STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Christopher Bollas' *Streams of Consciousness* is available in two volumes

1974–1990

1991–2024

STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Notebooks 1974–1990

Christopher Bollas

KARNAC

firing the mind

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Preface

These notebooks are presented in two volumes, spanning the period from 1974 to 2024. They are preceded by a brief history in order to provide the reader with an account of those teachers and writers who influenced some of the ideas in this text.

Never intended for a reader's eye, many of the early entries were written in the few minutes between psychoanalytical sessions when thoughts arrived that I felt were worth noting. Most were dated and titled to provide some organization, especially when it became clear that lines of thought were emerging that needed some form of identification.

Through the years, I rarely revisited previous entries. The notebooks functioned less as a repository of ideas which might be reviewed and reconsidered, and more as a medium for thinking—rather like a conversation with an other, ideas displaced by the next thoughts that arrive.

Although the writing mind does leave traces in the sand, if thoughts are left untouched and unreviewed, not exploited for revisionist thinking, they serve a rather unique potential that lives in the act of writing itself. When I look back, I find myself looking into a curious mirror. I see the familiar guise of a writing personality but each revisiting reveals a new movement of thought, one that invites—indeed provokes—contradictions, odd juxtapositions, and neologisms. Ordinary words may take on entirely new meanings without my necessarily knowing what is meant. In such a circumstance, the writer follows the pen, and over time establishes an intriguing intrasubjective relation between consciousness and the unconscious. Our inner phenomenology enacts this relation.

In the notebooks, I refer to many of the writers who have influenced me, and the order in which they appear provides an essential link to the associative logic of the entries. They include works across the literary spectrum, from ancient texts and well known literary milestones to so-called "lesser" writers, and specialists whose works are comparatively unknown.

Were this an academic work, with the aim of commenting on the full spectrum of writers that influenced my work, these allusions would need to be fully referenced. This, however, is not

a work of scholarship. When I mention writers or lines from their works they are often cited from memory, and memory is imperfect. These partial references are also part of the history and evolution of my thoughts, and to eliminate a reference because the full details cannot be found would disable that history. The re-collected arrives in the stream of consciousness, sometimes mangled by misremembering, prompted by odd contextualization (what is this idea doing in this context?), and sometimes it is the product of pure invention.

The reader will find some passages in which quotations are correct and fully cited. The intent of such accuracy was usually to copy the passage down exactly, so that in this act of writing I could slow my mind down. This allowed the author's lines to ramify through the receptive work of unconscious thinking, acting as memory aides for an underlying process of thought. As with recollections of a conversation, any two selves engaged in a free-moving dialogue will have distinctly different narratives of what was said. When neither is held to account by a registrar from consciousness, the two selves find freedom of thought.

In preparing the notebooks for publication, I decided to keep the original text almost entirely as it was, deleting only occasional fragments that were too insubstantial to be of significance. I felt that the addition of comments and footnotes, although potentially clarifying, would remove the reader from the direct experience of the particular idiom of unconscious to conscious thinking.

These private notes were not, for the most part, preambles to published works, and many of the entries could have formed nuclei of essays that never saw the light of day. Writing the notes remained a separate part of my intellectual life, representing moments in time when an idea arrived from the unconscious to acquire further derivatives; allowing consciousness to grapple with an unconsciously driven stream of thought.

So, how might you, the reader, meander through this text?

I am reminded of Ulrich Knoepflmacher, my professor of Joyce studies at UC-Berkeley. He ended his introductory lecture on *Ulysses* by saying "There is only one way to read this work." We all leaned forward in eager anticipation. "Get a six pack of beer, begin in the morning, and read through the day and the night. Do not stop and query. No guidebooks! Just keep reading and reading. And then *eventually* you will get him. He will be *your* Joyce, not mine, or anyone else's. But you will never forget this and it will be with you the rest of your life." His words had a profound impact on me.

So, as you head into these notebooks, be kind to yourself. If you do not understand me, no worries. The chances are that I did not understand my own view at the time. As you will see, I frequently contradict myself; I openly disagree with myself. In the early years, from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, I often tear apart and reassemble concepts. Little about psychoanalytic theory is settled. What is the ego? What is the self? What is character? What is idiom? A proposed solution will often be destroyed in a subsequent entry, and on occasion the early attempts prove more precise than later ones.

