

Preface

The Intimate Edge of Experience

AMANDA DOWD
 EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
ANZSJA, Sydney, Australia

In Christopher Bollas' latest book *The Freudian Moment* (2007), he describes a relational coupling, 'the Freudian pair', as comprising the 'free associating analysand and the evenly suspended analyst' (p. 13). He goes on to quote Freud:

'...the attitude that the analytic physician could most advantageously adopt was to *surrender* himself to his own unconscious mental activity in a state of evenly suspended attention, to avoid so far as possible reflection and the construction of conscious expectations, not to try to fix anything he heard particularly in his memory, and by these means to catch the drift of the patient's *unconscious with his own unconscious*'. (Freud, 1923, p. 238 in Bollas, 2007, p. 13)[italics added]

Bollas reclaims, for his Freudian colleagues at any rate, the central ground of the unconscious-to-unconscious link in both the formation and therapeutic value of any depth 'psychoanalytic pair' as this distinguished historical relational constellation might now be more aptly named. Those trained within a Jungian and post-Jungian psychoanalytic tradition might wish to claim the revelation of what that unconscious-to-unconscious link might actually mean and feel like relationally by citing Jung's *Psychology of the Transference*, first published in 1946, as a seminal text.



The image chosen by Conference organisers for the Conference and hence used as a 'cover' image for these published *Proceedings* is taken from *Collected Works*, Vol. 12, *Psychology and Alchemy* (p. 147). This drawing, entitled 'the union of irreconcilables: marriage of water and fire' is described as being 'after an Indian painting' and is taken from a nineteenth century text.¹ Jung utilised this drawing to illustrate a point about method:

'If reason is not to be outraged on the one hand and the creative play of images not violently suppressed on the other, a circumspect and far-sighted synthetic procedure is required in order to accomplish the paradoxical union of irreconcilables.' (para. 186)

Here Jung makes the point that if reason and imagination are to coexist, a way must be found/created which 'brings together' seemingly oppositional forces, energies or elements. In this image, the 'irreconcilables' are depicted as fire and water; intellect and emotion; masculine and feminine; in passionate embrace.

Jung's re-discovery of such arcane images speaks to his significant contribution to the understanding and practice of the psychoanalytic 'healing' relationship: that beneath and alongside the necessary state of 'surrender' with its attitude of 'evenly suspended attention' there is indeed a hidden 'passion' enjoined: both intrapsychically and inter-relationally.

Jung's opus is predicated on a language of dualistic, seemingly oppositional patterns of 'pairing'; contained, yet circumambulated and with an eye to telos. But this image is an adaptation from an Indian image out of a non-dualistic, plural cosmic fantasy. Perhaps, when considering this collection of papers, we might also focus on the *circulation* or flux, in, through and around 'difference'; an interpenetration, an elemental coniunctio, a passionate encounter. The many hands pointing to the many ways of approaching and 'coming to grips' with the elements of being; the heart of the matter.

An image such as this can be read as a representation of both intra-psychic and inter-relational patterns of engagement. We can think of that unconscious-to-unconscious link mentioned earlier as an elemental coniunctio or circulation as depicted in the alchemical image by the circulating fire and water; we can think of intuition arising out of such intra-psychic and inter-relational patterns of engagement.

All of the papers presented in this collection are evidence of that ‘passionate encounter’ between a relational pair: analyst/patient; anthropologist/subject; teacher/student; person and culture; one culture and another; and the recognition of and circulation around and through difference.

And each, in their own way, also demonstrates the fruits of additional ‘passionate encounters’, married with the intra-psychic capacity for surrender and ‘catching the drift’, with the realms of idea, image and feeling to arrive at an emotionally coherent and satisfying distillation of what it is like to encounter an Other at the intimate edge of experience.

