no.' He was just 'an ordinary man of good memory,' he said, who had fallen into an abyss, and felt compelled to report it. He claimed that his first book on Auschwitz, *If This Is a Man* (Abacus, 1987, originally published 1947), was written with no literary aims, and never reworked or polished. After it was published he said he was going back to his 'real job' and would never write again; almost to the end of his life he insisted that this 'real job' was chemistry. But none of this was true. In fact, he polished and reworked *If This Is a Man* for years. From the beginning he dreamed of giving up chemistry to write full time. He had written before Auschwitz, and never stopped writing after it – every evening, every weekend, every holiday.

All of this, like his depressions, he covered up and denied. I believe the depression itself is behind this – a chronic self-distrust, a deep fear of attention, an inability to accept praise. His depressions, he wrote at the end of his life – because, as we will see, he made an attempt to talk about them then, to himself and to his readers – sprang from success, not from failure. But this was said only at the very end, literally months before he died. Primo Levi presented a false front to the world all his life – pretending to be a serene and optimistic man, and *not* a writer, when he *was* a writer and not serene or optimistic at all. This in itself created anxiety, conflict, more depression. And in the end the false front cracked, as perhaps it was bound to do. That should have made us wonder about it. A few people did, but not many. It seems we need Primo Levi to be serene and optimistic, for our own sakes, and also for his, because we love him and do not want him to have suffered. But he did.

For our own sakes we need his books to be optimistic and serene, and so we think they are, especially the first one. And the first one is, although it is also honest and without illusions. So are many of his essays, which ring with his passions – for language, for science, for the natural world; and with his quirky, ironic humour, and his beautiful, clear-as-a-bell style. There are other books, too, in which these passions dominate, for example his chemist's autobiography, *The Periodic Table* (Abacus, 1986, originally published 1975), which concentrates on his happiest years and ignores the rest; and *The Wrench* (Abacus, 1988, originally published 1978), his hymn to work, which is about a man alone.

But the rest don't share the same optimism. Already in *The Truce* (Abacus, 1987), the story of his return from Auschwitz, the shadows are closing back in. The books of moral-scientific fable that followed are deeply dark and pessimistic. His last book of essays on the Shoah is full of darkness, and many of his stories, and most of his poems, are darkest of all. When I studied his life I realized why: they were what he wrote when he was entering, or just emerging from, his worst depressions. When he was in them he could not write at all.

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These truths about Primo Levi's writing – that writing, not chemistry, was his 'real job' and that his writing had a dark side, indeed a dark heart – have only recently begun to be understood, and were not understood during his lifetime. He hid both these truths from us, and then suffered from his success, because people treated him as a guru and beacon of hope, which he didn't want, and failed to recognize him as a real writer, which he did.

The classic justification of literary biography is that knowledge of the life can illuminate the work. This isn't entirely untrue – understanding the cultural and historical background of a writer can certainly help towards a richer reading. But for the kind of individual, psychological analysis of a writer's work that interests me it is to a large extent untrue. For example, I find in Levi's stories radical hints of his own psychic disturbance, although that is not what they are about. They are about disturbance in the universe, in humanity and in nature, about which they are often fascinating, because Primo Levi was an artist and not actually crazy. The truth is not so much that the life helps us to understand the work, as that the work helps us to understand the writer. If you want to know what drives a writer to write, you can often find clues in the writing itself.

There are at least a dozen such stories, where – as in patients' dreams – Levi's subconscious comes closer to the surface than it does in his major works, which are firmly under the control of his moral and intellectual aim to spread hope and not despair.

As an illustration, let me quote what I say in my book about one story, alluded to in the title of this talk: '*La bestia nel tempio*,' 'The beast in the temple.' A couple on holiday are taken to see an ancient temple on an island in the middle of a lake:

> Their guide leads them into its central chamber: a vast, dark, impossible arena. The blocks of seats are insanely irregular; a whole section leans inwards. All around and between them are columns, which are the most impossible objects of all. Whenever you try to follow a column with your eyes it turns into a gap between columns and vice versa; so that both, but especially the gaps, are clearly illusions. Then the guide points out a massive shape: the Beast. The Beast hears them, and begins to gallop around the arena, faster and faster, seeking an escape. Each time it hurls itself against a narrow opening, bits of the walls collapse, and the opening is narrower still. The narrator's wife says: It is making its own prison. It is closing every exit itself.
>
> When they emerge a group of people are setting up their tents outside. They come to wait for the Beast, the guide says. They have always done so, since the temple was built. When it finally escapes they will kill and eat it, and the world will be cured; but the Beast will never escape. . . .

Then I ask:

> What is the Beast, and what is the Temple? Surely the temple could be a mind – a dark, dreamlike, misshapen mind: Primo's subconscious mind, or the depression hidden at its heart. And the Beast? – is the Beast not Primo himself, desperate to escape, and each

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> convulsive effort to force his way out only closes him in more? Or is it his depression again, or its cause? – which has always been there, but if it could only be expelled (told?) and destroyed all would be well, but it never, ever will. (Angier, 2003: 692–3)

We come now to depression in Primo Levi's life and death. There are at least three things that lead to the conclusion that depression killed him, and that Auschwitz was not the major factor. The first is that he suffered from depression all his life: not just after Auschwitz, but from adolescence, or even childhood.

About his childhood the evidence is weakest, as it usually is, because by the time the biographer arrives it is too long ago. And in this case Levi's closest family – his wife and sister – would not speak about it. What evidence there is is more about isolation, and emotional difficulties in general, than about depression as such. But there is, for example, the fact that he missed half of his first year of primary school, and was removed and tutored privately for the last one. The family's explanation is that as a child he had 'delicate health.' And it is certainly true that he was always extremely small and thin for his age: at 15 he still weighed only 98 pounds (44.5 kilos), which put him in the bottom 3% of boys. But then at 24, when he entered Auschwitz, he had still reached only 108 pounds, the weight of a slender girl: and there, as we know, he wasn't 'delicate' at all but extraordinarily tough and resilient, surviving a whole year of starvation and slave labour without ever becoming ill until the end, while bigger and stronger men died all around him. (It is important to correct a common impression here: people talk of his being in a chemistry lab in Auschwitz, and attribute his survival to that. He *was* in a lab, and it did help to save his life, by keeping him indoors during a second winter. But before the lab he spent eight months as an ordinary prisoner in an outdoor commando, including a first winter, which was in full blast when he arrived. And long before Auschwitz he had shown how really strong and healthy he was, on the mountains – all his life Primo Levi was a serious mountaineer.)

At the same time, all the witnesses of his childhood draw the same picture: of a hypersensitive, preternaturally serious and well-behaved little boy, who never shouted or brawled, or took part in any childish things except in his closest family circle. He displayed – according to his first, Italian biographer – 'extreme introversion,' and seemed to everyone old beyond his years. According to one member of the family, he had great difficulty in relating to other children.

His 'delicacy,' I conclude, was not really physical, but emotional from the start: compounded of intense shyness, extreme introversion, and a deep sense of isolation and difference, which came at least partly from the fact that already, intellectually, he *was* different.

From adolescence on there is much more evidence. First of all, there are hints of a particular kind of emotional suffering in several of his published writings and interviews. In *The Periodic Table* he writes of the 'deep-rooted shyness' which kept him from approaching a girl to whom he was very much attracted at university. 'In fact I was desperate,' he writes,

> and certainly not for the first time; actually at that period I thought myself condemned to a perpetual masculine solitude, denied a woman's smile forever, which I nevertheless needed as much as air. (1986: 35)

At the end of his life Levi was working on a book which was very different from anything he had done before: he was making that last minute attempt to explore his private difficulties to which I have referred. This book remains unpublished; but he gave three chapters to his publisher, and I found three more. In Chapter 3 he talks in detail about his terrible emotional and sexual block about women; and this chapter, we should note, he gave to his editor for publication.

It is this tormented relationship to women that was at the heart, I believe, of Primo Levi's depressions. It is explored in detail in this last unpublished book, and it bursts out in some of the dream-stories I have mentioned – for example in one called *Quaestio centauris*, about a centaur who falls impossibly in love with a human woman; and one called 'Dialogue of a poet and a doctor,' in which a young poet consults a doctor about his isolation and despair.

I found the real doctor to whom the real young poet, Primo Levi, had gone; and I found many friends who understood the role that his emotional and sexual repression had played in his life. It is, I suppose, my own theory that this repression was a key factor in his depressions. He himself never used the word 'depression' until the end. To friends he talked of being 'tired'; in his writings he talked of despair. But what he did talk and write about was suicide. He was driven to thoughts of suicide several times by the sexual torments of his youth, he wrote in his last book. If he had not met his wife when he did, he said to several close friends, soon after his return in 1946, he would have killed himself then. In other words: he thought of suicide several times, even many times, before Auschwitz. What saved him immediately after it was the resolution of his old torment about women.

Looking into the psychic background, I found several significant figures. Two were in the second generation above him: both his paternal grandfather and a paternal great-uncle had committed suicide. He knew about his grandfather, but not about his great-uncle, and there was one thing he did not know about his grandfather either: that he had killed himself in a very similar way – by leaping, not into a stairwell, but into the inner courtyard of a house. I do not know how much can be made of a certain genetic predisposition, but clearly there was some. The Registrar of Births and Deaths in Turin, at least, had little doubt. The death certificate for Michele Levi, Primo Levi's grandfather, said 'Precipitazione dall'alto,' 'Jumped from a height.' When he handed it to me he shook his head and said 'Sono tutti pazzi, 'sti Levi' – 'They're all mad, these Levis!'

It was in the generation just below this I found the third and final significant figure, which was, of course, his mother. Levi's parents' marriage was far from happy. It was arranged, as most Italian Jewish marriages still were in 1918. Cesare Levi, his father, was 40, and had been in bourgeois terms a playboy; according to family legend, he had an illegitimate child in Hungary. Levi's mother, Rina,

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was the opposite: only 23, inexperienced, inhibited and thoroughly Victorian. (That was her son's own description of her, in his last, unpublished book.) Cesare didn't change his spots: he remained a womanizer, and soon took his secretary as his mistress, which she remained for the rest of his marriage. Rina, who had probably contributed to this outcome by her frigidity, suffered, endured and punished him.

All this I put together from various people in the family and in the Jewish community of Turin, and from two novels based on the Levi family. Primo Levi himself never talked about his original family. But its effect on him, I believe, went very deep. He was born 42 weeks after his parents' wedding: in other words, he was conceived on Rina's honeymoon, which was (according to the story handed down) a classic trauma to her, from which she had attempted to flee. And he was male. She loved him with a possessive love all his life, but I think she could hardly touch him. 'I do not think my mother ever hugged me,' he said to his closest confidante towards the end of his life, 'not even when I came back from Auschwitz.'

His mother seems to me the source of a very great deal in Primo Levi. His father was too; but secondarily, because he died when Primo Levi was 22. Rina lived with him all his life. In fact, she outlived him by four years.

It seems to me that the love-hate relationship Levi had with his mother was at the root of the love-hate for women that was his central torment. It was to protect himself from her dominating nature that he first developed, I think, that calm, impenetrable mask which became his public image years later, and which already made him seem old as a little boy. Since she only approved of him if he was not like his father, he *wasn't* like his father. Instead he was like her: stationary, self-denying, unable to fight openly for himself, but only to endure. Everything in him that was like his father – the adventurer, traveller and lover of women – he repressed, and expressed only in his writing, if at all. Despite her passivity, and *un*like him, she was demanding and deeply egotistic; she dominated him all his life, and would not let him go. He brought his wife to live in her house; she brought up his children; she dominated them all.

This led to the final tragedy of Primo Levi's life, which was the tragedy of his own marriage: because after its triumphant beginning, in which Lucia Morpurgo literally saved his life by falling in love with him, it slowly became a tragedy for both of them. The key to this tragedy was his inability to put his wife before his mother, and take her away; or to put himself before either, and take himself away. Instead all three remained locked in a sort of devil's pact, in which Rina put up with Lucia to keep Primo, Lucia put up with Rina to keep Primo, and also, in the end, to punish him; and Primo put up with both of them, to keep the peace, and his image of himself as a good boy. This was the situation at the root of his last several depressions; and at the root of that situation was his pathological relation to his mother, from whom he had never been able to separate himself.

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People did not know that there had been many depressions before the last one. But his death had made the last one clear. About that one everyone simply assumed that its cause was Auschwitz. He was a survivor, indeed a writer-survivor, and we are all aware of the suicide rate amongst them – Jean Améry, Paul Celan, Bruno Bettelheim, Tadeusz Borowski, Piotr Rawicz, Jerzy Kosinki. The newspapers said it: 'Auschwitz killed him 40 years later'; Bettelheim, who was still alive, said it; Elie Wiesel said it; Levi's son Renzo said it, or was said in a newspaper to have said it. It was obvious, and also distressing. Primo Levi was the one survivor-writer who had seemed not to despair, who had believed we could actually learn from Auschwitz, and who had shown us decency as well as degradation in the pit of it. But now, 'If *he* couldn't live with his memories,' Clive James said, 'who can?' If he, finally, had despaired of humankind, mustn't we?

It seemed to me important to show that this was not true. First of all, Primo Levi was not changing his message to us, he was just ill. And second, his illness did not come from his memories of Auschwitz, as everyone supposed. He had put them to use in decades of witnessing; he had transformed them into knowledge and understanding; 'the poison of Auschwitz,' he said himself, 'no longer ran in his veins.' The memories were not the cause of his depression, he said himself, more than once, in the weeks before he died. What caused his last depression was the same thing that had caused all the others – his lifelong conflict over emotion, intimacy, sexuality – and the tragic family situation of his last years. And underneath both of these lay the unbroken, unhappy, ultra-Jewish and ultra-Italian bond to his mother. About Auschwitz Levi himself had said some shockingly honest things: that it had been his university, his one adventure, the time in his life when he had been most certain of what he had to do. There was a quotation I took out of my book on legal advice: 'The Lager was Primo Levi's university. *His* Lager was his home.'

I conclude with some factual detail. Primo Levi's first depression after the war was in early 1946, soon after his return. This was, of course, an Auschwitz depression. Nonetheless, it centred on the 'woman close to his heart,' as he called her, who had been deported with him and not returned; and for reasons closely connected to his old difficulties with women. In the 1950s and 60s there were at least two serious depressions, both centred on work problems. Around 1969 or 1970 there was one which followed the end of a love affair, and in 1971 one which followed the failure of a book, but which was probably still connected to that failure in love as well (as the book itself was). In 1972 and 1973 there were several more, mostly work-related. By now he was, reluctantly, on sleeping pills, but that wasn't enough, and around 1975 he consulted a psychiatrist for the first time. The psychiatrist concluded that he was not clinically depressed, and did not prescribe any medication.

Levi's full retirement from his factory in the late 1970s coincided with the beginning of revisionism about the Shoah in the wider world, and with the

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beginning of his mother's decline at home. From that point on he had many small depressions – 'at least once a year, like flu,' his last confidante says. Now that work was over they centred mainly on his health – he had a 'terror of physical ailment,' she says; and more and more on the prison of demands created by the two ageing mothers – Lucia's as well, but most of all his own.

In 1982 came his first clinical depression. The psychiatrist diagnosed it as such; he went to a neurologist and was put on antidepressants. This depression lasted nine months. It ended very suddenly, 'like a plug being pulled,' he said – as his other serious depressions had also done before. In this depression, his confidante noted in her diary, he thought not only of suicide, but of suicide by jumping from his third floor flat.

Finally, in September 1986, the last depression began. This time many drugs were tried. This was 1986– 7, and there was no such thing as Prozac; he was first given an MAO inhibitor, then several tricyclics. None seemed to help much, and there was the complicating factor of an enlarged prostate, which his doctors suspected of being cancerous, and decided to remove. For some weeks before the operation he was taken off the antidepressants. During this time he went for several sessions with a psychoanalyst. And since my book was published some new information has emerged: during this last depression Primo Levi's obsessive regret and remorse over the death in Auschwitz of the 'woman close to his heart' returned.

He had the operation, and was found not to have cancer after all. He came home in late March 1987. He refused to see anyone, but most of his friends spoke to him on the phone. They were all shocked at the severity of this depression, but they all thought he would pull through, as he had done before. On Friday 10 April he sounded much better – as though the plug had finally been pulled. But on Saturday the 11th, the first beautiful spring day, 15 minutes or so after she had brought him his post, the concierge found his body at the foot of the stairs.

On the question of suicide: I do not know the exact numbers, but a large proportion of suicides are people in clinical depression, and an appalling proportion of people in clinical depression eventually commit suicide. I think it is also classic for people in depression to commit suicide just when they are beginning to get better, and even on particularly beautiful days.

But we can leave such generalities aside. About Levi himself we know that he had thought of suicide many times before. We also know, from his writings, that he disapproved of suicide, that he thought it was letting people down, and that it was against the aims of life, which was his only religion. Those who do not want to think that he committed suicide argue that that terrible death – no note to his family, the broken body at the foot of the stairs – was utterly out of character. Primo Levi was a chemist, they say, he would have known which pills to take, to make a kinder and more dignified exit. I agree. But all this shows is that he did not *decide* to make his exit. And I agree with that too. Primo Levi

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would never have decided, in character, more or less in possession of himself, to abandon his family, and to tell them why. He did not want, or decide, to kill himself, of that I think we can be sure. But we also know, from the contemporary diaries of his closest confidante, that he could think of nothing else. He told her so, three days before he died: 'Penso solo a sopprimermi,' 'All I can think of is killing myself.'

Given this, there is only one thing I think we can imagine: that he resisted and resisted, as he had done before. But a man who has seen suicide as a way out since his youth; who has thought of it whenever he was in a deep depression, many times before; who has been obsessed with the thought of it probably for weeks, and certainly for days; and who then dies in the way Primo Levi did: well, it is conceivable he fell, there were no witnesses; but the chances are slim. I wish it were not so, but it is.

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Psychoanalytic reflections on Primo Levi, Carole Angier and biography

HELEN TAYLOR ROBINSON

Introduction

When a biographer undertakes to write and to give both information and interpretation to the life and works of a writer she may be said to stumble into the territory of psychoanalysis. That territory is the exploration of the unconscious psychical life of the instinctual self. Psychoanalysis takes as its premise that the unconscious psychical life of the self has an over-determining part to play in the conscious world we inhabit, and that the instincts, moreover, will be the dynamic engines of the psychic process.

It is usual for the psychoanalytic terrain to be revealed in a safe and regularly controlled and time limited setting by the owner of the psyche in question. Help is sought in understanding himself, help that is needed due to longstanding difficulties. So when a biographer examines a life and wonders about the less available aspects of that life, and the life of the fiction that carries its author, she might well be interested as to where her researches take her and, indeed, where they seem to come to a kind of halt. Furthermore, if these researches reveal significant gaps, silences, 'no entry' points – as Carole Angier has unquestionably demonstrated in the case of Primo Levi – and tantalize us with a violent outcome, Levi's suicide, then perhaps a psychoanalyst might be advised to tread carefully. For we now move through an immensely intricate version of reality.

For our purposes here, this version of reality may be called the Carole Angier Primo Levi biography, together with Levi's semi-autobiographical fictions, documents or testaments, his scientific parable-fables and tales, and the distressing material surrounding his life, his writing and his suicide, in the light of the Holocaust. Speculation and conjecture, hypotheses and questions, lines of enquiry and intuitive and imaginative leaps, of the kind the psychoanalyst makes

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Helen Taylor Robinson is a Member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. This paper was given as a Response to Carole Angier's paper (see pages 3–11) as part of the Fifth Annual Lecture of *The Journal of the British Association of Psychotherapists*, 14 May 2005.

daily, will here be *unsupported* by the rigorous theoretical and technical framework we call an analysis. In this sense, we are rightly wary and compelled to assert, from this point, that biographical truth, literary/fictional truth and psychoanalytic truth are entirely different disciplines whilst sharing some common elements, complementarities and symmetries.

What we can say is that Carole Angier's biography, the writings of Primo Levi, the serious issues of depression and suicide in the context of the second world war and its aftermath for all mankind, and for Jewish mankind in particular, invites us to bring together this complex, hybrid mass *as if it were a man*, to play for a serious moment with *se questo e un uomo*! And if we can allow ourselves a kind of mythological patient, using the phrase 'if this is a man' as a reference to the psyche as a body of knowledge, if this can be imaginatively brought to the consulting room of psychoanalysis, do we have anything we can offer in a responsible and thoughtful way, to the *myth* which presents in these circumstances?

I begin with a passage from Levi, the fiction maker, who creates the testament that follows on from *If This is a Man*. It is called *The Truce* and was published eighteen years after the real events of his life, the moment of liberation from Auschwitz.

Here is the 25/6-year-old narrator figure who describes the start of the uncertain exodus from Auschwitz internment.