The book prints a process not an accomplishment.

It may help the reader's orientation to read "Character: The Language of Self" published in 1974. Written in 1973 it congregates some of the seminal ideas that continued to sponsor my writing.

Brief history

This brief history is intended to address the important question of influence. All writers are derivative of those who have preceded them and along with the flow of cultural memes there are countless other sources that contribute to one's thinking.

I shall identify many of those with whom I have studied, both in the academic world and the schools of psychoanalysis, and those who have been my supervisors. However, like most people, I have also learned a great deal in conversation, even from very brief exchanges.

For example, Norman O. Brown came to visit one day and asked to see my waiting room—which I took as a reference to my consulting room. We went to the waiting room and he sat down and … well … waited. I pointed out that the consulting room was just round the corner and he replied that he preferred to sit in the waiting room. He then asked, "What do you think they are waiting for?" That single question has stayed with me for life. It evoked an unthought known axiom, and it was to remain in the matrices of my unconscious.

Indeed, the concept of the unthought known is not original. For centuries we have known that we contain forms of knowledge that we cannot put into conscious thought, much less into speech. It was an ordinary day at the Austen Riggs Center when I sat back in my chair in my office and I asked myself, "What is this book about?" [*The Shadow of the Object*] immediately, the words "unthought known" popped into my mind.

It was delivered by the Other—my unconscious—but it remained for me to try to figure out what it meant.

What about the term "transformational object"? Certainly we can find its roots in Bion's notion of "transformation". Was that its origin? Again, I can recall when the idea arrived and its context. In an intensive Winnicottian analysis, the analysand is carefully steered into regression to dependence, and the experience is profound. The analyst is the figure of the transference, but what struck me as remarkable was the *process* we term psychoanalysis. When I asked myself

what this was, the term "transformational object" came immediately to mind. Some years later, Joe Sandler said he thought it worded the experience of being inside the analytical process.

Many ideas are launched in conversation and in this section I list those who have been for me the most significant figures in the conversational world. Those not included can be found at the end of the history in the Acknowledgements.

I hope that this contextual information may help to orientate the reader. Although the notebooks were begun only in 1974, they reflect my experience in the 1960s, so we begin there.

UC Berkeley: 1960s

How did I come to psychoanalysis and where was I before I started writing these notebooks?

As a student at the University of California I sought psychotherapy to help me with anxieties and symptoms that were bewildering to me. At the same time, Frederic Crews—later famous for his *Freud Wars* critique of psychoanalysis—invited me to attend his graduate seminar on Psychoanalysis and Literature. Our analytical texts were mainly American classics, including works by Charles Brenner and Jacob Arlow. We also read Faulkner's *The Bear*. The Crews seminar became an intellectual template. Our Freud reading stayed very close to the text, going over the same passage again and again, taking in the precise wording, syntax, and flow of ideas. This allowed us to study a product of unconscious thinking in a way that seldom happens in clinical trainings. While clinicians can never share the same patient, those in applied analysis—commenting on poems, plays, novels, historical events etc.—can share the experience directly, in real time. It is a highly effective way to teach psychoanalytical thinking.

In the summer of 1966 together with my close friend, Michel Small (a UC student), who was also interested in psychoanalysis, we vowed to read Otto Fenichel's formidable text *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neuroses* and to discuss our reading for a few hours every week. These conversations allowed two novices to share ignorance and slowly, slowly, begin to wise up.

I studied American colonial history and historiography at Berkeley. Historical time—the sequence of *events*—is a logic of the real. Study the steps of historical action and you find the material to be highly overdetermined, made up of multiple separate but related strands that share space and time.

My senior thesis was a study of the psychological conflicts manifested by the earliest settlers in Boston. I found Wilhelm Stekel's works of considerable use in translating their complex repressions into an understanding of the underlying issues they were avoiding.

I moved into psychology and history as I studied slavery and the mind of the plantation slave with Kenneth Stampp, whose book *The Peculiar Institution* argued that Black people were not cognitively inferior to white people but that their apparent stupidity was in fact an intelligent act of adaptation to their oppressors. They gave the impression of inferiority in order to protect themselves from graver violations against them.