And what of the ‘hidden’ passions? Judith Pickering, in her Panel Contribution, *Ancestral and Mythic Themes in the Consulting Room*, reminds us that:

‘...the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of... It is the patient’s secret, the rock against which he is shattered’. (C.G. Jung, 1963, p. 117)

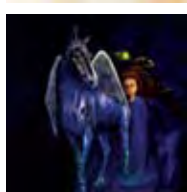
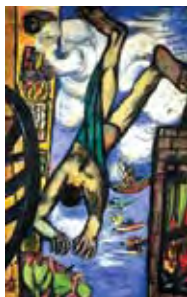
The contributions from those teachers of Jungian and depth psychoanalytic ideas in this collection presented their own experiences of engaging with the ‘story not [yet] told’. Judith goes on to highlight the potential for the academy to function as a facilitating environment; an ‘amplificatory temenos’ or location which can, ideally, function in a manner complementary to - rather than antagonistic to - the therapeutic work of bringing ‘unthought knowns’ (Bollas, 1987) to consciousness.

It also made me reflect on the ‘untold stories’, the ‘hidden passions’, the quiet voices also gathered at this Conference.

Different facilitating environments, different frames, focus attention, care and energy on the ‘matter’ under investigation in subtly different ways, for example the clinician may be more (but not wholly, of course) engaged with the process of *the way in which* thought/mind/subjectivity comes into being and is experienced; the academic/teacher may be more engaged with the thoughts themselves and their application to specific task or argument.

Each paper can be downloaded, usefully, separately, but we urge readers to consider the whole as a demonstration of what it takes to encounter and hold in mind radical Otherness where ‘taken for granted’ arenas of human experience are challenged. Both papers and Conference played around the themes of what separates and connects, as clinicians, teachers, students, cultures – people - how different/similar we are to one another; how much we dare to reveal in one another’s company, how we drive one another mad. But, perhaps more importantly than this, how we can help each other to think, make sense, bear the unbearable and locate hope.

As the reader moves through from consulting room to seminar room to ‘country’ the changes in the patterns of the transference/countertransference relationship and how it might be engaged with can be, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, discerned. Similarities and difference. Food for thought. Psychoanalytic practice privileges experience over knowing and yet, as these papers ably demonstrate, there are different kinds of experience and different ways of knowing and coming to know. The qualitative differences and similarities can be discerned. Perhaps it is what we do with that experience and knowing that separates and connects us as practitioners – in whatever field - and people.



The ‘geometry’ of the *Proceedings* presents the contributions of analysts and academics, in conversation, and follows the internal logic of experience and idea presented during the two-day conference rather than the actual programme. The Editorial Committee wishes to thank David Tacey for graciously relinquishing his keynote speaker status to facilitate this.

Hopefully, this allows for a circulation through experience, idea, feeling and image in context.

If we consider the images² that each of the authors of the nine main papers have chosen to accompany their text as selected facts (from W. Bion, after Poincare, 1963) – i.e. designators of an organising pattern that gives a sense of coherence to the elements of their work - then we might have a story line that goes something like this:

- Falling through the gap
- Isolation/alienation
- Support/binding
- Encounter
- Spiral
- Dark horse
- Plurality
- Prayer/devotion
- Water crossing

Each illuminates an area of specific ‘passionate engagement’ and yet, taken as a whole, following the line through, what reveals itself is a processa pattern of engagement.....

John Morton, who introduced the second panel discussion (and from whom we unfortunately do not have a written contribution), reminded us of Jung’s dream of the house with many levels – perhaps, now, an iconic metaphor

for a depth psychology of subjectivity. It is an archaeological image, of slow revealing, of 'going down', of finding bedrock; a place to stand. Many of us 'find' in this dream (and I am here taking the meaning of the word 'dream' to refer broadly to a foundational pattern or template) – and by extension Jung's opus – a pattern that makes sense, something that we can recognise ourselves in, or want or long to recognise ourselves in.

Hopefully, for academics, analysts and other practitioners, and students, the Conference papers in this collection will address some of the anxiety that surrounds the 'mystery' of what is happening in the local community – both consulting room and seminar room. That is, perhaps it begins to address the question for one another: what are we each doing – and just as importantly, not doing - with the Jungian dream? Papers by Fullerton, Clark and Devereaux, Tacey, Russell, Stewart and Bishop speak particularly to this question.