*The Thaw**

In the first days of January 1945, hard pressed by the Red Army, the Germans hastily evacuated the Silesian mining region. But whereas elsewhere, in analogous conditions, they had not hesitated to destroy the Lagers and their inhabitants by fire or arms, they acted differently in the district of Auschwitz: superior orders had been received (given personally, it would seem, by Hitler) to recover at all costs every man fit for work. Thus all healthy prisoners were evacuated, in frightful conditions, in the direction of Buchenwald and Mauthausen, while the sick were abandoned to their fate. One can legitimately deduce from the evidence that originally the Germans did not intend to leave one man alive in the concentration camps; but a fierce night air raid and the rapidity of the Russian advance induced them to change their minds and flee, leaving their task unfinished.

In the sick bay of the Lager at Buna-Monowitz eight hundred of us remained. Of these about five hundred died from illness, cold and hunger before the Russians arrived, and another two hundred succumbed in the following days, despite the Russians' aid.

*From *If This is a Man/The Truce: A Survivor's Journey Home from Auschwitz*, published by Bodley Head, reprinted by kind permission of the Random House Group Ltd.

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The first Russian patrol came in sight of the camp at midday on 27 January 1945. Charles and I were the first to see them: we were carrying Somogyi's body to the common grave, the first of our room mates to die. We tipped the stretcher on to the defiled snow, as the pit was now full, and no other grave was at hand: Charles took off his beret as a salute to both the living and the dead.

They were four young soldiers on horseback, who advanced along the road that marked the limits of the camp, cautiously holding their sten-guns. When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words, and throwing strangely embarrassed glances at the sprawling bodies, at the battered huts and at us few still alive.

To us they seemed wonderfully concrete and real, perched on their enormous horses, between the grey of the snow and the grey of the sky, immobile beneath the gusts of damp wind which threatened a thaw.

It seemed to us, and so it was, that the nothing full of death in which we had wandered like spent stars for ten days had found its own solid centre, a nucleus of condensation; four men, armed, but not against us: four messengers of peace, with rough and boyish faces beneath their heavy fur hats.

They did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene. It was that shame we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage: the shame the Germans did not know, that the just man experiences at another man's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defence.

So for us even the hour of liberty rang out grave and muffled, and filled our souls with joy and yet with a painful sense of pudency, so that we should have liked to wash our consciences and our memories clean from the foulness that lay upon them; and also with anguish, because we felt that this should never happen, that now nothing could ever happen good and pure enough to rub out our past, and that the scars of the outrage would remain with us for ever, and in the memories of those who saw it, and in the places where it occurred and in the stories we should tell of it. Because, and this is the awful privilege of our generation and of my people, no one better than us has ever been able to grasp the incurable nature of the offence, that spreads like a contagion. It is foolish to think that human justice can eradicate it. It is an inexhaustible fount of evil; it breaks the body and the spirit of the submerged, it stifles them and renders them abject; it returns as ignominy upon the oppressors, it perpetuates itself as hatred among the survivors, and swarms around in a thousand ways, against the very will of all, as a thirst for revenge, as a moral capitulation, as denial, as weariness, as renunciation.

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These things, at that time blurred, and felt by most as no more than an unexpected attack of mortal fatigue, accompanied the joy of liberation for us. This is why few among us ran to greet our saviours, few fell in prayer. Charles and I remained standing beside the pit overflowing with discoloured limbs, while others knocked down the barbed wire; then we returned with the empty stretcher to break the news to our companions. (Levi, 1987: 187–9)

A psychoanalytic approach to the opening pages of *The Truce*

Levi's depiction of the thaw that now begins the truce of the book's title is, I suggest, a metaphor for us as psychoanalysts of an internal world and can be taken as reference to a fantasied terrain within the psyche. It is not Levi's internal world, it is not the young narrator's internal world, for he describes what he experiences that is real but with hindsight. From the events that follow in the Levi story we can hypothesize and reconstruct an *imaginary* psychical reality that the Levi myth offers.

In this metaphor, derived from psychoanalytic theory, the four young men that arrive from outside would, I suggest, represent the instinctual masculine potency or virility that reasserts itself as wondrously concrete and real, within the unreal, dissociated and depressed internal grey that pertains. The unreal greyness of snow and sky is a metaphor for the feeling state which Levi describes and which may be interpreted, psychically, as the subjugation by two parties to render the instinctual null; the two parties are the perpetrators in Auschwitz, and the victims in Auschwitz, who in an unwilling and violent coupling destroy life, render it grey (another nullified burial has just this moment passed) rather than allow birth. But here for a moment the instincts, the young Russian liberators on horseback, suddenly prevail. The 'nothing full of death' that the horrible newborns of the Auschwitz experiment had been wandering within, as 'prisoners-no-longer', condense into this nucleus of valid life and hope. The self sees and identifies with the new arrivals not, for once, as persecutors or persecuted. That the Russian youths were 'armed but not against us', implies a new intercourse of two parties rather than a doing to death by one party to a submitting other. The 'four messengers of peace with rough and boyish faces beneath their fur hats' may serve to remind us of the dreaded apocalyptic four, Conquest, War, Famine, and Death (could there be a more apt likeness of the circumstances at Auschwitz?) who have been ravaging to bring about The Final Solution, the world's end. But can these be different beings? How can one know or recognize them as new or different, despite the hope? In the delusion of the camp, or Lager, is it not difficult to identify what these are? And yet Levi gives them a warm and complex humanity, quickly compromised by what they have now to bear witness to. Every young man who carries on forward with hope carries the fearful presentiments of the future, and these rough boys with guns would be looked to, and also envied, for just this. They are men offering a different solution to

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the one that has been. And it is the life and death balance here, between hope and destructiveness, within the psyche, particularly the adolescent psyche, the importance of hope being fought for and gained as a developmental staging post to manhood, before the later sufferings that will come and bring a different kind of wisdom.

As Carole Angier has indicated, the picture of the young Levi before internment is of an already 'if this is a man' kind of man, in a balance that is already seemingly tilted towards the deadly, the introverted, the compromised – it is already precarious how things stand. This is potency untried, already somewhat interned, pending. But what is keeping the psyche waiting? Is there already, in psychoanalytic terms and from Angier's account, internalized here a monstrously bloody Mother in unconscious phantasy, a murdering Mother bent on destroying the Father? Is the amorous and independent father of Primo Levi, Cesare, for his sins of desire, to be wholly devoured in the psychic primal scene by this mother Rina who is still, impassive, the centre of the household with a will that would seem to negate and destroy him (Cesare) silently? If this is not a creative and enlivening intercourse for a son to internalize, the potential to remain in a perpetual psychic re-enactment of this primal scene is there. If there is a Mother killing a Father in unconscious phantasy, in small, unspeakable, Auschwitz acts, and a father to some extent running off, trying to evade and defy such perpetrations, do they alternate? Who is who? Is there a pattern, what does each metamorphose into and become in the instinctual internal world, moment by moment – moments which can be tracked in the oscillations in an analytic transference, tilting and repositioning the balance, moments which, when left unattended, psychically lead to accumulations, stagnations, potentially deadly in their climax? The Auschwitz experience of this kind of silent, highly organized, degrading, unsurpassable cruelty that is continually a balance of disguise and deceit alongside open and flagrant violence is a model of psychopathological sado-masochism at its most persistent and perverse. In Levi's writings, in his need to account, to bear witness to, we could say there is an eloquent externalization and mastery of the internal giving him a literary potency and a literary manhood that confounds and moves beyond the actual psychic parents. In this sense his texts are a success, worked hard for. He is not compromised.

It is the next passage of his writing about the thaw that bodes ill, that creates, with hindsight, an imbalance that if unwatched becomes a suicide, a fatality. What internally is the incurable nature of the offence that Levi refers to in this passage quoted above? Why could 'nothing ever happen good and pure to rub out [the] past'? Why are there to be no survivors in a moral and spiritual sense from Auschwitz? It might psychically feel to be just so – endlessly. For those who are subjected to these cruelties it may indeed *be* so. But equally, as our greatest dramas testify, and as our clinical psychoanalytic experience testifies, it might also be a statement that gives licence to enact, in phantasy, an unforgiving retribution for which there would be an accompanying guilt. It might become the

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licence to destroy, to say 'never' and 'nothing' in place of 'maybe' and 'something', to allow an 'inexhaustible amount of evil' to be inevitable and not probable, to institute an internal machinery in which very little is allowed to change. This is a speculation based on the Levi myth; it is not a speculation in the analytic setting where it is psychically frequently re-enacted. 'An unexpected attack of mortal fatigue accompanied the joy of liberation for us', Levi says. The beginning of the return to internal liberation would invite, psychoanalytically speaking, murder and mayhem, despair and desolation back into the psyche. Such work to recovery would be beyond arduous. And after Auschwitz, Levi, the real man, has still to return to the realities of home, a future, a mother, a wife, children, work and creativity with all of it to do. That part of the Levi story, as Carole Angier's interpretation suggests, may represent an internal capitulation, as a result of which it was not possible to achieve a real external liberation.

Every time a sensitive child experiences a forced-upon-him cruelty by one party acting upon another, every time he feels obliged to collaborate with one parent in a silent outrage against the other, every time he feels he is null or too weak in his defence he might well feel he is in an unclean contagion that spreads. He might well feel this matter is incurable if it is prolonged, although he may return to it, unerringly, in an effort to repair it and so consolidate the horror, thus breaking the body and the spirit, rendering himself abject, and creating a will for vengeance. This, indeed, results in renunciation, moral capitulation and utter weariness in the face of such a war. We might as analysts in the consulting room understand the ego submitting to the violence of the corrupt Gestapo-like super ego that condemns, exterminates and vindicates its acts of cruelty and, in turn, draws out the cringing, placating, lying, deception and appeasement – the moral destruction of the submissive ego that retaliates in useless and repeated humiliations. But here we can, as psychoanalysts, enter the battle, look at these two forces at work and identify them as the two warring aspects of the parents doing unto death. But we could not do this with any assurance in the case of the real Primo Levi because he did not allow us this point of entry into 'if this is a man'. This part of his internal story remains silent. Omnipotently so, we could say.

But we can speculate psychoanalytically and suppose a cruel perpetrator self who needed to return, and intern, the monstrous mother/wife, to remain alive in his shared home with her so that he could psychically 'kill' her daily and be punished, in turn, by his own depression and sterility within writing, friendships, love and work, within freedoms of small and great kinds. There is a kind of truce here, a perpetual cessation, followed by the resumption of hostilities. Guilt at the unconscious meanings of such acts committed by the internalized couple is felt so concretely as the murder of one party by the other, as sickness and deterioration exacerbates the internal reality in its outer manifestations (the dying Mother/Rina) so that it feels as if it can only be exited by actual self destruction, *if no other help is sought*. Finally the self might ask 'if this is a man' and reply,

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savagely, killing the unconscious, here delusionally fused with the conscious, once and for all.

I reiterate that this is an imaginary hypothesis derived from the life and work of Primo Levi through a psychoanalytic model of the mind. In this model, sadistically identifying with the perpetrator self in the unconscious, or submitting as the victim self in the unconscious and creating a future world of guilt for both unacceptable positions, is a psychic position, a death laden, primal scene re-enactment. It can be identified, and reworked, moment by moment, in the long fiction, the internal narrative, of an analysis. It is the movement from the uncertainty of 'if this is a man' to 'this is a man', from the truce to the peace, from suicidal strivings to daily livings. Albert Camus made this succinct statement in his *Notebooks* (1970).

> There is only one liberty. To come to terms with death. After which everything is possible.

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The marriage of the Macbeths

JAMES V. FISHER

ABSTRACT

The author develops a reading of the marriage of the Macbeths in Shakespeare's Macbeth parallel to his clinical experience in couple psychoanalytic psychotherapy of a particular dynamic in couple relationships which he calls the 'shared proleptic imagination'. In this paper he elucidates this concept by means of the use of Bion's distinction between a 'Work Group' and a 'Basic Assumption' state of mind and then illustrates this dynamic in the relationship of the Macbeths and in a clinical vignette.[1] The primary aim is to explore these couple dynamics with the help of Shakespeare's characters, although it may also be interesting to see how this view of couple dynamics affects the reader's view of the play as a whole. Copyright © 2006 BAP. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

Shakespeare's pictures of the dynamics of human experience are almost always intriguing, including, of course, the ways he imagines marriage and couple relationships - the Macbeths most particularly. Among the many interpretations of the marriage of the Macbeths, Harold Bloom's must stand as one of the more unusual. He writes:

> The sublimity of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is overwhelming: they are persuasive and valuable personalities, profoundly in love with each other. Indeed with surpassing irony Shakespeare presents them as the happiest married couple in all his work. (Bloom, 1999: 518)

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It is true that the troubles these two people encounter seem, at first glance, to have to do with what is external to their marriage and not within it. However, even if we see the description 'happy' as ironic, I for one find Bloom's characterization idiosyncratic at best. If we shift our focus from 'happiness' to a notion we are more comfortable with, intimacy, what comes to my mind are the astute observations by Stephen Greenblatt in his marvellous *Will in the World* (2004). In it he has a fascinating chapter in which he discusses what we know of Shakespeare's own marriage, interspersing his account with detailed examinations of the Poet's various attempts to portray intimate relationships (Greenblatt, 2004: 118–49)

What kind of intimacy does Shakespeare think husbands and wives can expect? Taking all of his plays together, Greenblatt concludes that Shakespeare's answer is: very little! His view is that Shakespeare found it 'difficult to portray or even imagine fully achieved marital intimacy' (p. 128) – except in the marriages of two of his least appealing couples:

> There are two significant exceptions to Shakespeare's unwillingness or inability to imagine a married couple in a relationship of sustained intimacy, but they are unnervingly strange: Gertrude and Claudius in *Hamlet* and the Macbeths. These marriages are powerful, in their distinct ways, but they are also upsetting, even terrifying, in their glimpses of genuine intimacy. (p. 137)

Greenblatt focuses the matter for us nicely when he observes that it is startling 'the extent to which they inhabit each other's minds' (p. 139). Freud, in reflecting on the Macbeths, suggests that psychologically the husband and wife represent two complementary aspects of the same person (Freud, 1916: 323–4).

In this paper I want to explore this dimension of the relationship of the Macbeths, this idea of an intimacy that Greenblatt characterizes as two people 'inhabiting each other's minds'. But I want to do it in terms of the notion of the proleptic imagination, a concept I explored previously in a paper on the Macbeths. (Fisher, 2000) The term 'proleptic' I take from the now out-of-fashion study of rhetoric. There it indicates taking something in the future as already having happened. It is appropriate in that sense in reference to the Macbeths, as we will see. But I also want to use in a broader sense to include taking anything imagined, pictured, perceived, assumed, or believed as true. No reality testing is required or tolerated.

In that earlier paper I looked at proleptic imagination in each of the Macbeths individually but I did not see it as a genuinely couple phenomenon - no doubt because I had not yet become aware of it in my consulting room. In this paper I want to illustrate this couple phenomenon as it appears in the Macbeths' marriage and in my consulting room. At least I want to offer it as a possible way of thinking about some pernicious, but all-too-common, couple dynamics that can affect not only marital couples but also the analytic couple. In this paper I focus

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on the marital couple, although the implications for the analytic couple can be seen in the dynamics between the analyst and the marital couple.

Because the notion of the proleptic imagination - let alone the idea of a shared proleptic imagination - is not in general use, and doubtless because I am working on Bion at the moment, I have decided to appropriate two well known terms from Bion's early work - the idea of a Work Group mentality and a Basic Assumption mentality - as a way of introducing these ideas. Before I explain how I propose to use these terms, I should mention the concept that will already have come to mind when Greenblatt talks of the idea of two people inhabiting each other's minds - projective identification.

The dynamics of projective identification are doubtless at work in this story. But if we are going to use that concept here, we need to keep in mind the distinction between a projective identification that aims at evacuation of something into the other, and a different, but related process that, in effect, says, you're one too, or you and I are both whatever it is. The shared proleptic imagination, a kind of shared unconscious phantasy in the sense I have in mind, is not an evacuation of something into the other but an unconscious certainty, sometimes conscious, that both share exactly the same emotional state of mind.

My attraction to using Bion's early group terms for two different kinds of unconsciously shared states of mind is perhaps apparent. I realize there is risk of implying that I view the couple as a group, but I shall have to assume the understanding that there is a fundamental difference between the intimacy of the two and that of three or more. I will use these two terms simply to have a way to introduce two very different shared emotional states of mind, as well as two very different modes of sharing emotional experience.

By a Work Group state of mind I mean to designate a shared emotional orientation to any shared interest, for example watching a play, raising children, trying to have a serious conversation, or a frivolous one, going for a walk, making love, or whatever. The main point, as Bion emphasizes, is that it is a 'realistic' state of mind - or as I prefer, one that is open to reality testing. I should emphasize that by reality testing I have in mind judgements about both what we call 'internal' reality, the reality of one's own emotional experience, as well as what we experience as external reality. Action which is based on such judgements has in principle been open to review, and similarly the sharing in a 'Work Group' or 'realistic' state of mind must always be subject to review, a choice, to some degree, whether to continue or to withdraw.

In contrast there is what Bion called a Basic Assumption state of mind in which a particular cluster of emotions dominates and there is *no possibility of not sharing* in that state of mind. The mode of linking here Bion calls 'valency', the capacity of individuals, unconsciously and instantaneously, to hold 'each other in involuntary and inevitable emotional combination' (Bion, 1952: 242, 246). Again projective identification may be a sub-category of this form of connection, but we need to keep in mind a broader sense of being drawn into a shared

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unconscious state of mind, as I have suggested. My own preference is to designate this as a *shared proleptic imagination*.

It is important to note that a 'Work Group' or 'realistic' state of mind is not without emotion. To the contrary, this state of mind not only allows for an experience of the whole range of emotions, it is necessary to that emotional experience. It is centred around the emotion of curiosity, or what Bion is later to call 'K', the urge to know. I discussed this in greater detail in a recent paper on 'The emotional experience of K' (Fisher 2005). Therefore the primary distinction between the 'Work Group' or 'realistic' state of mind and that of the 'Basic Assumption' is not the distinction between reason and emotion. It is the difference between being able to think *while* feeling, sometimes intense, emotion, and being swept along by emotion unthinkingly. The first uses the process of reality-testing in reference to internal and external reality, thinking one's emotional experience and making judgements on that basis of 'thinking feelingly'. The second is the experience of overwhelming, instantaneously shared emotions about which thinking is impossible, competing feelings are intolerable, and the urge to act on those unthought emotions is virtually irresistible. For the couple it is a shared state of mind that resembles that of the mob.

The suicidal patient and her husband

I want now to flesh out these ideas by seeing how they help us to understand the marriage of the Macbeths as portrayed in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.[2] I should say here that there are innumerable observations that can be made, indeed have been made, about this intriguing play. My intention in this paper is to focus on one aspect and resist the temptation to take up other interesting questions. I do, however, think that the couple relationship is at the heart of the play and any broader interpretation of it must take account of the dynamics of the marriage of the Macbeths.

Let's begin by approaching the couple in the way we often encounter couple dynamics (especially in public mental health services). That is, I want us to observe first the 'identified patient', Lady Macbeth - or more precisely to sit in on an observation of her. Subsequently we will have an opportunity to observe the patient's husband and his mental state, as well as, interestingly, his discussion with the doctor about the condition of his wife.

As you read and/or watch this scene I invite you to attend to this observation in a clinical state of mind, forgetting what you know about their background from the rest of the play – that is, approach it without memory or desire, as someone once put it. What do we learn about them simply on the basis of these observations and what hypotheses we might form about (1) their current state of mind and (2) in what way their relationship is involved, either as a consequence or as a contributory factor? This 'consultation' has been prompted by the gentlewoman, the 'nurse', who is caring for the Queen, Lady Macbeth, calling

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in the doctor because of her patient's sleepwalking, although we are soon aware there is more to it than that.

[Scene: Macbeth 5.1.1 to 5.1.76 and/or the DVD Chapter 20, time: 1.45.12 to 1.49.33.]

In this disturbing scene there are a number of things on which we could focus. I want to call attention to just two. One is the presence and function of hallucinations. The other is the couple dimension of what we have just witnessed.

We are quickly aware that there is indeed more involved than just Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking that led the nurse to summon the doctor. Sleepwalking is, in a way, a form of hallucination in that the person is both in a dream-state and is taking intentional action in the physical world. We'll come back to hallucination in a moment since it is critical to an understanding of the couple dynamics I am trying to describe. But the first question concerns the content and the significance of what Lady Macbeth is hallucinating. We note that it leads the doctor to be concerned about the possibility of her committing suicide. He orders her to be watched and any means of her harming herself to be removed. He also forms an opinion as to what might have led to her 'suicidal' state of mind, although he lets slip that he has been influenced by rumours, 'foul whisp'rings' – it all makes him think he ought to refer his patient to a 'higher authority':

> Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
>
> Do breed unnatural troubles: Infected minds
>
> To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
>
> More needs she the divine than the physician. – (5.1.68–70)

The more interesting question for me has to do with the evidence on which one might base a judgement about whether this is indeed a suicidal state of mind and, if it is, what has led to it. The doctor, it seems to me, bases his judgement on Lady Macbeth's hallucinations, primarily her repeated 'washing her hands' and what she says as she does so:

> Yet here's a spot. (5.1.30)
>
> . . .
>
> – What, will these hands ne'er be clean? – (5.1.41)
>
> . . .
>
> Here's the smell of the blood still: all the
> perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

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> Oh! oh! oh! (5.1.47–49)
>
> . . .
>
> – Yet who would have thought the old
> Man to have had so much blood in him? (5.1.37–38)

If this were a dream, a nightmare, we would see its images as a picture of an emotional experience of guilty fear or remorse – a dream-picture of an anxious desperation to expunge that emotional experience in the face of her inability to integrate it satisfactorily into her life. And in this hallucination, as in a dream, a nightmare, her actions are futile.