I studied with Alan Dundes, professor of anthropology and expert on Ferenczi and Roheim. His lectures on the cultural unconscious and racism remained ingrained in his

students. Using what seemed like simple childish jokes, he showed how these emerged from forced integration, for example the bussing of Black Americans to white schools. The elephant joke, he pointed out, expressed a racist fear that Black folks were going to move into the neighbourhood. (A man puts elephant manure on his lawn. "Why are you doing that?" asks a neighbour. "To keep the elephants away." "But there are no elephants near here." "You see—it works!")

The East Bay Activity Center

From 1967–1969 I was a counsellor at the East Bay Activity Center in Oakland California, where I was thrown into the deep end of intense work with highly disturbed children. Their individual plights and solitary anguish were compelling. Several of the senior staff had studied with Anna Freud in London and brought her perspectives to the work, so we had in the back of our minds the road map we call "psychodevolopment". This informed our thinking and provided us with reassuring evidence in a world in which things seemed not at all clear. The evidence was those visible psychic steps that we all travel and that distinguish a four-year-old from a six-year-old, and an eleven-year-old from a fifteen-year-old.

This was the era of Margaret Mahler and her important work on autism. Although we found these texts useful, they tended to be experience-distant, so when I happened to see a review in the *TLS* of Guntrip's book *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self*, I ordered it and devoured it, because it showed the reader how to use the theories in clinical practice.

The British were dedicated to being clinically effective. From Guntrip I moved on to read Winnicott, Balint, Klein, and Fairbairn. Klein allowed me to imagine (creatively invent?) the internal worlds of the puzzling children who were such a crucial part of my life.

The Bay Area was awash with the fecund world of Gestalt psychology most commonly associated with Fritz Perls at Essalen. I found some of his ideas compelling, but it was the work of the Palo Alto Group—Gregory Bateson, Donald Jackson, and Jay Haley—that I found most useful in thinking about human interaction. *The Pragmatics of Human Communication* by Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson, provided a very different view of what we would term "character", and over the years I maintained an interest in the gestalts of human action and interaction. I also read Austin on illocutionary acts and Searle on speech acts. (Searle was at Berkeley and played a prominent role in the Free Speech Movement.) To my way of thinking the theory of illocutionary action fitted into the realms being discussed by the Palo Alto group and, looking back, contributed to my interest in character as action.

I found Heinz Werner's text *The Comparative Psychology of Mental Development* eye-opening. It conveyed many different lines of thought that were endemic to the depth psychologies, and I think its structuralization of pluralistic thinking was foundational for me. I find, for example, that I am as much at home reading Howard Gardiner's *Frames of Mind* as any of the psychoanalytical texts. I also found clinically useful some of the predicates and practices of the Transactional school, notably Eric Berne.

University of Buffalo: literature and psychology

In 1969 I drove east to the University of Buffalo where I was to do a PhD in English literature. There I was enrolled in the "Literature and Psychology" program which was part of the English department. The program included psychologists and psychoanalysts and the monthly meetings of the Group for Applied Psychology involved people from various university departments and from within the community. Warren Bennis, a leading figure in organizational psychology attended, as did Heinz Lichtenstein, the eminent psychoanalyst and student of Martin Heidegger. Guests dropped by all the time and I was fortunate to meet Kenneth Burke whose work on rhetoric as intersubjective action (my interpretation of him) influenced my understanding of character as the idiom of a self's actions and interactions. Indeed, the issue of how our being enacts axioms from our unconscious is an area studied by many great American psychologists, amongst them Abraham Maslow and the remarkable American ego psychologist George Klein, whose work I read when I was at Austen Riggs in the middle 1980s.

Riggs inherited and treasured the interface between classical psychology and psychoanalysis. The seminar on the ego conducted there by David Rapaport during the 1950s was attended by Roy Shafer, Robert Holt, and others. Ego theory insisted that behaviour be included in the assessment of ego functioning. For me this was an interesting road to travel in searching for a language to identify character moves, motives, disorders, and transformative potentials in a psychoanalysis.