This dreaming pattern, however, is indigenous to the North and the West. In our region, Oceania, this deep pattern cohabitates with radically Other dreaming structures and patterns. Jadran Mimica's paper on the Yagwoia of East Papua New Guinea helps re-locate us in this region and Craig San Roque's review of Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria* helps re-orient our thinking towards the different dreaming pattern or way of being resident here.

There is a need to meet and be met by something recognisable and that recognises us in return; to 'find' ourselves in the familiar. There is also a need to recognise the Other as Other; to 'come to terms' with the unfamiliar, with difference. And to come to terms with ourselves as being 'the unfamiliar' to the Other.

Hopefully, these different patterns are *not* irreconcilable; hopefully we can resist any desire to set them in opposition. Hopefully we can return to our Indian drawing and imagine different elements circulating in erotic play.

Leslie Devereaux, in her paper *Between You and Me*, describes the suspension of the normalising belief in the world as we already expect it to be as the ‘phenomenological epoche’. This is the sine qua non of the capacity to be open to the other as Other in a non-narcissistic way; one practises being in a state of ‘arriving’ at seeing and understanding through experience; paying due attention to both the richness and complexities of the present moment and the process. Leslie reminds us that ‘the self and the other are ideas inseparable from each other... And so the encounter with the other is also the encounter with the self and to know, amid this projection and difference, what is what, is perhaps the heart of human difficulty’.

Leah Carter, a Conference attendee and PhD student from Western Australia, had this to say about Leslie Devereaux’ paper:

‘I was moved by the poignancy of Leslie Devereaux’ account of her experience in Mexico, where she set herself the task of embodying the lived experience “walking with short steps” of the women in the culture that was the subject of her research. The significance of her story was for me twofold; as an expression of a cultural process that embodies lived meaning and as a metaphor for the slow and painful learning of wisdom. There was profound meaning held in the belt that each woman made and wore for life after painstakingly acquiring each skill needed to create it. It seemed to form a wholeness in its role of adornment and beauty, of modesty and of constancy whereby it was worn always, leaving its mark on the body. The story touched my sense of the attenuation of a meaningful aesthetic at these levels in current Western culture; evoked a deep longing.’ (pers. comm.)

Isn’t it precisely because of the attenuation of which Leah speaks that we desire to meet, write and are curious about what others are thinking and doing.

The metaphor of this woven, dyed belt, signifying an embodied experience of the interconnectedness of life in all of its forms, is beautifully illustrated by this passage of Leslie's:

‘Without the frost under my foot, the grassy patches between forest and cornfield would not be good pasturage for sheep. Without the baaing of the lambs, the wool in the belt would be gone. Without the truck horns the colourfast red dye from German companies in Guatemala would have to come by mule train, and be more costly. Without the wood smoke from the disappearing oak forests, how would the weaver cook her corn into tortillas? So it is clear that my belt is made of an infinitude of non-belt elements. It has no separate existence from this web of non-belt elements.’

This is a feminine statement, out of a feminine and profoundly ecological sensibility; if not a hidden passion at the Conference, perhaps an under-represented one.

This collection expresses some of the diversity found in the minds and hearts of some of those at work in this country who deal with the matter of psychic pain and making sense. Each is a revelation from ‘the inside out’. A small contribution to beginning to think about the question: What are we doing here?

The Editorial Committee wishes to thank all contributors for their thoughtfulness, generosity and goodwill in working with us. Thanks also to Tim Hartridge our graphics designer for his generosity, creativity and willingness to accommodate our particular needs. Thanks to all for your patience as we find our way around the web publishing domain!

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NOTES

1. The Union of Irreconcilables: marriage of water and fire. After an Indian painting: from Mueller N., *Glauben, Wissen und Kunst der alten Hindus*, Plate II, fig.17, 1822.
2. The images reproduced here are those found on the first page of each of the main papers in this collection. Permissions and acknowledgements, where necessary, can be found at the end of each paper.

REFERENCE

Bollas, C. (2007) *The Freudian Moment*, Karnac, London