Why doesn't she inquire further about this strange phenomenon of the stain and smell of blood she cannot get rid of and seek a second opinion perhaps? Because she is asleep – and in dreams, even if we do inquire, being a dream-state it would be as difficult to get a responsible answer as to get rid of the bloodstain. But she acts as if she were awake and conscious. What if she were fully awake and conscious and still did not, indeed refused, to question the experience because she knows, she is certain what she sees and what she smells? That is what we call hallucination. We can define it as a proleptic dream-state of mind, a dream-state experienced as reality and marked by unquestioning certainty.

My second observation has to do with the couple aspect of what we have just observed. In the past I have talked about 'couple dreams' (Fisher 1999). But these so-called couple dreams happen while our couples are awake and conscious. I hope by the end of this paper it will become apparent how important hallucinations are for understanding some of the most difficult dynamics in the intimate couple relationship – and most particularly *shared couple hallucinations* or a shared proleptic imagination. As a couple phenomenon they are a most insidious form of shared unconscious phantasy, a shared unconscious phantasy that is acted on as if it were a fact.

In the scene we have just observed we could ask whose hands Lady Macbeth is talking about. Clearly when she asks, 'will these hands ne'er be clean', she seems to be looking at and thinking about her own hands. But notice she also says:

> Wash your hands, put on your night-gown;
> look not so pale. – I tell you yet again, Banquo's
> buried: he cannot come out on's grave. (5.1.58–60)

You will have noticed, I imagine, that most of Lady Macbeth's comments sound like a part of a conversation, an urgent, desperate dialogue – but a dialogue with whom? In her repeated sleepwalking dream, or hallucinated dialogue, Lady Macbeth seems to be struggling to integrate something that drives her to the

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edge of madness. To whom is she saying 'wash your hands' and why does she mention Banquo and reassure her interlocutor that he is buried and cannot come out of his grave? What is it, what is the emotional experience that this woman cannot integrate *in* her mind and *into* her life?

And what about her husband? Let us now observe the current state of the other half of this couple:

[Scene: Macbeth 5.3.1 to 5.3.62 and 5.5.1 to 5.5.28 and/or the DVD Chapter 22, time: 1.50.34 to 1.55.43 and Chapter 24, time: 1.56.19 to 1.58.47.]

What do we see when we observe Macbeth for ourselves as he questions the doctor regarding the condition of his wife? The doctor hedges, not mentioning that he is anxious about her possible suicidal state of mind. To Macbeth he simply says it's just her 'thick-coming fancies' that keep her from sleep. Macbeth's retort might make us wonder, given what we have just seen. It is difficult not to hear him speaking about himself as well as his wife:

> Cure her of that:
> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart. (5.3.39–45)

Not 'give sorrow words'! Not acknowledge the reality of conflicting emotions! But 'pluck out', wipe out of existence these troubles, these conflicts, with sweet, oblivion-making medicine. Macbeth finds no sweet antidote to give him some peaceful oblivion, although perhaps he seeks it in this scene in his attempted schizoid razing of his capacity for emotional experience. He appears to disdain that 'sweet oblivious antidote' his wife has chosen (though his final duel with Macduff may be his version of it). There may be some temporary satisfaction in his cynicism, and in his disparagement of his emotional experience, his strutting and fretting his hour on the stage, he is a template for many of the men, but not only the men, we see in therapy. But he clearly finds no peaceful oblivion in his cynicism:

> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And is heard no more: it is a tale

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> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
>
> Signifying nothing. (5.5.17–28)

Destroy or damage the capacity for emotional experience and you damage or destroy the meaning in life – and paradoxically find yourself in an increasingly despairing emptiness. But how did these two people come to this sorry state? And what, if anything, has their relationship had to do with what has happened?

The shared unconscious proleptic imagination

In order to think about those questions let's look at something of what has gone on between wife and husband. We begin soon after Macbeth's famous victory in the service of the king, Duncan, which earned him the new title of Thane of Cawdor. Lady Macbeth is reading a letter from her husband from the battlefield. In it he barely mentions the victory but excitedly tells her of an experience so strange he must share it with her immediately. Prophecies from some strange women, 'Weïrd Sisters', that seem to become true as they are made. A new title and wealth already his, and a pronouncement that he will be king. Without hesitating or stopping to ponder on it all, he sends an urgent message to his 'dearest partner of greatness' so that the picture in his mind might be their shared picture of the greatness that is promised.

Why then, do we imagine, does Lady Macbeth immediately think about her husband's weaknesses – or what she assumes are weaknesses – for example, his reluctance to act when it conflicts with his sense of honour – or, too full of the milk of human kindness! She is convinced it is just his timidity and he needs her to stir him into action. Otherwise, she fears, he will miss the destiny he covets, the kingship with which fate and supernatural powers have already crowned him.

[Scene: Macbeth 1.5.1 to 1.5.73 and/or the DVD Chapter 6, time: 17.13 to 24.13.]

Here are a few observations about this powerful scene which I think Harriet Walter portrays so effectively. It is not just that Lady Macbeth enters into what she takes to be the spirit of the letter, it is almost as if she were there ahead of her husband, already thinking about the problem of his 'character weaknesses' – at least as she perceives them. Perhaps she is right. It is not a matter of misperception that I want to call attention to here when I suggest that Lady Macbeth *misreads* her husband. It is not that she is wrong about Macbeth's character flaws, perhaps his 'fear', or his being 'too full o'th'milk of human kindness' to do what he must do if he is to succeed.

No, the misreading, I am suggesting, lies in two errors. One was to take his obvious excitement, and perhaps *his* proleptic state of mind – his picturing the

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words of the 'Weïrd Sisters' almost as if an accomplished fact – as the *totality* of his emotions and potential emotions. The other error was to take his letter picturing the two of them in royal splendour, as if he were stating a fact and not primarily communicating his emotional state. Perhaps it struck such a resonant chord with Lady Macbeth and her own imaginings of glory and power that it became a reality for her as soon as her husband painted for her a picture of it – her proleptic imagination.

Here I want to interrupt to give a brief clinical picture of one critical moment of a similar dynamic with a couple I have been seeing. She was struggling with her ambivalence, having left the marital home but also having initiated the couple therapy. He was mystified, unable to cope with her leaving and suspicious of her motives in suggesting therapy. I want to focus only on a critical moment well into a very intense process when she announced that she didn't want to be with him and wanted to bring the therapy to end in the next month or two. Taking her at her word, he was despairing, especially given that he thought they were making progress and had even managed some of their most satisfying intimate moments ever. He responded that it was just what he had suspected, that she intended this all along and had just been going through the motions. He then repeated his theory that there was something in her that made her want to spoil anything good between them, especially when it was going well, since she could never decide what she really wanted. Her reaction was to look at me upset, wanting to know why he was attacking her. For her it confirmed just why the marriage was impossible.

I have learned the hard way with this and other couples how difficult it is not to respond to such comments that are couched as decisions as if they were in fact decisions. Communication of emotional experience does not always come with the preface *I feel as if I*, for example, never want to see you again. In fact they seldom do, especially when they are strong feelings that have been suppressed, but it is extraordinarily challenging to remain in a state of mind to hear them as communications of emotional experience. At cooler moments the woman in this couple has often explained to me that she makes 'decisions', that she 'decides' she is going to do this or that, all the time, but only knows it is a real decision when she gets to the point of acting on it.

I try to talk with them about what she has said as an emotional communication of how she feels at this point about the therapy and the marriage. But in this atmosphere – and in this marriage – is there really any possibility for her to articulate such intolerable feelings – intolerable for him (because it feels like a decision to him) and intolerable for her (because it feels like a decision to her)? In a sense this can be seen as an example of the ambivalence the couple has been talking *about* so much. But of course it doesn't quite feel like that, for them or for me. Ambivalence appears most often, not as a thoughtful state of mind, but serially as singular states of mind. Especially where there is an intense internal conflict, each side of that conflict is experienced as absolutely and only what

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one is feeling when feeling it. An invitation, whether to partner or patient, to remember and consider returning to the opposing emotional state of mind can be experienced as an attempt to deny the reality of what is being felt. Who then holds on to the ambivalence?

There is one thing I want to say briefly about technique in this context, which is implied in the work with this couple. It has almost become a commonplace in our work with couples and with individuals that one of the key therapeutic goals lies in the withdrawal of projections and owning what is one's own. I would stress Bion's discovery in analysis of psychotic patients that projective identification is both an evacuation, a projection of unwanted or intolerable feelings *and* potentially a primitive form of communication (Bion, 1957, 1958). We are accustomed to the idea that one major therapeutic leverage in analysis lies in the analyst's capacity to take in those 'projections', not being overwhelmed or defined by them, in order to experience them as a mode of communication. It is the same in the dynamics of couple therapy and in the couple relationship. At some points in a relationship it is not the withdrawal of projections that is important, indeed they are misperceived as projections, or as only projections. To insist on their withdrawal would be to reject them as a communication. The critical capacity on the part of the analyst, and ultimately each partner in an intimate relationship, is to be able to experience them as communications. That, I suggest, is the fulcrum of the dynamic of intimacy.

With my couple we were skating close to the edge where emotional experience becomes action, where what is being imaged is taken *proleptically* as already a reality. How long can we survive at the edge? Long enough for the two of them to think through together such intense emotional experiences?

It is similar with the Macbeths, I am suggesting. The difference is the difference in the emotional experiences of each couple and the actions to which they might lead. For both couples the question is: do emotions, particularly intense emotions, sweep away the possibility of thinking? Can there be a shared Work Group thinking rather than a shared Basic Assumption flight to action? The Macbeths unthinkingly swept along toward assassination (Lady Macbeth is thinking, but only about *how* not whether to do the deed) – or my couple unthinkingly swept along to final separation – both have the quality of the actions of a Basic Assumption mob.

Of course my couple, or the Macbeths, might reasonably proceed to those actions thinkingly, but only if they can 'think feelingly'; think while in that emotional state. The difference would be that the choice then would not result in madness or a schizoid state, which in effect destroys the emotional conflict. The fact that in the end the Macbeths display both madness and schizoid meaninglessness suggests to me that it is action flowing from a shared proleptic imagination, action taken not so much on the basis of thought-through emotion, as action flowing-from and thus part-of a Basic Assumption state of mind.

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The couple and ambivalence: Macbeth's equivocation

With both the Macbeths and my couple there is evidence, I think, of a profound ambivalence hidden beneath the intensity of the passions of the moment. If the conflicting feelings could be really, that is experientially, acknowledged, it would disrupt the flight into a shared Basic Assumption mentality. The story of the Macbeths allows us a poignant insight into tragedy of an inability to recognize and acknowledge the more hidden emotions that can constitute an ambivalence felt to be intolerable. In this play we get a particularly vivid picture of Macbeth's ambivalence and his internal torment that goes with it. What follows is my evidence that Lady Macbeth has unthinkingly misread her husband; something she later begins to recognize but struggles against acknowledging because she senses it will drive her into madness. Of course it could also be said that Macbeth initially misleads his wife, only later recognizing his ambivalence and finding that he too is on the edge of madness.

[Scene: Macbeth 1.7.1 to 1.7.83 and/or the DVD Chapter 8, time: 25.36 to 32.44.]

Macbeth's state of mind clearly was affected by his wife's greeting that his letters have transported her beyond 'this ignorant present' – she feels now the future in the instant. She takes him as having decided, but weak, unable to take action. His perhaps surprising initial response is to say to her, 'We will speak further'. In this scene we hear him, on his own away from her, thinking about what he does feel.

This moment is the heart of the story for me. I have a special affection for it because this is the kind of thing I have seen beneath the mask of so many schizoid men in couple therapy – not only men of course, but I find men in particular susceptible to the myth of the emotionally literate woman who all-too-often uses a fluent psychological vocabulary to distract herself and her partner from her emotional experience. The man, as we may discover, is full, often over-full, of feeling usually seriously conflicting emotions – so full he cannot imagine experiencing them, indeed would think that would be mad.

In Macbeth's agonizing in his private moments, I suggest that we hear him thinking *realistically*. That is, he is imaginatively reality testing, thinking about how it will be if he, or they, follows the course that is beginning to feel inevitable. Imagining what might happen and what it might be like based on our experience is one of the most important ways we have of reality testing – sometimes the only way.

When Macbeth thinks about his relationship to Duncan – as his kinsman, as his host, as his subject – he discovers emotions in himself that make assassination feel impossible. In some of Shakespeare's most poignant lines, Macbeth imagines the murder of a good man:

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> his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind. (1.7.18–25)

This is the same man who later despairs:

> [Life] is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. (5.5.17–28)

How can this be, at one moment thinking feelingly and the next emotionally vacant? Some have said that Macbeth was an evil man; some that he was emotionally coerced into this by a wicked, evil woman. It is no doubt plausible to see these two people as the epitome of evil. But I want to suggest that we can see some all-too-common couple dynamics here. We saw her in that earlier scene where, caught up in her conviction that this was what her husband wanted, Lady Macbeth seeks to empty herself of her femininity and any of her own conflicting feelings. In their place she invites the spirits to 'unsex' her so that she can give her husband what she thinks he needs to achieve his aspirations – and hers. She is willing to sacrifice all for the passion of his ambition – of their ambition. But why, we might wonder, does it focus in such a disturbing image of a woman's attack on her maternal feelings?

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
> As you have done to this. (1.7.54–9)

Macbeth hears this not a rejection of herself as mother, but to the contrary as the possibility of the conception of the children, the *male* children, this couple do not have.

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> Bring forth men-children only!
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males. (1.7.73–5)

Greenblatt describes him as 'weirdly aroused by this fantasy' (Greenblatt 2004: 139). Is it weird or is this the form their shared proleptic imagination takes? Macbeth joins his wife in what looks like an unconscious phantasy in which the murder of Duncan, the king, is somehow equivalent to this couple bringing forth male children to secure the crown, their crown, in an unbroken line into the future. When she invites the spirits to 'unsex' her so that no feminine weakness can mate with her husband's anticipated hesitation, she becomes in his mind the mother of soldiers who, like their mother, would show no hesitation, weakness, or ambivalence. With this shared single-minded potency, she says, 'What cannot you and I perform . . .'! Can they bring forth male children?

Against this dream, this hallucination, there is the growing realization that it is Banquo's heirs, as the 'Weïrd Sisters' had said, who threaten to inherit the kingdom. Macbeth's nightmare-ish murderous attempts to prevent this prove futile. Lady Macbeth is convinced more and more that in this waking nightmare, all thinking about their emotional experience must go. She can see where it will lead: 'it will make us mad' (2.2.32–3)

In the last scene to which I want to call attention, the 'nightmare dinner party', we observe Lady Macbeth beginning to comprehend how desperate and disturbed her husband is. And she too has begun to realize their plight:

> Nought's had, all's spent
> Where our desire is got without content:
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
> Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (3.2.4–7)

Still she seems able to cope with disappointment and chides her husband again for too much thinking. After the murder of Duncan she had tried to calm her husband telling him to wash his hands: 'a little water clears us of this deed'! Now she says to him: 'Things without all remedy / Should be without regard: what's done is done' (3.2.11–12).

But Macbeth knows how close he is to madness:

> O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
> Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives. (3.2.36–7)

Is this when she begins to realize something of the reality of their shared unconscious phantasy – the imagining that the murder of Duncan was the bringing

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forth of male children? Is her husband being driven mad, not just because of their insecurity but also because of his realization that there will be no children, no heirs?

> Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
>
> And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
>
> . . .
>
> No son of mine succeeding. (3.2.4–7)

It is at this point that Macbeth takes action *independent of his wife* in an attempt to master the emotions that are tormenting him. She asks desperately: 'What's to be done?' He responds with apparent affection:

> Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck
>
> Till thou applaud the deed. (3.2.36–7)

What she will soon discover is that Macbeth has organized killers to murder Banquo and his son. When Banquo dies but his son escapes, Macbeth is distraught. His wife will make one last attempt to keep him from falling into madness at what I am calling a 'nightmare dinner party'.

The nightmare dinner party

How appropriate in a bizarre way that we see something close to the denouement of the couple nightmare in the scene we could describe as 'the nightmare dinner party'. Here we see portrayed this couple's final attempt to sustain some sense of normalcy. Why is it finally not sustainable? I suggest Macbeth's acting independently has broken the spell of their shared Basic Assumption state of mind. In her husband's hallucinations Lady Macbeth begins to see, but cannot yet bear fully to acknowledge to herself, that this means he, at some fundamental level, has been acting against some of his own important feelings. That is, there has been a profound internal conflict in Macbeth which means that her proleptic imagination, which became their shared imagination, only related to an aspect of what her husband felt. In some basic way she has misread him.

This dawning awareness drives her to the edge of madness because she, too, at some fundamental level is profoundly ambivalent about what has happened, an ambivalence of which Macbeth seems completely unaware. As she struggles to avoid acknowledgement of that reality at the end of the dinner party, we can almost hear her nursery sing-song voice in her sleepwalking madness: 'The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?' (5.1.40). The Thane of Fife, Macduff, also had children. Where are they now?

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And Macbeth? As his wife slips irretrievably toward her own hallucinations, in which she tries to recreate the single-mindedness of their shared dream of potency, he takes the opposite route, destroying his capacity for emotional awareness so there is nothing left to think about. In the end, as with his wife, action precedes, even precludes, thinking:

> Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
>
> Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd. (3.2.4–7)

If they were scanned, then it would be impossible to experience life as a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing, as if one felt nothing. This is the man who sees no way back to thinking what he is feeling, as he says to his wife at the end of this scene:

> I am in blood
>
> Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
>
> Returning were as tedious as go'er. (3.4.135–7)

And yet this is also the man who, when at the end of the play he encounters Macduff, cries:

> But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
>
> With blood of thine already. (5.8.5–6)

Again Macbeth is on the verge of thinking what he is feeling. But from the moment their shared imagination became a shared hallucinatory nightmare, everything Macbeth had done, and continues to do right up to, but, I think, not including that final duel with Macduff, is shaped by his being caught up in the couple nightmare. Macbeth's continuing desperate murders were a futile attempt to establish the certainty of their power, their potency – a potency they have unconsciously imagined as absolute, the power of the Basic Assumption mentality.

When this paper was presented I said nothing following the viewing of this scene, made almost overwhelmingly painful in the portrayal by Harriet Walter and Antony Sher. In this published version I have also decided not to include any final comment. Having invited you into this story, the disturbing reality is that, no matter how painful to watch, for the Macbeths there is nothing we can say or do that will illumine their way back from these destructive couple dynamics – not even as an uninvited guest at this nightmare dinner party.

[Scene: Macbeth 3.4.31 to 3.4.143 and/or the DVD Chapter 16, time: 1.11.38 to 1.20.29.]

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Notes

1. This is (potentially) a multi-media paper making use of Gregory Doran's DVD film of the recent RSC production of *Macbeth* with Antony Sher and Harriet Walter (Doran, 2001) . I am suggesting that along side the paper the reader views the appropriate sections of the DVD marked in the paper and/or reads the appropriate sections of the text of *Macbeth* (Muir, 1951). I am aware that it is unusual to link a paper discussing a play so closely with a particular production of that play. However, although I developed the structure of my analysis of the couple dynamics discussed in the paper before I saw this RSC film version, the elaboration of my interpretation has become intertwined with that of the film. I think this film version offers the viewer an experience of the emotional interplay between the Macbeths that goes beyond what has previously been available and even beyond what was possible in the stage version on which this film is based. In the future anyone interested in these emotional dynamics in *Macbeth* will have to take account of the portrayal in this film which in my view sets a new standard in the understanding of these troubled characters.
2. Rather than giving an extensive rationale for my approach to literary works and to characters in them, I am here simply offering this study of the Macbeths as an example of my approach. This is clearly not a literary critical study, nor an attempt to offer a psychoanalytical perspective on the play. I take these characters as people similar to the patients in my consulting room. My aim is to be as respectful of the former as I am of the latter, attending to what I hear and see as carefully as I can. A more complete account will be found in a book I am preparing which includes reflections on *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet* under the provisional title of *Imagination, Shakespeare, and Psychoanalysis.*

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Nelson Mandela, the last hero: a psychoanalytic perspective

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ABSTRACT

Nelson Mandela's capacity to bring about fundamental and creative change in apartheid South Africa was chosen as an appropriate topic for the conference on 'Diversity'. This paper is an attempt to understand this capacity from a psychoanalytic perspective. Based on the reading of texts, it is proposed that while Mandela is a gifted man, endowed with an excellent intellect, physical strength and good looks, it was his early beginnings that enabled him to lead a creative life. The hardships of his life and his responses to these form the basis for discussion in this paper. Unlike those often seen in psychoanalytic practice, his was not a life of 'acting-out' and revenge, but more of reflection and struggle, which is the aim of psychoanalytic work. Copyright © 2006 BAP. *Published by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words creativity, diversity, internal struggle, Mandela, political struggle

Introduction

When I was invited to present a paper at the conference on diversity, it was Nelson Mandela who immediately came to mind. There can be few in the world that do not know that through his thoughts, words and actions, the new South Africa was created. This process moved from one of institutionalized hatred, alienation and persecution of black people – 'apartheid' – to one in which these institutional barriers were dismantled, so that the ideas of equality between races could be realized.