Nelson Rockefeller had called Buffalo the "University of the twenty-first century". He had put a fortune into gathering a remarkable faculty, and at the time it was the most radical and creative English department in the country. Many poets and writers from the Black Mountain School (which had closed) found their way to Buffalo, including Robert Creeley and Gregory Corso as well as the doyen of that group, Charles Olson. They joined other poets and novelists such as Carl Dennis and John Barth.

But above all it was Robert Hass who would change my way of thinking. Deeply familiar with psychoanalytical thinking, he made implicit use of it. In a seminar on Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Hass and others on the faculty taught us in depth how a poem *thinks*. This was an act of sustained immersion: we suspended consciousness to allow unconscious thinking to receive and communicate the logic of the poetic text.

At a first reading, most great poems elude consciousness. They are unconscious presentations, and they require hearing or reading again and again before our consciousness begins to gather *some* of that unconscious thinking, and then to consider and organize it. The subtitle of the *Prelude* is *Growth of a Poet's Mind* and I think this work, along with Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams,* became the background for my own views of unconscious thinking and free association.

Encountering a complex poem is remarkably similar to listening to a patient's narrative. The logic of a poem moves at times in cryptic condensations that are similar to free associative speech. The finest teacher of psychoanalytic thinking, in my view, is the astonishing literary critic Helen Vendler. As she critically examines poets and their works we find an evolution of

Freudian method that is stunning. Her analysis of syntax opens up a perspective that allows us to see how, and in what ways, character is syntactical.

Buffalo also had a strong contingent of French writers and philosophers such as René Girard, whose lectures on the "enemy twin" were complex musings on the psychic reality of the double: a forerunner of my own thinking on the borderline personality. A variety of psychoanalysts would come for extended visits. In particular, I found Guy Rosolato's detailed lecture on the movement of the phonemic (words echoing one another) highly illuminating.

Our resident genius was Michel Foucault. His English was not great and as my French was merely touristic, I found his lectures hard to comprehend. But, perhaps because my father was French, somewhere in my unconscious I *seemed* to understand him.

At Buffalo I studied Lacan's work with Stuart Schneiderman, who left the university to enter analysis with Lacan. In the late 1970s, after publication of my essays in the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*, Lacan conveyed his appreciation of my work and his wife, Laurence Bataille, who was editor of *L'Ornicar,* asked me to contribute to the journal. Through readings and conversations I eventually grasped *my* Lacan, and I used his structural theory (symbolic, imaginary, real) as a psychodynamic reality. I have since then seen the constant interplay of the self within these differing realities and I have often found Lacanian writings inspiring because of the doors they open or the questions they ask or the puzzles they offer.

Meanwhile at Buffalo, while studying for my PhD in literature, with the kind, careful, and thoughtful guidance of Lloyd Clarke MD, head of the psychology section of the Student Health Center, I was trained on the job to do psychotherapy with students and faculty. With the authorization of S. Mouchly Small, psychoanalyst and head of psychiatry at the university medical school, I attended rounds with the psychiatric residents, and we spent time at Buffalo State Mental Hospital interviewing institutionalized male schizophrenics. On ward rounds in the hospital various psychiatrists taught us how to observe a distressed person, what to look for, and how to form a diagnosis.

I was working two days a week at the Student Health Center, and Clarke and I, with the help of Murray Schwartz (English Department), set up a training in psychotherapy for graduate students in the humanities.

The weekly staff meetings were a wonderful soup of views: Rogerian, T-groupers, encounter therapists, Jungians, existential psychoanalysts, systems theoreticians, and ego psychologists. These remarkable meetings, in which the group would concentrate on the task of discussing a new patient, were living proof of the value of differing perspectives. Every approach bore within its predicates crucial assumptions that also operated within psychoanalysis, and I would transfer ideas from these approaches into my psychoanalytical vision.

As with all university departments, Buffalo's faculty and students shared space but followed diverse schools of thought. The era of Formalism was waning, giving way to Structuralism, Phenomenology, and the abstract-hungry schools of critical theory. What we called "applied psychoanalysis" had a long history. Beginning with Freud's own analyses of literature, it found its way into anthropology (Lévi-Strauss, Weston La Barre), history (Hofstadter and Schorske),

political theory (Sheldon Wolin), philosophy (Marcuse and Norman O. Brown), and even further afield.

