

Response

to Peter Fullerton

The Making of a Representative

*Identifying what informs an authority to speak when
working with couples in marital psychotherapy*

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In that very particular vehicle of the ‘analytical hour’ we travel with Peter Fullerton to the metaphorical space where unconscious material is constellated; a space that brings forth a *relationship* of mutual unconsciousness.

Peter helps us to get a handle on this double un-knowing by reference to Doris Lessing’s fantastical images of Paradise and Paradise Lost: that eternal human drama of pre-consciousness depicted as an Eden-like geography and demography, contrasted with the arrival of consciousness and the accompanying dramatic pains and subtle joys of shouldering the responsibility for our knowing and acting.

The move is a good one! How else could we gain images of *not knowing* except through building a bridge, a metaphor, between a description of a known world (even one that is fictional) and the unknown and unknowable world of the unconscious?

My own interest was aroused by the role of she-who-is-handmaiden or, he-who-is-skilled-at-human husbandry, the one who encourages the entry into

this space of the double unknowing and the mutual unknowable - as we slouch towards our Bethlehem.

It is this skilful role, as I understand it, which gives 'an authority to speak' as in the title of Peter's paper.

Analyst and analysands tie an unconscious knot and, in my looking into this space, I imagine it to be a knot of *not* knowing: an actual negation of thing-ness!

I am drawn to how real this knot of unconscious material is for Peter. How the experiential rupture is held as a fertile wound, a meeting of wounds (Max's, Cheryl's and Peter's): a mutuality of experience for which Peter, as therapist, becomes a representative.

It is a reality shaped of desire, loss, and longing. No wonder it is 'the aspect of their marriage which they had most difficulty recognising'.

And, as Peter says, in this work the therapist invites 'contamination' - physician, take your own medicine!

The rupture to understanding is shared by all and on all fronts - the absence of objective thing-ness, of objective understanding, remains to the bitter end. The driving emotion that seems to shape the analytical hour is experienced, to the end, as *bittersweet*: the analyst is always a full participant!

Lessing's display of an archetypal drama, a drama that skilfully questions the taken-for-granted nature of a fixed reality, suggests that survival, or 'transcendence' if you prefer, is more in evidence as an ambivalent display of the dialectic of desire, more a story of conflict between desire and reality, than the surface dynamics that immediately meet the therapeutic eye.