While Mandela is without doubt an iconic figure, universally loved and admired, his achievements, for me, are embedded in his mantra 'The Struggle is my Life'. He was referring, of course, to the political struggle but at a psychoana-

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lytic level, there was always the bedrock of the personal struggle. Working analytically, it is a commonplace that psychopathology is closely linked to the failure to struggle, to the longing for solutions, for answers, 'now'. Therapy, slowly and painstakingly via a range of techniques and understandings, always moves towards the gradual giving up of those defences which bypass the struggle.

Growing up in the 1940s and 50s in apartheid South Africa, there were many occasions when I felt pain and shame at the ever-present humiliation of black people. What stands out in my mind is the experience with our maid whom I loved and I felt loved me though we could not really know one another. Our warm relationship one day turned and she treated me coldly. I was afraid I had carelessly hurt her, and I had. When I asked her why, she told me that I had said to her 'Do you mind ironing my dress'. 'Don't ever say "do you mind" to me' she told me. In that small exchange were the rules of apartheid. White people should not have a mind themselves that could encompass the mind and feelings of a black person.

Mandela lived a life with a growing capacity to recognize that others, even those who demeaned and imprisoned him, have minds and feelings. Importantly, he was able to encompass the quality and the cultural context of the minds and feelings of others. It seems to me that it was this capacity that enabled him to embrace a diverse group of people. In this paper I will attempt to explore from a psychoanalytic perspective some of those aspects of his development which may have contributed to this remarkable quality. I will suggest that Mandela lived a creative life which culminated in a truly creative act: to transform a society suffused with institutionalized divisions based on the denigration of non-whites, into one in which the divisions were dissolved to release the potential for ordinary human exchange between races.

I have had concerns about the enormity of the task I had given myself. The Mandela story is a very long one, now spanning 87 years. I will not be addressing the social aspects in a major way though I do not want to exclude the role of the social and external political changes that facilitated the changeover to the new South Africa. My question is much more how, given these important factors, Mandela accomplished this.

This is not in anyway an attempt to psychoanalyze Nelson Mandela and in this paper I have had to rely on texts, his and those of others, for my understandings. It is more an attempt to bring some psychoanalytic understandings to what I have read. The reading of texts for psychoanalytic interpretation is a topic in itself (Edel, 1987; Steiner, 1995; Shengold 2000). There is always a caution given by those who analyse texts in this way: the necessity of taking into account one's own transference to the subject. My transference, in so far as I can be aware of it, is to my own interpretation of him as a hero. My countertransference is the sense of freedom I have experienced when reading the texts.

Mandela evoked this sense of freedom in me and I can only assume, given his achievement, that I am not alone in this.

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What of the hero?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of 'hero' in some ways describes Mandela well: 'A man of superhuman strength, courage or ability, favoured by the gods, a demi-god'. Yet Mandela, time and again, referred to himself as an ordinary man, disillusioning those who might wish to see him as a demi-god. He is not the hero described by Freud (1920). The hero myth, says Freud, is the step by which the individual emerges from group psychology. He describes how this kind of hero frees himself in his imagination from the group but finds his way back to it. He does this by telling the group about his heroic deeds which he has invented. The hero claims to have acted alone in accomplishing the deed, which only the horde as a whole would have attempted: 'The lie of the heroic myth culminates in the deification of the hero' (1920: 137).

We will see how Mandela was always part of a group, how he was able to form relationships with others who shared his vision of a non-racial community in South Africa. He could both learn from them and influence them. He understood that both the oppressor and oppressed must be liberated because 'all had been robbed of humanity.' He did not separate himself either in his speeches or in his actions from his 'people', using 'I' not 'we' when he spoke of weakness, and 'we' not 'I' when speaking of strengths. Not only did they share a common cause but he was also one of them. 'I am an ordinary person. I have made serious mistakes. I have serious weaknesses' (Mandela, 1994: 617).

He was a leader with a following that is perhaps unprecedented. Yet he was not the charismatic leader Averbach describes. This was someone who, according to Averbach, was traumatized in early childhood, but creates a semi-mythic persona by a character split, and by the distortion of early traumatic experiences and relationships, incorporates this persona into a wider social or political entity. Averbach points out how prior to the crises which raise them to power, charismatics are often seen as ineffectual, banal and unimpressive and are able in these crises to reinvent themselves.

> . . . the charismatic reaches out to abstract objects such as the Public, Society, Nation or Universe. By becoming a public being, the charismatic creates a prosthetic relationship through which he aims to find the resolution, the love and wholeness that were lost, attenuated or never had in private life. (1995: 847)

Though there were difficult childhood experiences, Mandela did not seem to experience these as traumatic, nor were his relationships to his cause or the people around him prosthetic. So we return to the hero, a different kind of hero. In his paper entitled 'Some notes on the heroic self', Steiner, quoting Lagache, suggests that the heroic aspects of the self, or the heroic self and its heroic projections, introjections and identifications, are part of normal development. He contrasts this with the megalomanic, psychopathic and pathological aspects of the ideal ego, which if not properly integrated with the ego ideal and super ego,

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cause an identification with heroes that is distorted, spurious or even hallucinatory. Steiner goes beyond the idea that heroic components are present in us all and part of normal development to link them with creativity. These, he says, are the necessary, but not sufficient conditions of creativity itself. The heroic self frequently has to overcome great difficulties and anxieties in order to survive and this in itself adds to the quality of its nature, to its need and capacity to identify constructively, to compete with and even to outshine its heroic parents. He adds:

> And there is no doubt that this need to identify with another 'hero' may also imply the need to find someone who was or is heroic because he or she also had to overcome great personal difficulties. (Steiner 1999: 687)

Mandela himself said 'I know that our society had produced black heroes and this filled me with pride. I did not know how to channel it. But I carried this raw material with me when I went to college'. These ideas of creativity and personal difficulties are implicit in the theme that was so central to Mandela, 'the struggle is my life'. I would add one further idea that of healthy narcissism.

The notion of 'struggle'

The point was made in the introduction, that failure to struggle' is one of the hallmarks of psychopathology, most evident in the perversions, which Chasseguet-Smirgel (1987) describes as a lack of psychic elaboration. This is also characteristic of extremist politicians and movements. Bollas, like Steiner and Averbach, describes them as indicating:

> . . . a collective certainty that their revolutionary ideology will effect a total environment transformation that will deliver everyone from the gamut of basic faults: personal, familial, social and moral. Again it is not the revolutionary's desire for change, or the extremist's longing for change, but his certainty that the object (in this case the revolutionary ideology) that will bring about change that is striking in the observer. (1987: 27–8)

Such a view suggests that the extremist attracts his followers with the lure that life will be transformed, with no hint of the huge personal struggles entailed.

The destructiveness of these ideologies is sadly, well known to us all today. As long ago as 1915, obviously during the First World War, Freud in his paper 'Thoughts for the times on war and death' despaired of 'the great world-dominating nations of white race on whom the leadership of the human species has fallen' (1915: 77). Their creative powers had, on the other hand, led not only to great technical advances but also to artistic and scientific standards of civilization. Why, he asks, could they not find another way of settling their misunderstandings and conflicts of interests? Fifteen years later in 'Civilization and its discontents', he pursued this theme, struggling with the commandment 'Love

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they neighbour as thyself'. There was no doubt that it was, and remains difficult, if not impossible, to love one's neighbour.

> . . . their neighbour is . . . not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions to humiliate him, to cause him pain to torture and kill him . . . who in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? (Freud, 1930: 143)

Freud also disputes the second part of the assertion, 'as thyself'.

> The Commandment 'Love they Neighbour as Thyself', is the strongest defence against human aggressiveness and an excellent example of the unpsychological proceedings of the cultural super-ego. The commandment is impossible to fulfil. (p. 143)

Those to whom he refers do not in all probability love themselves. They are, as Averbach suggests, those who lost or never had the love and wholeness in private life. Mandela, in contrast, seemed to have had both and there is evidence in his words and actions of something one might call healthy narcissism. This is a complex area, deserving study in its own right. It is also an area that has received less attention in the literature than psychopathology:

> Experience has demonstrated, that in the study of the human mind, it is more difficult to detect and study directly what is normal, and therefore less evident, than to study the evidence of psychopathology and to move from this to the norm. (Gaddini, 1992: 28)

Ogden (2002) offers a way of considering what he calls a 'narcissistic object tie'. This is one in which the object is invested with emotional energy that was originally directed at oneself and is a shift from narcissistic identification in terms of the degree of recognition of, and emotional investment in, the otherness of the object. This he says is a more mature form of object love. Similarly, Loewald writing about internalization, refers to a transformation of object cathexis into narcissistic cathexis. Both he (1980) and Ogden draw attention to the potential enrichment of this process. 'In internalization . . . the ego opens itself up, loosens its current organization to allow for its own further growth' (Loewald, 1980: 75).

They both link this to creative processes. Ogden quoting Loewald writes of the 'enlivening fire' and indicates that through the connection between the world of external objects and the unconscious internal object world, there is a possibility of generative 'conversations' between unconscious and preconscious aspects of oneself. The creativity that will be discussed in this paper is not that of great artists, musicians, and writers. It is the creative living implied by Ogden and Loewald and most clearly described by Winnicott as 'being alive', the approach of the individual to external reality. Both authors relate this to the

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process of mourning. There is also agreement that the potential for these developments are laid down in the very early life of the infant.

> This variable (creativity) in human beings is directly related to the quality and quantity of environmental provision at the beginning or in the early phases of each baby's living experience. (Winnicott, 1982: 83)

Bowlby from a slightly different perspective says something similar:

> Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler or a school child but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on into old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws his strength and enjoyment of life and, through what he contributes, he gives strength and enjoyment to others. (1991: 442)

I will try to show that Mandela's early life provided him with such intimate attachments and all their consequences; that there was suffering and loss; and that he led a creative life culminating in a great creative act. While saying earlier that psychoanalytic theory has paid less attention to maturity and normality, one writer, Bollas, has elaborated these ideas, which will be the basis for the psychoanalytic understanding of Mandela's life and work.

Of course, Mandela is a world icon and there were significant figures in his life that were heroes for him. The political struggle was the bringing together of all races in South Africa, so that they could live in a society based not on denigration, inequality and humiliation. The ongoing recognition of the immense difficulty in achieving his vision of the world was his personal struggle. It was Mandela's genius to embrace the whole of South African society and the thread of diversity runs through the accounts of Mandela's capacity to achieve a state of mind where he could relate to others in a way that ran completely counter to the institutionalized racism that was South Africa. As we know, it permeated every bus and bench, kitchen and sitting room, workplace, garden and street and every single relationship between one human being and another. Although there were times when there was supreme effort involved, Mandela seemed to walk like a ghost through the high walls of racial separation.

Mandela's early life

Bowlby's comments are borne out by Mandela's words, 'My roots were my destiny'. He drew his strength and enjoyment from his early life and gave both to others. Rolihlahla Mandela was born in 1918 in a village in a most beautiful part of South Africa, the Transkei, an area which produced more black leaders than any other region of South Africa and who were brought up with this history. He carried the beauty of this place and all its associations with him throughout his life, while not, according to Sampson, romanticizing his roots. His father, a

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hereditary chief, was a strict and stubborn man and Mandela considered that he had inherited his qualities. Importantly according to Sampson, his father had 'no sense of inferiority towards whites' (2000: 4). He had four wives who got on well with each other. Mandela was very close to his mother but would often stay with the other wives and they did not regard him as a stepson: 'His happy experience as a son loved by four mothers made his childhood very secure' (Sampson, 2000: 5–6.)

When his father was dispossessed, they moved to a nearby village where Mandela would spend the next few years. With cousins and friends and sharing of food and 'simple pleasures', Mandela never felt alone. With his early history it is not surprising that Sampson remarks that 'the security and simplicity of his rural upbringing played a crucial part in forming his political confidence' (p. 6).

There were also important transgenerational factors. His father was the grandson of the great King of the Tembu people, a royal family that commanded loyalty and respect from their people. His father, according to Sampson, was a kind of prime minister, and as a boy Mandela was respected in his community. At the age of 7 he was given the name of Nelson. It was apparently quite usual for mission-educated children of Mandela's generation to be named after British imperial heroes and heroines.

He felt he was influenced by the structure and organization of early African societies in the evolution of his political outlook. He described a classless society without exploitation, and the democratic principles by which it was governed.

> . . . such a society . . . contained the seeds of revolutionary democracy in which none will be held in slavery or servitude, and in which poverty, want and insecurity shall be no more. (Mandela, 2002: 127/9)

But Mandela also grew up with the African notion of brotherhood, of 'ubuntu', 'a person is a person because of other people'. Archbishop Tutu describes it as gentleness, compassion, hospitality, openness to others, vulnerability, being available to others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life (Sampson, 2000: 10). Mandela was to say fifty years later when he was President 'I am what am, both as a result of people who respected and helped me and of those who did not respect me and treated me badly' (p. 35)

So, without the language of psychoanalysis, the idea of object relations was embedded in the ethos of the community in which Mandela grew up. While these early times provided the bedrock for his future, there were other experiences that might be seen as contributing to the ethos of struggle.

His father died of lung disease when Nelson was 9 and he was left in the care of his father's friend, the Regent of the Tembu people. We may wonder how Mandela dealt with this early loss, living as one of the family in this household, with a new father figure. He was surrounded by loving people, with the pleasures of riding and dancing. Mandela observed the Regent, who would listen for hours

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impassively and silently to the complaints of tribesman, landowners or labourers, until finally at sunset he tried to produce a consensus from the contrasting views. Mandela was profoundly influenced by this capacity to keep together all shades of opinion. While Mandela saw himself as a member of the royal family he did not quite belong and Sampson suggests that this may have spurred his ambition. It may be that this comment can be related to the fact that Mandela was more serious and hardworking than the other boys.

Mandela's powerful intellect, which was to serve him well, was honed by his education in a Mission school. He was also a handsome man and it was all his gifts, his natural endowment and his early experience that he brought to his life task, 'the struggle'. But he was also aggressive and was also known for being stubborn. These qualities were, it seems, vital.

The description of Mandela's early life indicates that he did have the early beginnings that could lead to what Bollas calls 'a belief in a golden era':

> a time when all was well . . . innocence [that] forms the basis for an illusion of absolute safety that is essential to life, even if we know it is a psychically artistic device. (1995: 200)

In 1986, Mandela wrote of his golden era, in a letter to a friend:

> The country boy in me refuses to die, despite so many years of exposure to urban life. The open veld, a bush, blade of grass and animal life make it a real joy to be alive'. (Sampson 2000: 329)

> I cannot pinpoint a moment when I became politicized, when I knew that I would spend my life in the liberation struggle. I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, and a thousand indignities produced in me an anger, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. (Mandela, 1994: 35)

No epiphany but a long struggle, always fortified by those memories of his country upbringing, as Sampson says.

A creative life

The slights and indignities were only an aspect of the hardships Mandela had to face, as we know. Although I will discuss in more detail the question of his anger and aggression one can conceive in the light of 'slights and indignities', of a different scenario, a cycle of hatred and revenge against the perpetrators. This is described by Bollas as one whose life is taken over by an illness, who has a sense of living within something that determines him, which is his fate.

> Thus he has a separate sense, unconsciously determined and deriving not from the creative work of the unconscious but from the repetition of pathology. (Bollas 1995: 181)

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Such an individual, according to Bollas, lives with a sense that something has displaced his true self, an uncreative life. However, it was Mandela's gift that there was not repetition but an evolution and elaboration of his way of being. For example, there was a reworking of humiliations, being called a 'kaffir', the most derogatory word for a black person. After four years of extreme poverty in Johannesburg, living in crowded townships and working in a law office, having studied and married, he found a different way. When he had become a lawyer, he walked through a 'whites only' entrance to a courtroom and was told by a young white clerk with a dark complexion 'This is for whites only'. Mandela replied 'Then what are you doing here?' In this short exchange Mandela, while putting himself on equal terms with the clerk, at the same time conveyed through the acuity of his words that he was, in the professional hierarchy, his superior. Interestingly, the projection by this young white clerk of, perhaps, his own sense of inferiority (for reasons we can speculate about, not least that he was in the presence of this tall, handsome lawyer) found no place or hook in Mandela's psyche. What it seems to reveal is what Bollas calls the urge to articulate the true self:

> The true self is the idiom of personality and, therefore, the origin of the ego. A part of the ego processes the demands of environmental reality, and its structure changes according to the nature of the interaction with the object world. (1989: 112–13)

Using different language, Mandela says something that resonates with this idea. In 1953, having had experiences which Sampson, euphemistically, calls 'harsh', he describes having felt freed from any lingering doubt or inferiority. He could walk upright like a man, and look everyone in the eye with the dignity that comes from not having succumbed to oppression and fear. He reworked his experience leading not to humiliation but self respect, the healthy narcissism described earlier. Perhaps through this he could, therefore, respect others. On occasion he used humour, even during the dark hours of the Rivonia Trial when the death sentence hung over him.

But there had been other experiences of intimidation. His previous conviction and sentence in the Treason Trial led to his spending a couple of weeks on Robben Island. Sampson tells how Mandela, although scared, stood up to an intimidating warder and as a consequence the prison conditions improved. Mandela did not react to this with triumph that he had defeated his persecutor, but with the understanding that the behaviour of the warders was determined by the prisoners' attitude towards them. He realized that warders could vary as much as any other human beings.

> Once you have rid yourself of the fear of the oppressor and his prisons, his police, his army, there is nothing they can do. You are liberated . . . You don't want to be assaulted, you don't want to be hurt, and you feel the pain and humiliation. But nevertheless you feel that this is the price you have to pay in order to assert your views, your ideas. (Sampson 2000: 217)

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Reaching this emotional state seems to have been the result of considerable internal work and work that was done at some cost to himself. Importantly, he could reach out to others, including oppressors, as human beings.

Diversity

'I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free', said Mandela (1994: 202) going on to say how he began later to realize that his boyhood freedom was an illusion, that he discovered as a young man that his freedom had been taken from him and not only from him but 'everyone who looked like I did'. In an external sense, it goes without saying, that there was no freedom in apartheid South Africa for people who looked like he did. It conveys the superficiality of the difference, appearance, which was the source of the gravest of restrictions of freedom. Yet, Mandela revealed a profound capacity for internal freedom. A thread runs through his life of a capacity to achieve a state of mind where he could relate to others in a way that ran completely counter to the institutionalized racism that was South Africa. In the course of his political life Mandela was able to encompass relationships at every level in this highly structured society in which division and alienation were enshrined in law and permeated every fibre of South Africa's fabric.

He began his political life as a black nationalist, a period which Sampson describes as being marked by a pride in his people and their history and his determination to regain their rights. According to Sampson, he sought allies wherever he could find them: white liberals, Indian Ghandi-ists and Christian priests. Some of his most 'effective and committed friends' were communists and it was the communist party that was uniquely multi-racial,

> prepared to treat Africans as human beings and their equals; who were prepared to eat with us, talk with us, live with us and work with us. (Sampson, 2000: 41)

> It was they who prepared the Freedom Charter that was against narrow Nationalism, Afrikaner or African. It committed the ANC to discarding racialism, to widening the basis of the struggle, and was to become its key manifesto for the next forty years. (p. 87)

That Mandela sought allies from such a wide spectrum of people is in itself interesting but that he forged such enduring, rich and supportive relationships with people of remarkable calibre, both black and white, says a great deal about him. Bollas's notion of a 'destiny drive', that is, a sense of direction built into existence in which living is from the true self, goes some way to understanding this capacity of Mandela's:

In human relations, individuals regularly project parts of themselves into their others, shaping their relational world according to the idiom of their internal

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world, creating a village of friends who constitute a secret culture of the subject's desire. (Bollas,1993: 50)

While one might say that Mandela's vision was of a non-racial South Africa, his destiny drive was to live a life of equality, both treating others and being treated as an equal. In the end, he did not create a village, but a world of friends, driven by a quest to find the humanity in others, including those who classified and looked down on him. From my reading, it would seem he was let down by people and there were betrayals, but he did not, in his accounts, dwell on them. While one might use Bollas's idea that he projected into them his own idiom potential, the elaboration of idiom also speaks of a capacity to learn. He learned from many, especially his great friend Walter Sisulu who valued the good in others, and up to a point, he was always able to listen. 'Few things are more exciting to me than to listen to a man's background, the factors that influence his thoughts and actions, the unknown battles he has fought and won' (Sampson 2000: 230).