The psychoanalytical wing of the English Department had been assembled by Norman Holland, a Shakespeare scholar who undertook non-clinical psychoanalytic training in Boston and went on to write crucial texts applying psychoanalytical concepts to literature. He was joined by Leslie Fiedler (my dissertation director), Robert Rogers, Murray Schwartz, Richard Wilburn, Jim Swann, Mel Faber and others, who formed the most cohesive graduate program in “lit and psych” anywhere.

Not long after I arrived, Buffalo discovered the British School of psychoanalysis and one full semester was devoted to the reading of Marion Milner’s *The Hands of the Living God*. Murray Schwartz, gifted Shakespeare scholar, would write one of the first Winnicottian essays, “Where Is Literature?”, which has become a classic over the decades.

Smith College and Beth Israel, Boston

In 1972 I left Buffalo to study at Smith College. I had applied to both the British Psychoanalytical Society and the Hampstead Child Analysis training. Anna Freud asked that I gain a “proper” clinical training and license, and she recommended Smith, where I could gain an MSW in one calendar year.

In those days the college was founded on ego psychology and I was fortunate to study with Paul Seton (member of the Western New England Psychoanalytic Society) and Donald Fern, a brilliant young analyst who died prematurely in his forties. The psychiatric social workers on the faculty were outstanding clinical thinkers and their attention to the detail of a session was grounding. My clinical placement was in the Department of Psychiatry of Beth Israel Hospital in Boston which was staffed by psychoanalysts.

1971 saw the publication of Kohut’s *Analysis of the Self.* All serious clinicians were reading it and many were changed by it in vital ways. A senior Boston analyst said, when discussing a patient who some thought needed analysis, “No! The only people who need analysis are psychiatrists training to be analysts. It is not for the guy on the street.” I was shocked, but at that time his view was not controversial. With Kohut evoking hope in clinicians that they really could help highly disturbed people, ego psychology gave way to new movements in America and a new view of psychoanalysis.

At Beth Israel I was most fortunate to attend Arnold Modell’s seminar on object relations. A kind, shy, and brilliant man, Modell was one of the very few senior American analysts who really grasped the British approach to psychoanalysis. For me, his musings on “the intermediate area of experience” were especially resonant.

I also attended Peter Sifneos’ workshop on focal psychoanalysis. He taught me many things, but top of the list was his insistence that comments to a patient must be lucid, and should connect with what they had just talked about. Although he was not, I think, familiar with the work of Bion, Sifneos was certainly into linking.

Beginning analysis and work in London

In the summer of 1973 I moved to England to begin psychoanalytic training, and in September I began my training analysis. There is nothing like five-times-a-week analysis—it is a remarkable experience—and although this first analysis was brief (about three years), when I resumed with another analyst the process was very similar. Both were members of the Independent Group, and this approach profoundly informed my view of the creativity of psychoanalysis.

Before beginning my formal analytic training, I worked as a psychotherapist at the Personal Consultation Centre (PCC) in Kings Cross, which offered psychotherapy to anyone who came through the door. It was a wonderful introduction to British culture and to those fascinating axioms that generated personality in mid-twentieth-century Britain. It was a good opportunity to study personality, and especially the schizoid phenomena that so fascinated D. W. Winnicott, Michael Balint, and Masud Khan.

The two years spent at the PCC also gave me time to find the English person within me. My father lived his first ten years in Paris, his adolescence in Argentina and Chile, and his early adulthood in the UK (in Surrey) before migrating to the United States in his mid-twenties. When I visited Paris for the first time to stay with relatives, I found aspects of my father and myself in the French idiom of personality. The same would prove true when I visited Argentina, recognising many of my father's mannerisms in the gregarious full-on lifestyle of these fascinating people.

I was slowly getting to know British psychoanalysis. At the PCC we were supervised by Geoffrey Thompson, a close friend of Samuel Beckett and Wilfred Bion. His supervisory comments were wonderfully elliptical and creative, like a music critic enjoying the mental instrumentations of *Homo sapiens*. People were an endless and fathomless surprise: "Oh my word, now, what do we make of that, eh?" he would say with great delight.

And it was through the PCC that I came to know John Bowlby. I remember sitting in his office at the Tavistock, impressed by this most remarkable and sincere scientist who had somehow landed in the fields of psychoanalysis. He provided heroic empathy, reaching across class, ethnicity, and age to actualize a hidden thread running through all of us that is deeply curative.

Politics and psychoanalysis in the community

As part of the Camden Council of Social Service, chaired by Pam Warren, our task at the PCC was not only to provide individual psychotherapy but also to be available for "community work". This was not new to me, and here I shall digress briefly to mention some political and cultural strands in my intellectual background which are frequently reflected in these notebooks.

From the age of sixteen I had been politically active in Orange County, California, especially in organizing effective opposition to landlords who rented cardboard homes to African American families in a ghetto in downtown Santa Ana. I was encouraged and supported by Arnold Hano—a writer and chair of our local Democratic Party group—who looked forward to my getting a driver's licence so I could put ideas into local practical action on behalf of our group.

With the help of a local dentist we lobbied the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and they stepped in to make changes. It was a good experience for an adolescent to see that modest political action could actually achieve things. I was something of a political nerd, spending my allowance on a subscription to publications such as the *Congressional Record*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, *Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, and *Soviet Union Illustrated Monthly*. I became active in the California Democratic Council and then with Citizens for Kennedy.

As editor of my high school newspaper—advocating civil rights—I was inevitably in the hair trigger of the John Birch Society (very prevalent in Orange County California) and was the recipient of a few "death threats" and blind confrontations at the cinema, in a cafe, anywhere in town. These confrontations continued for a decade and were instructive as I came to know some of the Birchers and understood aspects of their paranoia. It was another form of schooling.

My first serious encounter with psychoanalytic writing came with reading the works of Erich Fromm. *May Man Prevail* was transformative, and his weaving of Freud and Marx opened up new avenues of thought. My first two years of university were at the University of Virginia which I selected because its Woodrow Wilson School of Foreign Affairs was considered one of the best preparations for foreign service. The study of International Relations (something of an oxymoron) revealed perspectives devoid of any psychological understanding of the complexity involved, or of the challenge of employing psychological understanding in improving such relations.

Like so many of my generation, I joined the Civil Rights movement and took part in marches and demonstrations in the south before moving to UC Berkeley in 1964 to finish my undergraduate education. In 1965–1966 I worked as an intern for the Council for a World Without War chaired by Robert Pinkus.

I was tasked by the leadership of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at Berkeley with "negotiative skill". This meant, in the first place, going round to all the "Greek houses"—fraternities and sororities—to seek support. But my skill was evident in the fact that I was one of the few around who had a coat and tie and could "fit in" and the task was a good challenge. I subsequently connected a member of the Board of Regents with Professor Kenneth Stampp because no faculty member at that time could contact a Regent, but of course the obvious solution was to ask a Regent to contact a faculty member. I was given a nickname—"the problem-solver"—which may have identified my interest in the psychology of conflict and how to go about using psychological insight into mitigating conflict.

I knew various members of the Black Panther party and in 1967 I met La Verne Wells, an African American counsellor-intern at The East Bay Activity Center. We became good friends and she introduced me to her brother, Bobby Wells, chair of the Black Students Union at Oakland Arts and Crafts. They welcomed me into the community in the "flat lands" of Oakland and I came to know and to value the grace and tolerance of this community, and I learned many things that I carried with me to Buffalo in 1969.

In the 1968 election I was the "Orange County Representative" for the Peace and Freedom Party. I represented Eldridge Cleaver (whom I had met) and was elected for this post because

I was white and could get on the beaches and run faster than anyone else. Those were my qualifications.

In the early 1970s in Buffalo, I worked with Joan Clarke at the Erie County Manpower Development Project, funded by Rockefeller to stimulate changes in impoverished communities in the state. I taught “interviewing techniques” to their Black American students who were learning how to be “block leaders”. I well remember our first meeting. In the lead-up to discussing methods of interviewing, I mentioned in passing Freud’s structural theory. The group jumped on it. “So, what *is* the id?” It took up our first hour and they ran with it. In our next meeting, we discussed the ego and the superego. The group took over, and they now explored the practical issues of talking to a troubled person on their block, equipped with a theory of psychodynamic conflict. This experience in Buffalo taught me vividly how depth psychology can be used in community work.