And what of those who did not share his views? I have already spoken about his growing understanding of the white Afrikaans prison warders on Robben Island. He recognized that they were prisoners too. He had a growing interest in Afrikaners, learning their language and studying their history. When he was living on the mainland, after leaving Robben Island, he began meeting Afrikaans members of the government, and found them

> . . . sophisticated and more open than nearly all of their brethren. But they were victims of so much propaganda that it was necessary to straighten them out about certain facts. (Mandela, 1994: 169)

Mandela's use of language reveals this capacity for an openness to the other, the opportunity to elaborate, not foreclose. 'Brethren' is a kind word. He did not condemn them for their views; he understood that they themselves had been 'abused' by the propaganda.

He brought the same willingness to listen and understand to groups of black people whose views he felt were unhelpful. In 1976, after violence and rioting in South Africa, a new generation of prisoners arrived on the Island and he was able to persuade them that their black nationalism was misguided. He could, though, recognize the good in them, admiring their militant spirit. But it seems that by projecting into them his own idiom, he was able to use these young men as actual objects for passionate expression of himself (Bollas, 1989: 35).

The basic humanity that pervades Mandela's relationships, beyond the political arena, conveys the sense of his being able to encompass the diversity of the human race. As Bollas says:

> Persons rich in self-experiencing, who take pleasure in the dialectics of the human paradox, seek objects with evocative integrity that challenge and stretch the self. (1993: 31)

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Aggression

In his early days as a lawyer and revolutionary he was convinced that an armed struggle would be absolutely necessary. Although the ANC adopted a policy of non-violence, Mandela became impatient with this policy:

> If the government reaction is to crush by naked force our non-violent struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a non-violent policy. It was a grave declaration and I knew it. (Mandela 1994: 87)

> The rationale for violence was that the South African government set the scene for violence by relying exclusively on violence to answer our people and these demands. (Mandela, 2002: 134)

Over the years he became more thoughtful, preferring sabotage because it did not involve loss of life and offered the best hope for future race relations with bitterness kept to a minimum. In analytic terms, certainly those of Winnicott and Bowlby, aggression is about survival, related and necessary. Violence and aggression were channelled with creativity and purpose, linked with a fundamental decency of character, that is, self respect and respect for others.

Bollas (1989) comments that one can fulfil one's destiny if one is fortunate, if one is determined, if one is aggressive enough. That Mandela was angry is clear. What he seemed able to do, often in consultation with his colleagues, was to transform his earlier hotheadedness into an effective political tool having realized in retrospect that he had been thinking like a 'hot-headed revolutionary'. He continued to do this to the end.

> It was the reality and threat of the armed struggle that had brought the government to the verge of negotiation . . . when the state stopped inflicting violence on the ANC, the ANC would reciprocate with peace. I know people expected me to harbour anger towards whites. But I had none. (Mandela,1994: 181)

Mandela's stubbornness, which Sampson (2000: 583) regarded as a downside to his persistence, may have been part of his aggression and as essential for the achievement of the creation of a multi-racial society, as his other qualities. Somewhere within him was always the sense of freedom to think and act in ways that were consistent with the sense of destiny

> '. . . moving in a personality progression that gives him a sense of steering his own course'. (Bollas 1989: 41)

> To allow my activities to be circumscribed by my opponent was a form of defeat, and I resolved not to become my own jailer. (Mandela 1994: 64)

It is well known that Mandela took risks at every level of his life experience. He lived a dangerous life before he was imprisoned, living underground, training

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abroad in guerrilla warfare. When, finally, in 1964 he was captured and put on trial with the death sentence a real possibility, he said

> During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Sampson:193)

With such thoughts Mandela, saved from the hangman's noose, went to prison for 27 years.

Prison and aloneness

Mandela spent most of his 27 years in prison, on Robben Island, a stark place originally built as a leper colony. It was staffed by white Afrikaans warders, who were as much prisoners as were the men who were confined. As one prisoner commented, only once in ten years did they hear a child's voice. Yet it seems Mandela was sustained by the experience of his past and vision of the future and lived a creative life on this island.

One of the first things he did when he arrived was to make a calendar. A sense of time, he understood, was vital in order not to lose one's grip or even one's sanity. He saw the challenge for every prisoner, particularly political prisoners, to survive prison intact, to emerge undiminished, to conserve one's beliefs. What we know, and what he could not have known then, was that he achieved all this and more. The political prisoners were kept together, and comradeship reinforced their determination. They all studied and the Island was called a university where they could all develop intellectually and emotionally. This is in striking contrast to the views of group psychology described by Freud (1920) who suggested that the intellectual capacity of a group is always far below that of an individual. It seems that this terrible turn of events in his life was taken as an opportunity:

> . . . all his battlefields would now contract into a tiny stage, which would provide a much more intimate trial of character. (Sampson, 2000: 199)

> This tiny stage, was one in which Mandela could see beyond the brutalities to the insecurities and psychological deformities of the warders and he was already seeing the prison as a microcosm of a future South Africa, where reconciliation would be essential to survival. (p. 225)

> At an age when most politicians tend to forget their earlier idealism in the pursuit of power, Mandela was compelled to think more deeply about his principles and ideas . . . he was able as he put it, to stand back from himself, to see himself as others saw him. He learnt to control his temper and strong will, to empathize and persuade. (p. 203)

And so it was that through these 27 years, the personal struggle continued.

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To achieve his vision, there must also have been an essential ruthlessness which is, according to Bollas, part of a destiny drive.

> To live a life, to come alive, a person must be able to use objects in a way that assumes such objects survive hate and do not require undue reparative work. (1989: 26)

A ruthless act may carry a great risk, the very risk from which the false self protects itself, the pain of loss and loneliness. Mandela took many risks and while it may be that he had to be ruthless with others there is little doubt that he had also to be ruthless with himself. Sampson describes Mandela several times as a loner and aloof. Mandela himself says he had at times to wear a mask, underlining the personal aspect of his mantra, 'the struggle is my life'. He had to take the risk that, because of the life choice he had made, those he had left to fend for themselves would survive. There is the sense that with his strong ego he was able to go through these experiences, not in a self-sufficient way but as profound emotional experiences, in all their complexity and over time, but the price was high. There was the pain of feeling that he had sacrificed his family to his politics and this was revived when he heard of the death of his mother:

> In South Africa, it is hard for a man to ignore the needs of the people, even at the expense of his own family. I had made my choice, and in the end, she had supported it. But that did not lessen the sadness I felt at not being able to make her life more comfortable, or the pain of not being able to lay her to rest. (Mandela, 1994: 138)

He agonized over his wife Winnie's imprisonment. 'Nothing tested my equilibrium as much as the time that Winnie was in solitary confinement' (p. 138). When his son was killed in a car crash and his great friend Walter Sisulu came to comfort him in his cell, he wrote:

> he said nothing, but only held my hand. I do not know how long he remained with me. There is nothing that one man can say to another at such a time. (p. 138)

One can only assume that these excruciatingly painful events were experiences that were mourned and internalized, and it was through this process that Mandela could continue to live a creative life.

The island perhaps can be seen as a metaphor for the essential human condition, one of aloneness. Bollas views this as the incommunicado element to each person, an essential aloneness and a positive and necessary feature of ego health. In Mandela's accounts of life on that island, there are descriptions of moments which reflect this essential aloneness not only in moments of profound pain and those of great joy or what Bollas calls 'jouissance'. He talks of objects which are used to 'meet and express the self we are.' The choice of such objects is an unconscious one and is a route to forms of self-experience by which the individual may experience his own idiom.

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Mandela, in contrast to those described as living with a repetition of pathology, had a rich life on the island, developing his ideas through his discussions with his colleagues, studying and learning about Afrikaners and their history. But alongside this intellectual development was his emotional development, no more clearly expressed than in his letter to his wife, Winnie who had been sentenced to six month's imprisonment.

> You may find that the cell is an ideal place to learn how to know yourself, to search realistically and regularly the processes of your own mind and feelings. In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors . . . but internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being: honesty, sincerity, humility, purity, generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve your fellow men – qualities within the reach of every soul – are the foundation of one's spiritual life . . . at least if for nothing else, the cell gives you the opportunity to look daily into your entire conduct to overcome the bad and develop whatever is good in you . . . Never forget that a saint is a sinner who keeps trying. (Mandela 1994: 253)

There was within him this jouissance and he did what Voltaire recommended in *Candide*. He cultivated his garden, a real garden, both on Robben Island and at Pollsmoor prison on the mainland. Gardening was also metaphor for the political aspects of his life.

> A leader must also tend his garden: he, too, sows, seeks, and then watches, cultivates and harvests the result. Like the gardener, a leader must take responsibility for what he cultivates. He must mind his work, try to repel enemies, preserve what can be preserved and eliminate what cannot succeed. (p. 150)

And there was his own internal garden that he cultivated with his early life, the memories of those times, of the natural beauty of the country and the landscape always present.

> Some mornings I walked out into the courtyard and every living thing there, the seagulls and wagtails, the small trees, and even the stray blades of grass seemed to smile and shine in the sun. It was at such times, when I perceived the beauty of even this small, closed in corner of the world that I knew that some day my people and I would be free. (p. 54)

And so it was.

Conclusion

I have tried to convey the view in this paper that achieving his vision was a reflection of Mandela's creativity. I have attempted to show that his early years contributed to capacities which fostered a creative life and that the culmination of his life has been one of the great creative acts. Could it be called great art as described by Edward Hopper, the celebrated American artist?

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> . . . the outward expression of an inner life in the artist, and this inner life will result in his personal vision of the world . . . The inner life of a human being is a vast and varied realm. (1953: 8)

The extraordinary and moving aspect of this creative act is that the materials Mandela used were his own gifts, his own struggle, himself. As with all great art, he was able to reach a universal core, perhaps, in the whole of humanity.

Note

This paper is a revised version of the paper presented at the Second British Association of Psychotherapists Residential Conference on 'Diversity' in March 2005.

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CLINICAL COMMENTARIES
Clinical material: Sam

Sam is Irish, in his mid-30s, and presented for help with a feeling that his life was stuck and he felt overwhelmed by feelings of frustration and despair. There was also a marked tendency to withdraw from reality into an encapsulated world of dope, alcohol, pornography, and grandiose fantasies. Chronic underachievement was also a feature. His appearance was of a scruffy, unkempt adolescent. The material presented is four years into a three times a week psychotherapy. At this time he was working in a junior position in a hostel for the mentally ill, and was in a relationship of a 'stably-unstable' quality with a woman, A. Six months prior, the couple had suffered a miscarriage of their first pregnancy. The session is the first after a summer break.

He was on time, and when I collected him from the waiting room I noticed a slight smile, which I thought might indicate that he was pleased to see me (usually he averts his eyes when I collect him before the session). He began speaking after only a minute or two of silence.

P: It's a blessing and a curse being back. A blessing, because it's been quite difficult over the past four weeks, a struggle to get through. We know why it's a curse.

T: What do we know?

P: Because there's no progress . . . and I'm just staring at my dysfunctional self here, which I hate. [He was silent for a few minutes] Some things have gone quite well. I've been able to complete an application for a new job as a service manager on the weekend, and it's quite a good application too. Work has been OK. But it's been difficult with A and me . . . she just nags at me constantly, it drives me crazy – telling me off for leaving the milk on the table, not closing the gate, not being confident enough, not being English and working-class like her, on and on and on. I just feel like walking out on her. Last weekend I had three days off and I wanted to go to Scotland, somewhere calm and quiet, but she didn't want to, so we had 3 days in London. We went out one night with a friend of hers, which went OK, but I got drunk and on the tube home I just withdrew from her, and when we got home she got stuck into me, so I packed my bags and went and slept in the car . . . until it got too cold. Just feel very unhappy. [His despair and isolation was vividly conveyed in the way he spoke] I know it all goes back to the miscarriage . . . just don't know if A and I can stay together. When she attacks me, I feel in a rage. Just feel like walking out on her.

T: As I did to you.

P: Yes you did [this struck me as an unusually plain and direct response for Sam]

T: As I packed my bags and walked out on you for a month, at a very difficult time.

P: Yes you did, and yes it was [again, unusually direct]. And now you're thinking, look at the arrogant little fuck, messed me around so much by coming late and missing sessions, and now he's come crawling back, the little fuck-up, because he can't do without me [there was a note of excitement in his voice].

T: The picture in your mind is of a me sneering at you, despising you in a cruel and superior way for needing me and maybe being pleased I'm back here for you [as I said this, it felt somewhat predictable].

P: [he was silent for a few minutes] I told A on the weekend about my addiction to pornography . . . she was shocked, but said she was pleased I'd told her. I didn't tell her everything . . . not about keeping porn at home and going to Soho . . . On the weekend, we spent a nice evening together, then I noticed *Leaving Las Vegas* was on TV . . . of course I had to watch it, I wanted the degradation. She was angry with me for wanting to watch it, but I felt in the muck, and I wanted to get even muckier. I felt like those football thugs who chant 'no one likes us and we don't care'.

T: [I was thinking about what he was saying, and about my associations to this film, which I hadn't seen, but knew to about an alcoholic man who goes to Las Vegas to wilfully drink himself to death. I was also conscious of the note of excitement and triumph in his voice again, and contrasting this, which sounded somewhat false, with the previous quality of directness and emotional clarity, which had struck me, and which I felt it important to make some acknowledgement of.] It strikes me that it is so much easier for you to talk about the you who wants to wallow in the muck and degradation than the you, who I can also hear, who actually wants to *leave* Las Vegas, to leave behind the excitement and to come clean, as you do with A about your use of pornography, and as you do with me which I can hear in a way of talking to me today which seems unusually clear and straightforward.

P: [He was silent for about 10 minutes, the atmosphere in the room was calmer and more settled.] I told my boss that I was applying for a Service Managers post, he seemed pleased. He gave me a good appraisal – he said I had the respect of the residents. I felt very surprised – he didn't have to say that. I do feel more confident at work. But not at home. I said some really nasty things to A when we had a big row last week. I wanted to blame her for the miscarriage, I wanted to say, at least I didn't kill our baby, at least I wanted it. I didn't say that – fortunately. But I do feel that, and I do blame her, even though that's unfair, but I feel it's not just that the baby died . . . a lot of things died.

T: I think you feel you also have to be quite careful what you say to me, like blaming me for not looking after someone properly by going away, but it's difficult when these feelings are so mixed up in you with relief that this hostel is open again for you when you've been carrying a lot of pain and turmoil for the past few weeks.

P: Yes I have . . . I did say it was a blessing as well as a curse to be back. [He was silent for a few minutes.] I've been thinking about wanting to be with a different woman, different from A, someone from my culture. I know you'll think I want someone like my mother, but it's just wanting to be with someone from my background. I'm fed up with being told by A how inadequate I am, because I'm not English, and working-class and confident and a proper man . . . I was thinking about going back to live in Ireland, and feeling more at home there . . . [He went on in this manner for a few minutes, and I felt that a contact between us had been lost, and that the session was petering out as he grew more distant. I called time].

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Clinical commentary: Sam

HEATHER WOOD

This clinical material provides an illuminating illustration of the dilemmas faced by a patient who is struggling with core complex anxieties, and the clinician's dilemmas in trying to engage in a constructive way with him. The therapist tells us at the outset that the patient has a tendency to withdraw into an encapsulated world of dope, alcohol, pornography and grandiose fantasies, suggesting the value of psychoanalytic ideas about addiction and perversion. The clinical material enables us to track the process of withdrawal into a sado-masochistic world in the course of the session, and to speculate about the dynamics of this process.

Commenting on another's clinical work, with the text of a whole session and with time to consider the material, gives one all the advantages of an aerial photographer over a walker when mapping difficult terrain. However, I think this therapist brings alive for us the immediacy of the struggle in the consulting room; with a perverse patient this struggle is often to interpret in a way which will not fuel the destructive dynamic which has been mobilized. The therapist wants to address the processes occurring between the patient and him or herself, without behaving in a way that may be construed by the patient as either sadistic or masochistic. While the 'aerial photographer' can have an overview, the 'walker' or the therapist has the benefit of that immediate experience, which is a vital part of the picture.

We are not told the gender of the therapist, but I will refer to him or her as a woman, because it seems that the patient is at this point struggling with issues relating to the maternal object, whatever the actual gender of the therapist.

It is valuable to have material from the first session after the summer break because issues about separation from the object will almost certainly be height-

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ened, and I would see issues about fusion, separation and core complex anxieties to be central in this account. The session begins differently from usual: the patient gives a slight smile, and seems to speak more quickly than usual. The therapist senses a greater readiness to engage, even pleasure at seeing her. In his first utterance he tells of the dilemma that confronts him when being faced with someone who is trying to be helpful to him: it is a blessing and a curse, and then, 'We know why it's a curse'.

The therapist at this point quickly interjects, 'What do we know?' If taken at face value, this is a question, and a question that we would be cautioned against in the old psychoanalytic adage 'If you ask questions, all you get is answers'. Faimberg (2005) reports a question posed to a patient, and adds 'This is a rhetorical question aiming to open new psychic space: it concerns unconscious associations and not conscious introspective answers'. I think the question posed here is of just this type: framed as a question, it is both an interpretation, and, with a co-operative patient, it speaks to the unconscious rather than inviting conscious introspection. 'What do we know?' communicates to the patient that the therapist can stand outside and reflect upon his need to create a fused relationship; the therapist will question his desire to create a relationship in which patient and therapist share one mind and in which thoughts do not need to be elaborated or spoken. In this way, the question sets the scene for the remainder of the session.

As a testament to the work that has already been done in this therapy, the patient is able to use the question to produce unconscious associations, as Faimberg describes. The therapy holds up a mirror to the 'dysfunctional self' which he hates. This seems like a moment of truth. He goes on to describe an object by whom he feels nagged and persecuted, who leaves him feeling inadequate and enraged, and whom he longs to get away from; when he does get away he feels cold and lonely. In these opening minutes of the session, the patient communicates very clearly what a curse it is to be offered help. For the patient with aspects of perverse pathology, there is no straightforward relief at discovering a benign object, able to think with them about themselves. The process is a minefield and the dangers posed by the object are acute.

Glasser (1979) describes how the core complex arises from the search for blissful union with the object, which appears to promise the eradication of deprivation and need, and the total containment of destructive feelings towards the object. In those with perverse pathology, Glasser suggests that this primitive urge for union arouses a terror of annihilation and loss of the self; the object which promises so much also threatens annihilation, and therefore arouses intense feelings of aggression. Yet to destroy the object would be to be left without any hope of gratification, isolated and depressed.

At the start of the session the patient tells the therapist about the fused relationship between them which he tries to establish in his mind; she questions this, and so steps outside of it, exposing the core complex struggle in which he

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is engaged. To be involved and dependent means being exposed to his own rage and destructiveness and the possibility of attacks or contempt by the object; yet to give up and walk out, to sleep in the car, is to be desperately cold and alone. For a brief moment in the session, he can acknowledge his anger towards the therapist. Yes, she did leave him, and yes it was a very difficult time. The therapist notes that this was unusually direct; it also seems to have been as much as the patient could bear.

Glasser describes the response to these core complex anxieties in those with perverse pathology:

> In the perversions, then, the ego attempts to resolve the vicious circle of the core complex and the attendant conflicts and dangers which I have indicated by the widespread use of *sexualization*. Aggression is converted into sadism. The immediate consequence of this is the preservation of the mother, who is no longer threatened by total destruction, and the ensuring of the viability of the relationship to her. The intention to destroy is converted in to the wish to hurt and control. (1979: 288)

The patient shifts in an instant from unbearable anger towards the abandoning therapist, into an excited state in which he is apparently the despised object of a sadistic therapist, the 'little fuck' who comes 'crawling back', to be triumphed over and despised for his dependency. The therapist, in her next comment, intervenes in a way which might be useful with a neurotic patient, articulating the transference fantasy about the therapist who he imagines despises him and sneers at him. With this patient she has the feeling, which is familiar to me, of having said something predictable. I think this alerts us to the fact that this is no longer a therapeutic dialogue: the therapist has been drawn into a sado-masochistic dance, in which there is considerable pressure to enact the required steps or the 'predictable' response. Articulating the transference fantasy ceases to have the function of an interpretation, but can feel like an enactment of the transference fantasy; it is as if, in her comments, the therapist has unwittingly confirmed the patient's need to believe that she is sadistically sneering at him.

The patient then takes off; the sado-masochism has been gratifyingly enacted between them, and he then tells her about pornography, the pleasurable degradation of *Leaving Las Vegas*, the desire to be even muckier, the triumph of being hated ('no one likes us and we don't care').

In my experience in similar situations, it can feel as though, whatever the therapist says, she is at risk of being perceived in one of two ways: either the therapist makes an interpretation which could be perceived as trite, ineffectual or predictable, and then becomes the object of the patient's contempt and possible sadism; or, in attempting to make a potent and effective interpretation, the therapist risks making a comment which could be heard as sadistic, cruel or retaliatory. The therapist in this session takes time to think, is concerned about the triumph and excitement in the patient's voice, and seems to regret the loss of the more direct patient whom she encountered at the beginning of the session.

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She tries to re-establish contact with the patient whom she encountered at the beginning of the session by reminding him of the part of him that wants to leave 'Las Vegas'.