In the 1990s, Nicky Gavron, Deputy Mayor of London, invited me and two other analysts, Robert Hinshelwood and David Bell, to join a bi-weekly study group to examine why Labour lost the 1994 election. This was a group of remarkable historians and cultural theorists, including Stuart Hall, politicians Tessa Jowell and Tessa Blackstone, and journalist Will Hutton, who in my view provided a model of how psychoanalysis can contribute to social change.

In 2016 I was invited to lead seminars at INSEAD (Singapore) on how psychoanalysis can teach people involved in international relations new means of understanding befuddling differences and forge new relations. INSEAD had for decades had three psychoanalysts on their staff teaching hundreds of students.

My work as a consultant to people in government has been completely confidential and remains so. It has, however, been an important part of the uses of psychoanalysis and its ability to explain conflict and forge solutions remains to be fully tapped. In the meantime, works by Gordon Lawrence (and many others from the Tavistock) remain as substantial learning posts to push our understanding of political conflict into a mature future.

The French connection

At the British Psychoanalytical Society trainees did not begin seminars until at least a year into their training analysis, and in my early years in London I spent more time communing with French analysts than with their British counterparts. In 1974 I met J.-B. Pontalis and he invited me to write for the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*. When I visited him in Paris it was as if I had come home. I met André Green a year later and for years he, J-B, and I would meet at cafes or their homes, where we would dive into intense discussions of theory.

No two people could be more different. J-B was quiet, contemplative, ironic, and a poet. André was a verbal warrior, intense, a dialectician (he needed conflict to think), and rough—like Herman Melville’s hurly burly prose.

How can we discuss conversation as a medium for thinking? What happens to ideas that are broached as each thinker/speaker alters their meaning? More than any other psychoanalytical

culture I know, the French think through conversation. Their journal *Combat* testifies to the art of verbal and intellectual fencing. This idiom is reflected in French prose, which is less formal, structured, and predictable than the English essay. Its impressionistic, almost circular spin of ideation is, as Blanchot puts it, an "Infinite Conversation". Maybe the French idiom of writing mirrors inner speech.

I wrote three essays for the *Nouvelle Revue*, written in English and published in French: "Le langage secret de la mère et de l'enfant" (*NRP*, No. 14, 1976), "L'esprit de l'object et l'épiphanie du sacré" (*NRP*, No. 18, 1978), and "Comment l'hysterique prend de l'analyste: l'effet de la conversion dans le contre-transfert" (*NRP*, No. 24, 1981). When Pontalis invited a writer to contribute, he would include a brilliant essay of his own on the same topic. These essays were an inspiration, illustrating what a creative editor can do to challenge psychoanalysts to think outside the box.

In the following years I also got to know Janine Chassaguet-Smirgel. In the mid-1980s I invited her to lecture at the Austen Riggs Center and we remained close until her death in 2006. She was a remarkably brave thinker. Whilst contending with disturbing misogyny in her own analytical culture, she pushed on with radical thinking about anal structures that proved challenging and evocative.

A meeting with Jean Laplanche at a conference in Lisbon launched us into a correspondence. He was always kind and supportive.

I am grateful to Didier Anzieu, Joyce McDougall, Haydee Faimburg, René Major, Michel de M'Uzan, René Roussillon, and René Diatkine, for their support.

The British society and the Tavistock Clinic

I attended seminars at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London from September 1974 through June of 1977 and qualified in August of 1977. I was taught by Hannah Segal, Betty Joseph, Herbert Rosenfeld, Henry Rey, Donald Meltzer, Irma Pick, Moses Laufer, Anne-Marie Sandler, Harold Stewart, Nina Coltart, Enid Balint, Martin James, and others. Trainees were required to have two analysands for which my supervisors were Paula Heimann and Marion Milner. The transition from Associate Member to Full Member required two further supervisions, and I went to Eric Brenman (Kleinian) and Clifford York (Freudian).

At the same time, I was also training in psychotherapy at the Adult Department of the Tavistock Clinic. Along with long-term open-ended analytic work, we also trained in brief or focal therapy, group psychoanalysis, marital/couples therapy, and organizational consultancy.