The patient takes a long time to think, possibly 10 minutes. Where is he during this time? When he speaks again, there is some evidence that he has not been following a silent stream of associations, but has been trying to collect himself together, to answer from this more functioning part of the ego which the therapist seems to want to engage with. He confirms that he is doing better at work, as if to provide her with what she wants. However, I think that in the remainder of the session he tells her that he can get out of the sado-masochistic state and into a functioning ego state at a price: the difficulties are enacted in his relationship with the partner, the aggression is projected and the partner becomes the annihilating 'baby-killer' whom he wants to attack and get away from. The intensity of the dynamic is drawn out of the room, and the therapist feels that the contact between them has been lost.

Thus it is possible to observe a sequence of moves within the session: at the beginning the patient can fleetingly acknowledge the anger of being left and the pain of returning to the therapy to face his dysfunctional self. These rapidly evoke in him contempt and sadism towards his vulnerable self, which he then projects onto the therapist, imagining being despised by the therapist for his dependency. The masochistic pleasure in being despised ignites a perverse excitement, leading him to the pleasure in being hell-bent on self-destruction. In this way he moves from a position of vulnerability to imagined strength and triumph, albeit the hollow triumph of being hated and not caring. If the alternative is to be hopelessly vulnerable and dependent, to be hated and to not care may be experienced as omnipotent, liberating and exhilarating.

The therapist worries that all contact between them had been lost, but there are indications that contact is re-established before the end of the session. The therapist acknowledges the patient's intense ambivalence about being there. There is a 'hostel' that he needs and values which is open again, but which he fears that he will spoil with his rage about the therapist's absence. He is able to respond to this in what I take to be an unconscious communication, about wanting a different woman from A. I would assume that the different woman whom he wants to be with is this therapist who can contain his ambivalence and enactments without retaliation.

In summary, this case material demonstrates many of the key issues encountered when working with patients with perverse pathology: how little sexualization has to do with sex and how much it has to do with managing primitive anxieties in relation to the object; the rapid, if not instant shifts which can occur in the course of a session into sado-masochistic relating, or the more organized pursuit of a perversion; and the intense pressures on the therapist not simply to enact countertransference feelings, but to act in a way which might be therapeutic with another patient, but which may be taken as fuel to the sado-

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masochistic dynamic. The therapist who generously provided this case material provides us with a graphic illustration of what challenging but interesting work this can be.

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Clinical commentary: Sam

PAUL DENNISON

'It's a blessing and a curse' jumps out of this snapshot of a session, and invites associations as I read through the rest of the material. The blessing of a pregnancy that failed? Doomed to fail? Cursed? Guilt and blame. Did the therapy carry a similar hope, a potential blessing but also doomed to fail? A curse from which mothers and sons cannot escape? My fantasy of Sam and his own mother is of a little boy's early dreams and hopes, a mother's power to wipe away hurt and mess and 'bless' her child. And a question, whether they did connect, a pregnancy, as with 'A' and with his therapist, that couldn't be maintained; disappointment, frustration, rejection and a growing sense of 'we both know it's cursed'. What is lacking are Sam's or his therapist's associations to the words 'blessing' and 'curse', and we don't know whether they were explored in this session, or previous ones. Both words are grandiose as though of a higher power: the fantasy of no escape from a curse, whilst a blessing can forgive anything. Apparently at opposite poles, they can also be seen as an unconscious attempt to mediate the split: only a blessing can remove a curse. Is this a sign of a possible transcendant function?

'What do we know?' the therapist asks. To have remained silent and let it pass would have confirmed a shared knowledge of failure, but the therapist picks up the unspoken challenge. I wonder what would have been silently confirmed to Sam if the therapist had not done so. That he is beyond hope? Fucked up and despised by his therapist? That his therapist is useless and unable to help him? Or that both are helpless in the face of a larger doomed fate; that the therapy is ultimately cursed whatever they do?

But his therapist does ask, and Sam responds to the invitation to a more open contact with: '. . . there's no progress . . . and I'm just staring at my dysfunc-

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tional self here, which I hate'. This wonderfully cryptic description of his therapist is followed by a few minutes silence, but is not taken up by the therapist, which intrigues me. Sam continues, at first retreating to a more reassuring note, 'Some things have gone quite well', but soon followed by more negative latent hostility to his therapist couched in terms of his partner 'A': 'She just nags . . . drives me crazy . . . telling me off . . . I just feel like walking out', ending on a despairing and isolated note, 'Just don't know if 'A' [= you] and I can stay together . . . I feel in a rage . . . like walking out . . .'. Sam has upped the ante, virtually demanding a response with the image (talk to me, or I'll walk out). At this point the therapist links the material to herself, her abandonment of Sam during the break, and her acceptance of the negative transference is rewarded by Sam's 'unusually plain and direct response', 'Yes you did'. The therapist strengthens the contact with the visual image 'As I packed my bags and walked out on you . . . at a very difficult time', rewarded by another 'again unusually direct', 'Yes you did, and yes it was'. This opened-up and more direct feeling contact allows Sam to put into words some of his fantasy of their unspoken relationship, that the therapist sees him as an 'arrogant little fuck' who 'can't do without [her]'. Like the duality of Blessing–Curse, another aspect of Sam's schizoid inner world is revealed: fear of dependance and flight into an 'arrogant' but isolated world.

The therapist recognizes 'a note of excitement' in Sam's voice, and reflects back to Sam what he had said. As she does so, she comments that her response felt 'predictable'. In this I think she is recognizing that something, probably the eroticization of the contact, had caused her, despite herself one could say (an enactment perhaps of what might have occurred between Sam and his mother?) to avoid dealing with it head-on. This comes across in the phrasing of the interpretation, 'picture in your mind is *of a me* sneering at you . . .', objectifying herself into the third person, losing the directness of 'I'. After a pause Sam continues with the eroticized theme, but the directness is lost as he escapes into the world of *Leaving Las Vegas*.

The to's and fro's of contact seem related to powerful unconscious feelings of hatred, blame, shame and guilt, and eroticization of contact when it does develop, and it is to the therapist's credit that she does not follow the likely path of the original relationship which the above enactment suggests. It would have been all too easy for both to retreat into isolation and failure, the limbo of an unsatisfactory but familiar 'stably-unstable' relationship, like that mentioned in the therapist's introduction in describing Sam's relationship with 'A'. Instead the therapist makes use of the changes in contact between them, to show Sam that she had seen and appreciated both sides, but particularly the more real and direct part of him that has made contact with her. After quite a long silence, and with the atmosphere more calm and settled, her interpretation is rewarded by themes of 'surprise', 'respect', feeling 'pleased', 'good appraisal'.

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Although in an end phase, the to and fro of two-person contact continues. Seeing his therapist as good, 'he [you] didn't have to say that', he immediately has to acknowledge his badness by admitting the 'really nasty things' he had said, and the black and white tussle of who was to blame for the miscarriage.

Discussion

I have assumed the therapist is a woman, and would be rather surprised if it were a man. The feel of the session is of the mother–son drama. The material is very much two-person; the third if it is there seems to be of otherworldly dimensions, with the power to either curse or bless, rather removed (aloof?) from normal human emotions. Is this the absent father? Or perhaps the Irish Catholic Church? My male countertransference is to want to get in there among the rage and muck, and 'sort it out', hence my being intrigued by the therapist not responding immediately or more directly to Sam's rage and contempt when it seemed so alive. I wonder how the session would have developed if Sam's therapist had verbalized to Sam his latent message: 'you're saying to me, "you're dysfunctional", "there's nothing else in this therapy" (= "no progress, just staring at"), "you nag me, tell me off, drive me crazy", and "I hate you!"'?

Sam's later comment of 'arrogant little fuck' vs. 'can't do without her' brings to mind an arrogant, aggressive persona used to hide a fearful, sensitive child who perhaps listens and feeds secretly (cf. Guntrip, 1968: 231). Maybe at this stage in the analysis the therapist is speaking more to this latter part of Sam. Perhaps over the previous years the therapist has tried to work more directly with Sam's negative transference but that approach failed? Was Sam too fragile? However, the directness with which Sam confronts his therapist in this session, albeit 'sideways', the moments of deeper contact between them, and the fact that the therapist is in tune with Sam and has probably already done a good deal of reparative work, suggests to me that the time is ripe to face the negative transference more directly to allow Sam to express that side of him which he fears can never be forgiven or accepted (the curse). In doing so the therapist holds to a position of balance not losing sight of both sides of the split, as in this session when she reflects to Sam the two modes he alternates between, leading to a better balance ('more calm and settled'). Boris's (1994: 111) comment that therapists 'camp on a fault' seems apt.

I have a hopeful sense overall. An emerging search for the 'third' can be seen in the repeated way Sam places dilemmas or paradoxes into the session. The Blessing–Curse image immediately invites associations to fill the space of the missing third, and the 'challenges' to the therapist can be seen as performing a similar function. As in the imaginal spaces: ⟨we both know⟩ [what?]; ⟨I'll walk out⟩ [unless?]; or ⟨I might just give up and die in Las Vegas⟩ [do you care?]. What between them will they create in that space? Will the pregnancy survive and flourish?

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Clinical commentary: Sam

ANN HORNE

Asked to associate to the material, to speculate rather than critique, I find myself initially engaged with the Celtic in it. Rather like reading James Joyce, it helps to listen to Sam's words in a soft Irish accent. (Sounds daft, perhaps – but try it with *Finnegan's Wake.*) The therapist has captured the rhythm and, importantly, the seductiveness of his fluency – and as one goes in and out of words/meaning/process/ambiance one comes to a few concepts that suddenly make one alert. Adolescence, patently. Adulthood as the achievement of intimacy and autonomy, perhaps. The nature of maturity with its implicit developmental gains and losses. The use of dope and alcohol, classic adolescent ways of putting life on hold. Deception. The primitive defensive function of perversion. Sam's adolescent quality, together with his use of pornography, explains my being invited to write a commentary on this material.

For the adult therapist there is perhaps no surprise in finding a struggle for and against adulthood in an adolescent in his mid-30s. As one who would define 'adulthood' as a technicality, an abstract ideal more noted in the breach than in the observance – and whose own analysis often centred on the question, 'Just what *is* an adult and why does one aspire to be one?' – I found that the session conveyed the movement in and out of the 'all or nothing' polarities that adolescents must adopt. Honesty is followed by deception and the need to keep objects at bay; passion gives way to detachment or sexualized self-denigration; daring to aspire to identity and maturity, regressing to immaturity; and an uncomfortable almost-balance provided by pornography that allows Sam to be an adult sexually and importantly contains his rage but denies, or defends against, the concomitant adult aspects of mutuality and responsibility. I also found myself thinking about the miscarriage – the pain of that, but also the move into adulthood sud-

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denly terminated. Just as there is no such thing as a baby, so there is no such thing as a parent – the infant by his presence calls forth and creates the parent from the individual or couple who existed previously.

This is the first session after a summer break. Breaks are not an unknown quantity to Sam who is in his fourth year of therapy. Yet 'breaks' are a feature of his life experience and perhaps of his interactions and repertoire with his objects. They also seem to be an important characteristic of his therapy. His therapist is swift to note a slight difference in his presentation – a slight smile, a non-aversion of his eyes. One's thoughts go to the importance of seeing and being seen: developmentally much more becomes likely when the infant can relish being seen. Curiosity becomes possible, as does necessary omnipotence. Whether the opposite indicates keeping intrusion at bay, or centres around the sense of shame and the need for shame as a protection against invasiveness, is not clear in this particular session.

The mixed start is not untypical of adolescent patients – 'a blessing and a curse', the relief of return after a hard four weeks and the fear of – well, what in this instance? The wording of 'staring at my dysfunctional self' is interesting. Sam is capable of seducing with his words and fluency (as in 'We know why it's a curse') yet there is also the 'stuckness' of what is referred to. Here there is again an almost adolescent sense of valuing being stuck, a thrawn perverseness. This does not satisfy – Sam does manage to tell his therapist of a significant move in his adult life, the completion of the job application and his satisfaction with it. Autonomy had been fine; intimacy had brought suffering. Sam's pain seems very real to his therapist. The litany is almost random – not putting the milk away, not closing the gate – then comes a rather more meaningful 'not being English and working-class like her'. And 'when she attacks me, I feel in a rage. Just feel like walking out on her.' This, I think, is important. It is qualitatively different from the other accusations and it involves difference, identity, individuation and being seen – all primary areas of psychological negotiation in adolescence and for those still constrained by adolescence. In this relationship he has found a woman who cannot value his difference (Irish, middle-class, male) and whose attacks are against his identity. How can he possibly gain separateness and autonomy? It has a very repetitive flavour, repetitive of earlier emotional experience and, like the small boy he was, he lacks any sophisticated psychological repertoire for dealing with it. I do wonder about Sam's history and especially about his relationships with his mother and father. He feels an impotent rage, one that takes him childishly into the car – where he freezes – and one would wonder whether he were protecting the vulnerable self or, rather, protecting the object from the destructiveness of his rage. It is like an infant in relation to a mother experienced as obdurate. His sense of being unsupported is acute and he can thus respond with conviction to his therapist's transference comment about his/her abandonment of him. It is an important communication.

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The development into excitement is equally important as Sam denigrates himself over the abandonment. This has now become perverse. A defence perhaps against the pain of having his vulnerability exposed – missing his therapist – or a recourse to a tried and tested way of keeping pain at bay, dehumanizing himself and insisting that he controls the object's sneering. The therapist is aware that the response to this, which summarizes the contrast between Sam's view of a denigrating therapist and his possible pleasure at being back, feels predictable. 'Predictable' does not necessarily mean 'wrong': it could be perfectly appropriate. But in the context of the sexualization of his self-denigration, it can only feel pedestrian.

The element of deception, common in perversion, emerges – he has told A of 'my addiction to pornography' and, although shocked, she was pleased he had told her. This is immediately followed by Sam's assertion that he had not, in fact, told her everything. There is triumph in this; the external (and therefore internal) object is for the moment defeated – even while A congratulates Sam on his disclosure to her. [Again, one wonders about Sam's parents.] It seems that A has a very different view of Sam's addiction, an almost abstract theoretical 'politically correct' attitude to it, until *Leaving Las Vegas* brings it into the room. Sam's comment is a terrific summary: 'I felt like those football fans who chant "no one likes us and we don't care".' The need not to care, not to feel, not to give the object any control over one's emotional states, is central. That Sam has found a relationship where he feels belittled is not surprising – he hates and seeks it. The shift for the therapist to keep in mind – and clearly it *is* in mind – is that, as a defensive position, it is now not always successful: Sam flees to it when anxiety assails him but it no longer fulfils its function with consistency.

The therapist's interpretation here follows several that have focused on the break and the loss of the therapist. Now there is a clear and different statement about Sam's wish for change and his pornography as a defence against anxiety. It is heard and brings calm. Once more Sam talks of grown-up things.

Where the sense of the session's petering out starts, I think, is when he is able for a short spell to bear the thought of his rage with A and to articulate that. He blames her for the death of the baby – 'a lot of things died'. His move into fatherhood was thwarted; 'Sam as father' died too. And his anger began to feel uncontainable. Perhaps that was a time for the kind of comment one would make to a young person, that there was good reason for anger but – like his going to sleep in the car – it felt dangerous and he tries to protect others from the consequences. *Then* it could be taken back into the transference, as the therapist did. Without this affirmation, the fear of his rage, and the reminder of his anger with the therapist, stimulates the flight 'home', the flight to mother, as he recognizes (a relationship within which he can once more test if his maleness and potency are bearable), and to an idealized 'mother country' where he is known and 'a proper man'. The flight from rage needs to be spelled out for Sam or he will continue to enact it.

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Commenting on a session of work with an adult patient makes me realize how much I work with the history in mind. Without it, one must merely speculate. For the patient who presents with perverse behaviour, the history is even more important as the nature of the perversion and the triggers that necessitate its use are bound in it. Holding the mother perceived as malignant in mind is essential: this affects not only the transference but attitudes to all in positions of authority. That Sam finally aspires to being a grown-up at work is enormously hopeful.

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ARTS REVIEW
Art and the human psyche in a changing world

DAVID HEWISON

In this paper I focus on two different things: first, some thoughts and questions about the nature of the artistic process from the point of view of a paper by Carl Jung on artistic creation; second, the problems that art faces us with today. In my view these are how to determine what is art and what is not; how to encourage more of it; and how to understand what it has to say to us.

In his 1922 paper 'On the relation of analytical psychology to poetry' Jung comments that medical psychology – by which he particularly meant the Freudian psychoanalysis of the time – has to be discarded when trying to think about art, as a work of art is not a disease and so should not be treated as one. He says:

> A Doctor naturally has to seek out the causes of the disease in order to pull it up by the roots, but just as naturally the psychologist must adopt exactly the opposite attitude towards a work of art. Instead of investigating its typically human determinants, he will inquire first of all into its meaning, and will concern himself with its determinants only in so far as they enable him to understand it more fully. Personal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it. We can certainly learn to understand some of the plant's peculiarities by getting to know its

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This paper was presented as part of a discussion about the contemporary significance and meaning of Art, itself part of the British Association of Psychotherapist's public event series on 'The Human Psyche in a Changing World'. The first presenter of the evening was the artist and art critic Mathew Collings, well known for his accessible and illuminating television series on art and for his annual live presenting of the Turner Prize ceremonies. My paper was written with some reference to what I thought he would be presenting, but it was also designed to stand on its own. On the evening, Mathew Collings spoke without a written paper, giving a deeply engaging and personal talk that questioned the value of much contemporary art.

> habitat, and for the botanist this is an important part of his equipment. But nobody will maintain that everything essential has then been discovered about the plant itself. The personal orientation which the doctor needs when confronted with the question of aetiology in medicine is quite out of place in dealing with a work of art, just because the work of art is not a human being, but is something supra-personal. It is a thing and not a personality: hence it cannot be judged by personal criteria. Indeed, the special significance of a true work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator. (Jung 1922, para 107)

He goes on to say, continuing the comparison with the plant and soil within which it grows,

> In the same way, the meaning and individual quality of the work of art inhere within it and not in its extrinsic determinants. One might almost describe it as a living being that uses man only as a nutrient medium, employing his capacities according to its own laws in shaping itself to the fulfilment of its own creative purpose. (para 108)

Jung suggests that we can think of the work of art in two different ways. One is that of a kind of conscious intention in which the artist's material is completely subordinated to his or her purpose: the artist knows exactly what finished product is wanted before beginning to create it. The other is a process in which the artist is a tool through which something else works; a process that rejects any conscious intention to mould it to something that the artist already wants. Jung describes this quite clearly, as follows:

> While his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could never have brought into being. Yet in spite of himself he is forced to admit that it is his own self speaking, his own inner nature revealing itself and uttering things which he would never have entrusted to his tongue. He can only obey the apparently alien impulse within him and follow where it leads, sensing that his work is greater than himself and wields a power which is not his and which he cannot command. Here the artist is not identical with the process of creation; he is aware that he is subordinate to his work or stands outside it, as though he were a second person; or as though a person other than himself had fallen within the magic circle of an alien will. (para 110)

Jung goes on to stress that the analysis of artists consistently shows how strong this creative but unconscious impulse is – even to the extent that we can consider the creative impulse itself as a kind of Prime Mover in relation to the artist who then becomes the Moved. In psychological language he suggests that we are dealing with the presence of an autonomous complex – a split off portion of the psyche that waxes and wanes in its power over the conscious mind of the individual. As a result, he suggests that we may be able to see evidence of two different kinds of art: one kind is a product shaped and designed to have exactly the effect intended; the other carries with it something strange, intuitive and

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pregnant with meaning. We can see in this duality something of the debate that Jung had with Freud about the nature of the symbolic – for Jung the symbolic was something that always carried with it the impossibility of ever completely understanding what was being represented or expressed; he felt that Freud had misused the term 'symbol' when he really meant 'sign' – a thing that pointed towards another thing and in a way stood in for it like a cigar stands in for a penis. Jung's criticism of Freud was that he drastically limited the possible meanings of images to those arising from the sexual instinct. As a result, everything could potentially be understood in advance, as it were, because everything *really* stood for an element of the artist's conflicted internal sexual fantasy life. Jung preferred the idea that a symbol was 'the best possible expression for something unknown' (or as he rather beautifully and symbolically put it) 'bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore' (Jung 1922, para 116).

Jung complicates his argument by then suggesting that in those instances where the artist consciously and intentionally creates a work that transparently gives form to what was in his or her mind they may in fact be suffering from a kind of delusion that they're actually in charge. In other words the autonomous complex may be so powerful that actually the artist no longer knows that it exists; Jung even goes on to suggest that the recipient or viewer of the work of art themselves may not be able to see within it anything of this greater symbolic world as they themselves cannot go beyond what is possible for them as human beings limited by time and space. He goes on to give the example of artists whose work has been rediscovered and who are then understood in a very different way to both their conscious intention and to the reception that they had when they were living. Perhaps the fresh eyes of the future will understand late twentieth and early twenty-first century modern art in a very different way to the way that Matthew Collins expressed it in his paper: finding it to be shallow, slick and often meretricious. Jung further suggests that art which does not itself appear to be symbolic in this powerfully evocative way that he describes, may actually be more aesthetically pleasing to us than the 'symbolic' art can be because it is already something finished and complete. As a result it doesn't pull at us, demanding that we be unsettled and provoked by it. The present day Kleinian psychoanalyst, Hanna Segal (1991) has described something similar when she suggests that a true work of art stimulates and mobilizes both our loving and our hating feelings.

Jung suggests that it may be pointless to try and determine the 'meaning' of any particular work of art or indeed of art itself, and perhaps even if art does have a meaning it may not be any meaning that we can really understand or explain to others. In order to think psychologically about art, then, we have to employ the language of psychology rather than that of artists, and so we have to go back to the idea of the autonomous complex.

The autonomous complex is a formation in the psyche that exists just below the level of consciousness. As a complex, it carries with it all sorts of images

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and meanings, memories and fantasies, that combine both conscious and unconscious elements, and which is not under the control of our will. As a result, a complex can 'take us over' when we are in a more regressed state or can operate on us or within us like a splinter part of our personality. Clearly there are similarities to pathological processes in this description and Jung points out that the 'divine frenzy of the artist comes perilously close to a pathological state, though the two things are not identical' (para 122). The artist and the insane are close together. He suggests that complexes are present in all people and their power changes in accordance to the degree to which we can be conscious of ourselves or not. Indeed, by definition, the more conscious we are the fewer complexes we are controlled by, and the less conscious we are the more we are likely to be under the sway of these unconscious structures. Where too little consciousness exists we either fall into apathy or into a more regressed and infantile state – and this is something that occurs in both artists and non-artists like.

How is it then that this autonomous complex becomes the wellspring of artistic creativity? Jung gives us an explanation which is more descriptive than explanatory when he calls upon the idea of the collective unconscious to account for this. He suggests that there is a layer of the psyche that exists beyond that of the personal unconscious, and so beyond our personal wishes, instincts, or repressed material, and which is inherently imagistic and emotionally powerful. Although he talks about it as existing, as it were, only in potential he suggests that it is triggered whenever the relationship between an individual's, or a society's, level of consciousness gets too out of step with that of our unconscious roots – both individual and collective. Art and artists, therefore, perform a very specific function in the self-regulation of conscious and unconscious tensions in society. Art is:

> constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers. (Jung 1922, para 130)

In this way, we can say that art relates to society in the same way that a dream relates to a conscious attitude in an individual: it nudges, suggests, hints and encourages us to look at what we either can't bear to know about or do not realize is important. Artists themselves are then necessarily un-adapted to social mores and norms in order to better act as conduits for this profoundly social unconscious experience. Perhaps the question we are faced with when we think about the significance and meaning of contemporary movements in modern art is whether we can think of them as representing a dream or sequence of dream

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images, or whether they are locking us into a nightmare from which we are unable to awaken.

If we allow Jung's rather Romantic vision of an essential, mythopoetic, transpersonal layer existing across humanity but having its own local versions of universal themes, we can understand how art from very different cultures is able to move us in a very familiar way: we already know it, deep inside our essential humanity, despite coming across it in this form for the very first time. Art, therefore, is a 'Very Good Thing'. It poses us with at least three problems, however. The first is how to determine what is art, and what is not. The second is how to encourage more of it. The third is how to understand what it has to say to us.

How to determine what is art

The view attributed to Damien Hurst is a clear one: apparently his answer when asked at yet another show 'but is it art?' was a rather brusque 'Well, it's in a bleeding art gallery isn't it!' We can compare this with the attitude of the New York Customs and Excise office when faced in 1926 with, amongst 19 other works, Brancusi's three foot high, elegantly curved and highly polished bronze work 'l'Oiseau' or 'bird' (Gayford 2004 is the source for the following account).

When told that this was art (which, following a 1913 statute intended to encourage art, was tax free), they responded that it didn't look to them like art and imposed import duty on the metal object reasoning that it probably had some practical use as, say, a hospital implement of some kind or alternatively some value as scrap metal. The 1913 legislation had already been challenged by a maker of ornamental benches, who had claimed that his productions should be tax-free. He had lost, and there was therefore a precedent that had ruled that art was a representation of a natural, preferably human, form. A previous work of Brancusi's had already been subject to import duty on exactly this point: that it wasn't considered to be a representation of its subject and so couldn't be clearly identified as an art object rather than any thing else.

The 1927 trial challenging this ruling debated exactly this question of 'what is art', leading Jacob Epstein, one of the people giving evidence in support of Brancusi, to be asked whether, if Brancusi had called the work a fish, rather than a bird, he would then consider it a fish? 'If he called it a fish, I would call it a fish', he answered. He was then asked: 'If he called it a tiger would you change your mind to a tiger?' Epstein demurred, 'No.' The counsel for the US then made a rather inspired intervention: 'If he called it Tiger in Flight? If you took a brass rail perfectly curved and symmetrically formed, highly polished, it would appeal to you also as a work of art?' Epstein again demurred 'No,' and then added, 'If some great artist made the rail . . .' Counsel responded 'Suppose you did not know who made it?' Epstein initially said, 'That would make no difference at

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all,' but was then pushed further by Counsel who asked, 'It would make no difference at all if, so far as its artistic quality is concerned . . . it had been made by a mechanic or made by a sculptor?' Epstein replied, 'If it is beautiful it could not have been made by a mechanic.'

So in these two versions, art is either something that is in an art gallery or is something made by an artist – which then begs the further question as to what makes someone an artist. Is it having an artistic talent, being able to craft something in the first of Jung's two categories of art; or is it the second category, being open to and led by the promptings of an inner vision – the living being that uses the artist as a nutrient medium in the service of its own creation?

How to encourage more of it

It seems clear that art's ability to comment on us and on our lives, both communal and solitary, suggests that we should be trying to find ways of encouraging it and encouraging more people to engage with it, to understand it, and to try their hand at it to the extent that they are able. Many people are put off art at school, when their drawing and colouring-in gets transformed into a timetabled subject, with assessments and judgements about whether or not it is good enough – which are often couched in the language of the New York Customs and Excise: how much does it look like something – how accurately representational is it? It was partly this attitude that prevented me from thinking I could get involved in making art until I was in my mid-30s, and I'm sure I'm not alone in this. On the other hand, I know of an elderly couple who came to art late in life, and who have now converted one of the rooms in their house into a studio and who paint every day, getting immense pleasure from it.

One possible way of encouraging art early in life is something like the Room 13 project at Caol Primary School, Fort William in Scotland, which was featured in a documentary on Channel 4 in 2004 (see: Room 13 website). Caol Primary School had had an artist in residence for a while and one of them, Rob Fairley, decided to intervene with two girls who were getting bullied by having them take the school photos. This developed into an experiment in creativity: a room was set aside in the school for the production of all kinds of art: painting, drawing, digital prints, sculpture, performance art, photography, mixed media collage and film – including the one shown on Channel 4. Pupils from the school are allowed to go to Room 13 at any time – as long as they are currently up to date with their work – and not only make things, but also debate and discuss and learn about art. They have curated a touring exhibition and they also learn about art as a business. Room 13 operates as a self-financing project with pupils as managers, selling their work and design skills, and employing the artist in residence directly. They also have their own view of what art is, as they put it: '[Art] is about asking and answering questions about the things that are really

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important. Most importantly, it is about thinking, and art is not art if it doesn't make people think' (Friends of Scotland website).

What about as analysts and therapists? Do we have a responsibility to encourage or enable art? Should we remain neutral when our patients begin to express artistic wishes or interests or talk about turning away from them? What would we say to someone like the filmmaker David Lynch who apparently went to a therapist and asked 'if I have therapy, will it change the way I see things?' and when he was told that it would, opted not to have it? Is analytic work contra-indicated for artists who need their particular emotional complications to enable them to make the work? Or can it make artists more able to create more fully? Or indeed, can it help them face up to the necessity of selling their work – or at the least of actually allowing other people to see it? This touches on the topic as to whether or not artists are seen by analysts and therapist to be operating out of a creative but defensive response to their own pathology, or out of a non-pathological creativity that has found a home in them rather than in another person – and of course it could be both. There are also the related issues of how art itself is used in therapy, and of the links and disjunctions between the verbal methodologies of analytic work and the less-verbal, or non-verbal ones of the arts therapies, including movement and music. This brings me to the third and last problem – how to understand what contemporary art has to say to us.

How to understand what contemporary art has to say to us

Perhaps one answer is to remember Jung's suggestion (above) that art is 'constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking'. But just what is it that we are lacking? And how has the change in the public's relationship to art since the late twentieth century impacted on Jung's neat equation?

The recent focus on spectacular and sensational shows of modern art, whose main currency appears to be shock or excitement, can be a real impediment to seeing what art and artists in general, in their broad manifestations in studios and workshops, garden sheds and back rooms, are dealing with and describing. As we only get one mainstream version, mediated through art as investment and titillation, and artist as celebrity and scapegoat, we cannot be aware of all that is going on. Perhaps the purpose of modern art is to get us to notice art as an essential feature of our lives, to 'democratize' it and get it out of the grand salons and into the reach of everyone; to make us all direct attention to an area of our psychic lives that we could otherwise pass over, or attribute to someone else.

On the other hand, however, if we think that the 'medium is the message' then perhaps we already know what art has to say: 2-dimensionality, a preoccupation with effect rather than affect, with display, with the body as object, with endless chains of meaning, with the gallery space itself rather than the works displayed within it, for example. There is no meaning, no grand narrative, no

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Prime Mover – and it is up to us whether we accept this situation or not. In showing us the extent to which art can be a consumer commodity, our contemporary situation is suggesting that it is up to us to decide whether we think that things have gone awry or whether we're actually working through our relationship to modernity as best we can – as I put it earlier, are we in a dream or a nightmare? Perhaps, following Jung, we just cannot know, despite the ways in which contemporary art prods at us to come to some conclusion about 'is it really art?' Is art beauty as Epstein suggested? Or is art, as Cary Grant put it in one of his films, 'just a boy's name'?

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ARTS REVIEW
'The Magic of the Couch' by Claudia Guderian, and 'Head Space: Photographs of Psychotherapeutic Environments' by Nick Cunard[1]

JENNIFER BENWELL

At the end of 2004 there were two exhibitions running concurrently at the Freud museum, both the work of photographers, who in their different ways captured something of the form and the spirit of the analytic environment.

This setting was a good one. The work sat alongside photographic records of Freud's study in Bergasse 19 Vienna, his home for 47 years. In 1938 when he was forced to leave Vienna and settle in Maresfield Gardens, North London, his study was recreated so that he could continue his work and since his death the room remains untouched, for us to observe. The work of recording, preserving and where possible, recreating Freud's Vienna study was done with reverence and an archaeologist's attention to detail. This adds to our sense that upon reassembly something beyond the material may be recovered. We are surrounded, as he was, by his extensive collection of relics, imbued with significance from other faiths and cultures. This museum within a museum creates a sense of layer upon layer of personal and collective meaning.

Dr Claudia Guderian's photographs of consulting rooms are added to this mix. Interviews with the analysts, detailed recording of rooms and furniture specifications are also printed in her volume *Magie der Couch* (2004). Unfortunately

[1] Jennifer Benwell is a member of the Jungian Analytic Section of the British Association of Psychotherapists and works in private practice. She originally trained in fine art and has been a practising artist for the last twenty years.

her books have not been translated into English, though Dr Guderian is looking for an English publisher. She has taken photographs of analysts' couches over several years, in one hundred consulting rooms in five different countries. This is an ongoing project which she is hoping to extend, investigating the physical and material aspects of the intangible, the analytic experience.

The precision of her photographs lends them beauty and mystery. For me the most striking factor was the strong presence of the absence of the two players, analyst and analysand. The couch and analyst's chair are captured in a wordless dialogue, often at opposite edges of the frame. This choice of intimate, bounded, interior images echoes the intensity and stricture of the analytic frame itself.

Nick Cunard's work is in the gallery space of the Freud museum. He is a social anthropologist by training and has a different approach: documentary rather than Guderian's '*nature mort*'. Here we have more of an a installation; photographs, texts and boxes of tissues are exhibited on the walls and in glass cabinets, echoing museum displays, placing the scenes firmly in the territory of relics or evidence of a specific culture's rituals and practices. This is a more flexible approach and hints at the larger, more elastic, containing environment, one in which the external world is still in view; in one photograph a builder is seen through the window of the consulting room getting on with his work. There are photographs of a beech-lined passage leading to the therapist's room, a ceiling rose stared at from the couch and, importantly, images of the analysts alongside excerpts from conversations about the environment they have created around themselves. We are not offered a carefully composed picture as we are in Guderian's work. Rather, we are encouraged to become involved in the journey to, and the experience of, the room, the analyst and through that, the photographer hopes, the experience of analysis. By virtue of this format placing us within the frame – staring at the ceiling, looking at the analyst – we can play with the question, are we observer or participant?

In the year that the primary subject of the Turner prize exhibition, a significant indicator of the current zeitgeist, was personal and cultural identities and their construction, these two exhibitions were timely. How much of what we imagine we see in these spaces is dependant upon the cultural context in which we view them? By placing the photographs within this setting, some of these avenues of thought are perhaps less available. We know they are therapist's rooms and we read them in a particular way. Put them in an interior design magazine and our response would be different. So we 'see' what we have been primed to see. This process of preconception has long been the territory of the artist and the psychotherapist. Ordinary objects or acts acquire symbolic significance through incorporation into a shared belief system. The urinal put in the art gallery becomes art (Duchamp, 1917*). We may imbue these interiors with sig-

*Marcel Duchamp exhibted a male urinal which he had signed with the name R. Mutt. Thus, the 'found object' became the artwork, 'Foundation' 1917.

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nificance, but how important are they? What are we really being shown and are they therapists' rooms or works of art?

Nick Cunard writes of his work in the exhibition catalogue: 'I was especially interested as a photographer to see what 'my' medium, this manipulated, mechanical process rooted in the world of materiality, would have to say about a practice that by its very nature was largely focused on accessing and working with invisible materials.'

The overt aim of these two exhibitions was an exploration of the importance of these spaces both to the analyst and analysand, the impact the environment has on 'the work', and I presume, to open up these essentially private spaces to public view. The significance of the details of these environments to the patient is not news. In some cases it seems to the patients that it is the clearest manifestation of the personality of the analyst, indeed such details can be decisive in the progress of an analysis if Will Self[2] is to be believed in his accompanying text:

> Nevertheless I stuck with Mr Z for over two years, and I might well have gone on for longer if it hadn't been for the stain on the carpet underneath his sofa, that and the unchanging and artfully messy stacks of books which ranged all over his little Battersea flat.

I write as someone who proposed a very similar project, though with 'anonymous' couches, some time ago, and am personally familiar with the strength of feeling the idea engenders – great enthusiasm and interest on the one hand and outrage on the other. In the psychotherapeutic context the obvious question raised is whether or not photographs of analysts' rooms are a breach of the frame or the alchemical vas. What does it mean to a patient and analyst to let the outside world into the analytic space and importantly, is that what these photographs do?

I think the rational answer is no, they don't. However, we are not in the business of the rational. My belief is that the photograph cannot capture what is experienced in the analytic hour, that there are as many rooms as there are analytic hours. The photographer makes representations of the reality she finds, making precise decisions regarding form and content, and so in some senses the rooms we see in these exhibitions are the artists' rooms, not the analysts' or the patients'. If the aim was to see inside the parents' bedroom, it has been unsuccessful. However there are patients and analysts who believe otherwise and some say that that is the point. It is not what has happened but what we feel has happened that is important: that a private and safe space has been broken into and exposed. We know that the containment of the room, the frame and its sanctity can be life preserving, both literally and psychically, and that when symbolization has not been achieved, or has been lost, it is the analyst's job to judge when reality needs to be introduced and very fine judgement is needed.

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There are also considerations, on the other hand, regarding the analyst's separateness. It is important that the analyst and their environment are not a creation of the patient's mind or in their control, but 'other'. Their independence is part of their usefulness to the patient. In Will Self's words, ' a room they can call their own, for an hour'. Asserting the independence of the room and the limits of the patient's ownership of it may be keeping the frame rather than breaking it.

Notes

1. Exhibitions of photographs at the Freud Museum 12 November – 12 December 2004.
2. Supporting text by Will Self 'A room of one's own – for an hour'.

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Books reviewed

Dark at the End of the Tunnel
By Christopher Bollas
London: Karnac Books, 2004, 135 pp, £16.99, pbk

Christopher Bollas presents his novella as 'another way to think psychoanalytically'. This intriguing claim unfolds through the characters of the psychoanalyst and his account of his clinical and his social world. It is as if they are all on the couch and indeed some complain about being so. The dramatic centrepiece to this work is the impact of 'The Catastrophe' on the world. This event is the catalyst for the psychoanalyst like nothing else to enter a torment about the nature of the world, what is good and what is evil. The book starts with the patient, Goran Will, losing an umbrella and being shot in the buttocks by his wife who is angry about his infidelity. Then the analytic session begins with Goran Will pressing the doorbell and forgetting that he was doing so. This act of forgetting presages what is to come when the psychoanalyst is confronted with the patient asking what he is to do. The 'doing' seems to have taken place already with acts of expulsion from the mind of the patient into the mind of the psychoanalyst.

'The Catastrophe' in the book is the event which has deeply affected the psychoanalyst and ignited a soul searching. It is never specifically called 9/11 but there is really no doubt. The other characters in the story emerge as devices through which Bollas creates the analysis on the pages of the book. What unfolds is an enquiry into the nature of our mental life through the various challenges that the psychoanalyst encounters in the course of his day. It is an irony that this is so in a book with a title that anticipates an ending that has already occurred. The psychoanalyst's world has been turned upside down. Part of this is expressed in his confusion about moral right such that 'the good' is no more than a projection, merely a point of view. The starkness of this comes under heavy fire when the psychoanalyst is overheard by a couple who have lost

their son in 'The Catastrophe'. It is so distressing that it seems we are a step away from violence but the psychoanalyst is stung by the comments the couple make as they leave. The wife says, 'You should burn in hell'. The husband adds, 'Come my dear, he is a psychoanalyst. He is in hell anyway'.

The psychoanalyst's distress is really felt in his thinking about the way he begins to consider that he is experienced as object rather than other and otherness. The distinction is crucial because as object he is seen as being in 'hell anyway'. Before that particular encounter he is accosted by his daughter's best friend named Aphrodite who was walking her dog Vesuvius. The psychoanalyst (we are never told his name) is object when Aphrodite 'knows' already that he is thinking about the meaning of life. This is what psychoanalysts 'do'. Mortified now that he is as transparent as this and that there is no mystery or curiosity as to where he might be in his mind, he sustains only further injury as she also points out that he has trodden in some shit. Now he finds himself *doing something* that everyone has to do: to clean their shoes on the grass. The sense of humiliation in this is palpable, that the psychoanalyst's reverence for what is in the mind and the processes of the mind are soiled and reduced to this level. What price 'otherness' now! The whole question of mind expressed as neuroscience becomes a reductive nightmare of human experience. This is the challenge to his being and his theory of being. One result of the catastrophe is that it becomes an interrogator creating a new opportunity to ask 'the why and how questions' without really expecting or wanting a conclusive answer.

The book pivots on the psychoanalyst surprising himself when one day in a session,

> . . . the analyst heard himself say, 'Well, we need companionship, especially when we get to the age when we can see dark at the end of the tunnel'. It was this turn of phrase, one delivered up by his unconscious, that stunned the analyst. Long after the session was over, the phrase still hung about him like a shroud.

From here the analyst is preoccupied with the dark but in conversation with Francine, a friend he meets in the coffee house, he finds himself talking about transcendence and this is now suggested here as an answer to dark. This is certainly meat for the analysis and once again he found himself at odds and saying that 'descendence' is of more interest than 'transcendence' as though his training made him automatically suspicious of it.

> We must deny ourselves pleasures on this earth. We must see ourselves as evil, but for the grace of God. Transcendence was at the expense of one's earthly being, which the psychoanalyst valued as the only being he would personally know . . . There was always a troubling genocidal intellectualism to Christianity, he thought, a kind of 'either-or'. . . a good part of humanity was meant to burn in hell while the righteous put their padded feet on the escalator to heaven . . . What kind of religion, he pondered, wanted to see half of humanity burn? Who would ever want to be associated with such a genocidal drive?

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The psychoanalyst goes on to ponder the nature of this and finds himself in the fishmongers and changes 'zones' from the terrestrial to the aquatic and becomes involved in a conversation about salmon migration. Now it is as if he searches for a biological answer to his questions expressed at one point in wondering whether the reason he pees a lot when crossing the Atlantic in an aeroplane is a migratory act rather than the effects of dehydration. This 'Heart of Darkness' corporeal experience of doing as being, is the dialectic of the novella in which a life becomes the experience of faltering transcendence to inevitable detumescence. Along the way the banal and everyday things of buying fish and bread, making soup and getting to the next bus stop are the things which matter. The psychoanalyst says,

> I think people hang out with certain words like they do with celebrities, and I think words like transcendence, soul and spirit are meant to make users feel like they are hanging out with gods.

The psychoanalyst strips away a feeling of intimacy with words and makes language feel like a collection of short-life pop stars. This derision put into the mouth of the psychoanalyst is all the more startling coming from the pen of a writer of Christopher Bollas's stature.

Some consideration is given to character. Once again the corporeal is invoked in terms of 'form'.

> . . . character is like a poem, or a symphony. It is the self's form. Being is form. Relating is form. The inner world is the mental contents, like the lyrics of a song, or the words of a poem, or the musical notes; but what they express is never the same as the form they are given.

Following the catastrophe the psychoanalyst believes that something has changed which alters the form and our understanding of good and evil. He proclaims, 'western literature our acculturation in good versus evil' has permanently changed. The foundations have been shaken and he insists that something is different. Westin Moorgate a journalist says,

> No, nothing is different. I mean, it's a bit rich don't you think, that I as a journalist have to tell you as a psychoanalyst that this is all in your head: you are making too much of it.

Since the catastrophe the psychoanalyst has experienced an over-valuation of things in his world. The catastrophe signals for him the end of something, he has the prescient feeling of it being a defining moment. He calls into question where he should be putting his energies. A sense of guilt is aroused and drives his search and this brings him more in touch with his place in the world as he now sees it. At the end of the book the psychoanalyst is in conversation with a patient who is dying from cancer. At the end there are no words 'to hang out with' but he in person is there. It is simple.

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About twenty-five years ago Christopher Bollas asked students in a training seminar at the BAP, 'What is an analysis?' This book goes some way towards providing an answer as something that is lived and lived in relation to the world. There are issues to do with mourning and changes to 'civilization' as an ideology. Since The Catastrophe the world has changed and for the psychoanalyst 'the world had lost its meaning'. Whereas could it be that the psychoanalyst had simply misread the signs? Whilst he was worrying about saving western civilization The Catastrophe was just part of a process. The psychoanalyst had come far from his Freudian roots and just like transcendence he could not think about eternity, which has something to do with the capacity to grieve. The book is an enormously stimulating, funny and poignant in equal quantities but always a challenging read. In my view its greatest strength is that the setting of the book is in a familiar world although is not quite one side of the Atlantic or the other. It is a novella but it is also a quintessential psychoanalysis, a mind trying to do more than relate to itself, but is it just in a zone of its own? From *Dark at the End of the Tunnel* springs now an even greater and more topical relevance following the bombings in London on 7 July 2005. What would the psychoanalyst be saying now about the meaning of good and evil? Would the journalist still say it is all a figment of the journalist's imagination and is it just he who lives in hell?

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The Vale of Soulmaking: The Post-Kleinian Model of the Mind
By Meg Harris Williams
London, Karnac Books, 2005, 251pp, £25, pbk

Meg Harris Williams' most recent book, *The Vale of Soulmaking*, is a tour de force of psychoanalytical literary criticism of major western poetic works. It clearly shows how literature was an essential inspiration to psychoanalytic thought. Freud was never in doubt how much he was indebted to poets and writers in his pioneering establishment of a new profession. Williams pays tribute to psychoanalysis as a source of her aesthetic appreciation. Psychoanalytical ideas are most helpful in understanding the meaning of the poem and simultaneously poetry opens a well of emotion that is conducive to psychoanalytic insight. Indeed, reciprocity is one of the central themes of the book, reaffirmed by its structure. The literary criticism chapters are preceded by the foreword – a reprint of Donald Meltzer's 1989 lecture, aptly entitled 'Psychoanalysis acknowledges its poetic forebears and joins the artistic family', including two paragraphs written

by Meltzer eleven months before his death. The book ends with Williams's substantial and inspired narrative poem – a fictional biography of Wilfred Bion – in iambic pentameter.

The daughter of Martha Harris (psychoanalyst) and Roland Harris (poet), Meg Harris Williams has spent her whole adult life marrying the two disciplines, as her numerous books demonstrate. The subtitle of *The Vale of Soulmaking* reads '*The Post-Kleinian Model of the Mind*' and Williams's psychoanalytic foundation is rooted in the work of her life long collaborator, Donald Meltzer who was indebted to Klein and Bion. The mind develops by working through the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions moving from narcissism to altruistic reciprocity through an ever-emerging series of catastrophic changes. It establishes progressively more secure internal objects, finally allowing for a solid combined object to guide its thinking. Concrete thinking gives way to symbol formation and the 'working dream'. The combined object (as in the later Klein and as further investigated by Bion and Meltzer) is the internalized cooperative and inspiring interrelationship between the parental couple who constitute a solid basis for creativity. Williams argues that the nature of the combined object is on the one hand the muse of the poet and on the other the 'dream' of countertransference in the psychoanalyst.

Williams allows the reader an experience of the beauty and the joy of the first encounter with the aesthetic object that can be accompanied by the terror of the intensity of emotion. The other terror is one of the loss of the muse. She portrays the nature and the experience of being with the muse: lonely and stumbling, never sure – yet enriching. How does one 'know'? The answer lies in 'not knowing'; in the experience of being with the other; and if that is reciprocal – it will change minds. It is lonely work, a constant struggle, with its inherent temptations to make it easy – to avoid painful emotional conflict – and that leads to insincerity.

The first literary work tackled by Williams is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, an anonymous text from the fourteenth century. Looking beyond the mediaeval trappings of court etiquette and the ideology of chivalry she shows how Gawain's submission to the teaching of the Lady – that true sexuality is rooted in the emotional experience of the knowledge of the other – leads him to an experience of a 'catastrophic change'. He is able to find the inner emotional stillness (as opposed to the Knight's action) to submit himself to the Knight's edge of the axe. 'His internalisation of his dream-experience is his new protection' (p. 24).

Williams's study of Keats starts by placing him within the context of the English romantic poets. It then assuredly and movingly shows his development from his initial steps as a poet to finding himself anchored in, and propelled by his Psyche. The literary criticism of Keats's work incorporates his letters that allow for a privileged insight into the poet's emotional development. Keats's mourning for his brother facilitated his working through the depressive position, allowed him the discovery of 'negative capability'; a state of mind that put him

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in touch with sincere emotionality. This, in turn, made an optimal use of his talent to create the most beautiful poetry. Williams describes it as

> No longer wandering thoughtlessly, the poet has discovered his vocation: to build the shrine in the forest of his mind in which soulmaking can take place . . . the feminine principle, so long 'neglected' or held in suspicion by the Romantic poets, is revealed by Keats's priest-like process of negative capability, to constitute the core of the poetic Muse. (pp. 53–4)

Williams proceeds with a highly illuminating chapter on Keats's relationship with Milton's poetry. She proves meticulously how unhappy Keats was with *Hyperion* and Milton with *The Passion*, because they were written when the poets were not in contact with their Muse. She helps us to

> see Keats allowing his internal objects to 'create themselves' in gradual stages, by means of varying, struggling identification with Milton and with Milton's own process of object evolution. (p. 78)

Milton is a source of struggle for many literary critics, mainly because of his dramatic split between the theological preacher and the poet. Williams demonstrates, with a sensitivity that does not distract from the intense beauty of Milton's language, the failings within parts of his poetic opus. Those are due to the poet guided by the intellect of his religious dogma rather than by his Muse. One is awed by the image of Milton composing at night in his mind, and then proceeding to commit huge amounts of poetry to paper in the light of day. She shows us his development from an infant-poet to a genius guided by his muse: the process of gaining an inner sight through his courageous stepping into the 'dark unknowing'. That is especially demonstrated in *Paradise Lost* when, following the Fall, 'the poet pictures the processes of internalisation and symbol-formation that result from the idea of the Muse becoming embedded in the world of circumstances – the womb of Eve' (p. 98).

Moving on to tackle the Theban plays by Sophocles, Williams observes:

> They represent an inquiry into the nature of suffering and its potential for either creativity or soul-entombment. They dramatise, in effect, the distinction Keats made between the vale of tears and the vale of soulmaking. This is essentially the same as that formulated by Bion in terms of the kind of pain that causes 'symptoms' while enclosing the mind in a sort of comfortable pessimism, as opposed to the pain that is truly felt mentally – which he calls 'suffering'. (p. 104)

She focuses on Antigone whose commitment to death is as fanatical as Creon's to tyranny, a commitment that disables her love from being nourishing and reparative. It is a refreshing interpretation in contrast with the more common one that concentrates on the conflict between the law of gods and the law of man. It is, however, the analysis of *Oedipus Tyranos* (*Rex*) that is dazzling in its innovation. Interpreting the poetic structure of the play, Williams shows that it

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is about weaning and a process of self-knowledge using the mind to think rather than to solve puzzles. The search for the facts of Oedipus's birth gives way to the 'limping quest' for the mystery of his growth. The study of *Oedipus at Colonus* emphasizes the poetic nature of the play. The interpretative emphasis on the role of the daughters is original. The woods of Colonus are the crossroads to Oedipus's final catastrophic change where he approaches his death as Dionisian regeneration.

The interpretation of the *Odyssey* is a superb illustration of the emotional development of the main protagonists facilitated by Athene, who steers Telemachos towards his manhood, and weaves a marriage of homophrosine (an equal love) for Odeysseus and Penelope, having shaken them out of their frozen mental states. Odysseus' intrusive curiosity, greed and trickiness delay his homecoming by nine years. Only when he prays to Athene does she set out to help them all by challenging the comfort they take from inertia. Telemachos leaves the claustrum of his adolescent group, and Odysseus abandons the idealized world of Phaecia. Both Telemachos and Penelope seek the internal recognition of the beggar Odysseus, and they are not satisfied until they feel inner congruence (with an internal father and a true love of a husband) following their emotional crisis. Athene makes them face the truth in their dreams. They must all engage in a dialogue with their internal objects. Penelope internalizes Athene and is able herself to become a weaver, not of the shroud but of the marriage. Odysseus replaces his lying trickery with the sincerity of his emotional experience. The bed test must follow the bow test. Penelope discovers the passion of Poseidon in Odysseus.

> Poseidon is no longer antagonistic but the foundation for the richness of the relationship and its capacity for endurance. It is not a Freudian – Aeschylean balance of intellect and instinct, but a Sophoclean integration achieved by 'suffering' in the full aesthetic sense. (p. 145)

The Shakespeare chapter begins:

> Shakespeare's search for 'the noblest Roman of them all' – idealised in Brutus, undermined in Hamlet, begun again in Lear, incomplete in Othello, eventually finds fulfilment in Antony, the archetypal pattern of the heroic or great-souled magnanimous man. And his magnanimity finds its ultimate expression in the achievement of a marriage of *homophrosine*, like Odysseus – an equal love. (pp. 149–50)

Williams pays particular attention to the other plays, and follows with the analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra*. She shows in detail Antony's emotional development from a narrow-minded soldier to a mature lover by means of working through his aesthetic conflict. It is, however, Cleopatra who grows in stature from a wily woman to a person capable of embracing love – concerned for the other, rooted

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in self-knowledge. Both protagonists experience the turbulence of catastrophic change that enhances the knowledge of their internal reality, and hence their capacities to respond to the external world. It is a story of love's opportunity to develop in stages and Cleopatra's monument becomes a symbol of love.

> All the energies of her infinite variety are channelled into constancy. This is her new sincerity. Now she knows that the true monument must consist not of 'marble' but of herself' (p. 170).

Shakespeare's 'noblest hero' is a woman.

Although the main literary chapters focus on five poets (Keats, Milton, Shakespeare, Sophocles and Homer), one is continuously impressed by the author's erudition and breath of knowledge. None of the great poets is missing from the work, and following that literary feast; Williams undertakes an analysis of Bion's autobiographies (Appendix A) and finds his Muse. Donald Meltzer's 1993 lecture *On Creativity* is transcribed with the welcome addition of his latest thoughts on countertransference, written before his death specifically for this book. They include his concept of counter-dreaming.

The concluding chapter of 'Post Kleinian Poetics' is a sensitive yet rigorous analysis of the art and craft of poetry and psychoanalysis. Williams is not a practising psychotherapist, yet she displays commendable insight into the intricacies of the work in the consulting room. That is not surprising in view of her conclusion that the 'muse' of both a poet and a psychoanalyst is a solid internal, creative, combined object; and the search for the truth is its mission.

> The emotional experience is a poetic marriage of contrary emotions . . . that may be . . . 'almost unbearable' . . . To resolve the painful tension of this conflict into a moment of knowledge requires an act of faith in which the support of the selfhood (what Bion calls 'memory and desire') is abandoned in favour of total dependence on the internal object, as with Keats and Psyche, or Milton and his Muse . . .' (p. 192)

This is the state of mind that allows poets to create and psychoanalysts to be guided by their countertransference, in order to preserve the creativity of the psychoanalytic process.

The Vale of Soulmaking is a superbly researched, rigorous and inspired book that can only enrich our work. It is a dance of poetry and drama that one can either sit back and enjoy, or through observing it carefully, absorb its the intricate rhythm and complex steps.

IRENE FREEDEN
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Mourning, Spirituality and Psychic Change: A New Object Relations View of Psychoanalysis
By Susan Kavaler-Adler, with a foreword by Joyce McDougall.
Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003, 297 pp, £17.99, pbk

Readers of this journal may be familiar with Susan Kavaler-Adler's earlier book, *The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and their Demon Lovers* (Kavaler-Adler 2000) – a title almost calculated, I fear, to put off serious minded members of the British Association of Psychotherapists. However, those who were not deterred by the title will have found themselves treated to a substantial and detailed object relations examination of the emotional development and creative struggles of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson, Anaïs Nin, Sylvia Plath, and Edith Sitwell; a hard-headed study which dispels the romantic notion that creative genius is, somehow, an automatic path of healing. Through the dense (but not difficult) fabric of her text – though there are some tiresome misprints – Kavaler-Adler displays an acute empathy and minute attention to developmental stages and trauma and an attractive blend of intuition and rigorous theoretical thinking. I will say more about the demon lovers later.

Now Susan Kavaler-Adler has written another substantial book in which she first expounds an object relations model of the psyche – incorporating much of the work of, among others, Klein, Fairbairn, Bowlby, Balint and Winnicott – and then puts the model to work, in extended case presentation and discussion, illustrating the ways in which the capacity to mourn is vital for healthy emotional development. In this she builds on Caper's suggestion that Klein's depressive position should actually be called a 'mourning position' because whereas depression suggests a blocked, melancholic state, Klein's depressive position is really 'a psychic state of conflict and process, not a state of pathological deadness':

> Unlike the splitting off and projecting of disowned parts of the self, in the depressive position the painful aspects of the self are contained and psychically processed. Affect experience is the main route to this process, whereas mourning is the overall gestalt of this affective process that involves the resolving and integrating of internal object relations as psychodynamic process. (p. 242)

In her Foreword, Joyce McDougall suggests that, by taking the theme of mourning as a paradigm, Kavaler-Adler is able to 'interweave clinical phenomena that have formerly been restricted to separate categories'. For example,

> She links the abandonment and depressive mourning of separation-individuation trauma with that of narcissistic injury, of the loss of the primal parents through literal death, and the mourning of bisexuality, as well as that of a grief – in relation to existential guilt and regret – and mourning the attachment to narcissistic parents. (p. xif)

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The density of McDougall's summary mirrors the multi-layered nature of Kavaler-Adler's text, which rewards study, but needs considerable digestion.

One theoretical point with significant clinical implications, which Kavaler-Adler brings out well, is the difference between Fairbairn's picture of 'inside and outside' being in opposition, in contrast to Klein's picture of 'inside and outside' working in parallel. By this she means Fairbairn's focus on an internal world 'that is mainly sealed off in a closed system, with the relationships in this world repeating themselves endlessly and monotonously' (p. 29). These are the dynamics of the schizoid world, in which the libidinal and antilibidinal egos, split off from the central ego, are locked in mortal conflict. Although, as she shows, the paradigm of mourning applies more generally within the therapeutic process, it seems to be particularly at moments of reconnection between the central ego and the libidinal ego that we become most conscious of our pent-up rage, grief and need. As her clinical descriptions illustrate, these profound but stormy passages require a high degree of constancy and empathic attunement in the analyst if primitive trauma is not to be repeated.

Given the current vogue for spirituality, not least in therapeutic circles, I was particularly interested by the way she associates 'spiritual' experience, in analysis, with these significant moments of integration, made possible by processes of mourning (p. 224f). Martin Buber, following Kierkegaard, made the connection between the achievement of unit status and our capacity to entertain a (monotheistic) notion of God, when he wrote,

> Not before a man can say *I* in perfect reality – that is, finding himself – can he in perfect reality say *Thou* – that is, to God. (Buber 1936: 63)

Elsewhere I have tried to think about the religious journey as the quest for a whole object – which must, in some degree, reflect a growing integration within ourselves (MacKenna 2002). As she describes them, these moments of psychic enrichment, when there has been a reconnection between the central ego and previously split-off parts of it, may initially be marked by an almost euphoric, idealizing transference, and by the appearance of supra-personal imagery in dreams and transference fantasy (p. 272). Encouragingly (from my point of view), and notwithstanding her psychoanalytic orientation, Kavaler-Adler explicitly acknowledges the archetypal quality of this imagery, and draws on Jungian thinking to locate it. Psychoanalytic psychotherapists might find these pages helpful in getting a handle on what, to them, I realize, is the sheer incomprehensibility of Jungian language. If interested, they might then want to read on, in other sources, to gain a fuller picture of Jungian thinking about the relationship of ego to self – a starting point might be Stevens (1982).

What, then, is the 'status' of the spiritual experiences recounted in this book? Describing Phillip, one of her patients, Kavaler-Adler says,

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> In retrospect, these phases appear to have been transitional stages in treatment, and in the developmental process of separation that Phillip was navigating through the mourning process. The spiritual beliefs associated with these transitional phases endure in his later psychic evolution, but they become less prominent in his mourning process later on, as he then relates directly to his psychodynamic conflicts in terms of his interpersonal relationships. The spiritual and transitional experiences become less important as literal truths as Phillip's interpersonal world becomes alive with day-to-day intimacy and whole self experience. Yet, the metaphors still stand, and Phillip continues to find them useful. (p. 276)

This tallies with Jungian experience that archetypal eruptions need, gradually, to be 'humanized' and woven into the routine fabric of experience. Concrete thinking has to give way to symbolism. In a similar way, from the Judaeo-Christian point of view, a crucial part of the journey is the descent from the heights, with their idealizing and somewhat manic intensity, and the gradual development of the ability, Blake-like, to find eternity in a grain of sand – 'Easter in Ordinary', in the title of a book by Nicholas Lash (1988).

Another spiritual aspect is reflected in Kavaler-Adler's preference for the language of the heart – a rich symbol in the Bible. Pointedly, she asks, 'Where is the human heart in psychoanalysis? Rarely do theorists deal with the heart as a psychic juncture of human experience; and she nails her colours to the mast, when she writes,

> I have found that speaking to analysands . . . using the language of the heart tends to be immediately communicative, often evoking a resonant response. There is generally a palpable impact when invoking the heart's needs, longings, and its wounds that we all ward off. It is certainly a more direct route to the contact involved in emotional touch than speaking of an id, ego, or superego, or even a libidinal ego or antilibidinal ego personified as an internal saboteur. (p. 4)

Do we think enough, I wonder, about the words we use, about the ways they resonate with, or afflict our patients' humanity? Reading these lines I am reminded of Bettleheim's devastating criticism of the vocabulary used in – and sometimes artificially created for – the standard English translation of Freud's works (Bettelheim 2001). It is particularly fitting that a psychoanalytic discussion of mourning should also speak the language of the heart.

But what of the demon lovers? In *The Compulsion to Create: Women Writers and their Demon Lovers*, Kavaler-Adler illustrated the ways in which her female subjects had incorporated – rather than internalized – intensely destructive aspects either of their fathers or, more damagingly, if the primary trauma occurred at an earlier developmental stage, maternal deficits, which were then stoked by the advent of oedipal desires in relation to brutal or emotionally withholding fathers. These dynamics are evident in their writing in which the demon lover may be idealized (Emily Brontë's Heathcliff), or denigrated (Sylvia Plath's Daddy). The compulsion to create fails, as a therapeutic tool, when the same dynamic is – Fairbairn-like – endlessly repeated. However, if the author achieves some

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capacity to mourn, as Kavaler-Adler suggests Charlotte Brontë did, then their characters become more genuinely human, showing both flaws and strengths. These dynamics are further explored in *Mourning, Spirituality and Psychic Change.*

As Joyce McDougall suggests, mourning provides Susan Kavaler-Adler with a rich and multi-dimensional focus through which to explore many aspects of the therapeutic task.

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'Henri Matisse. The Invisible Man'

HILARY SPURLING

Author of *Matisse the Master:*
A Life of Henri Matisse: the Conquest of Colour 1909-1954
Winner of the 2005 Whitbread prize

Discussant: ***JAMES FISHER***
Joint Editor, *Journal of the British Association of Psychotherapists*

Chair: ***Lesley Caldwell***
Editor: *Art, Creativity, Living*

Saturday, 11 February 2006
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