My years at the Tavistock years were sculptural. It was like the best graduate school one could ever hope for, and we were comparatively free to study topics of special interest. It was here that I learned Bion, primarily through supervision with Robert Gosling, his analysand and Chair of the Tavistock and I attended Bion's lectures there and thus gained a sense of this intriguing figure who clearly enjoyed the mischief of being a sage.

I enjoyed discussions of child cases presented by Donald Meltzer and Mattie Harris, which were discussed in Kleinian terms. The key clinical difference, in my view, between Bionian

analysts and Kleinians is that Bion said very little whereas Kleinians traditionally talked a lot. However, a new generation of clinicians, including John Steiner, were introducing what would come to be known as the "new Kleinianism".

I was fortunate to participate in Frances Tustin's seminar-workshop on autism. I had read her work while I was working at the East Bay Activity Center, but her thinking came alive for me when she discussed children in treatment. At this time I also attended clinical presentations by Anna Freud. It was not until I heard her using the structural theory that I realized quite how beautiful a model of the mind and self it is.

My study of focal psychotherapy with David Malan expanded on the training I had received in Boston with his friend and colleague Peter Sifneos. Focal psychotherapy has much to teach analysts, especially in its expectation that the analyst will provide a clear explanation of the patient's thought processes and behaviour in the session.

It was also my good fortune to study "core psychoanalytic concepts" in Joseph Sandler's weekly seminar at the Tavistock. Joe had taken me under his wing and he mentored me in the years to come, linking me up with psychotherapy training programs such as the British Association of Psychotherapists. He was a lucid thinker who believed in growing psychoanalytic theory from the core.

I came to appreciate Jungian analytical perspectives through supervision with Judith Stephens—a Jungian analyst—and Rosemary Gordon, a friend and gifted analytical practitioner.

Italy and Sweden

In 1978 I began my tenure as Visiting Professor of Psychoanalysis at the University of Rome, and for the next twenty years I would visit the University Neuropsychiatric Hospital for Children (known as "Via Sabelli") three or four times a year, for a week at a time. I also visited Aquila, Naples, Venice, Turin, and Milan, but Rome became my analytical home, a refuge from the warring psychoanalytical factions in London. The meetings there were non-partisan, searching, and jovial. Most of the essays in my early books were presented first in Via Sabelli.

In 1983, Ulla Bejerholm, a visionary Swedish psychoanalyst who lived in Malmö, invited me to attend and conduct her annual conference in Arild, in the south of Sweden. She, too, had worked at Beth Israel in Boston and had been part of Sifneos' workshop, so although we had not met before, we shared a common background. For the next thirty years the Arild group invited me to lead seminars and workshops for three days at a time. The group had about twenty-five members; most people attended over decades and we grew older and wiser together.

During this same era, I was invited by Arne Jemstedt to conduct seminars in Stockholm. Reared as they were in an interesting mix of existential psychoanalysis, ego psychology, and object relations theory integrated with their own mentality, one found in the Swedes a remarkably distinct perspective that cast new light on my own work. They are responsible for the best contemporary cultural journal that is psychoanalytically based, *Divan*, that has published some of my essays and placed them in interesting contexts.

Bion and Winnicott

In the early 1980s Parthenope Bion asked me to edit a volume on her father and I travelled to Turin to meet with her and discuss his work. She and Francesca Bion were sorting through his papers and were in the early stages of setting up the first Bion conference in Milan. Parthenope's knowledge, grasp, and deep understanding of her father's way of thinking and practising changed my understanding of his work. Our discussions of "O" and the mother helped me to embody Bion's categories and to see how his visions could be brought into the consulting room.

In the early 1980s Clare Winnicott asked me to be one of the literary editors of the Winnicott Trust. Invited into the 1952 Club—a group formed by senior Independent analysts—I was able to present developing ideas and to have invaluable guidance from its members, notably from Margaret Little, who had been an analysand of Winnicott and was a leading figure in Independent Group thinking. Clare Winnicott also invited me to join the "Hood Study Group" convened by James and Catriona Hood, two analysts from Scotland who had worked closely with Winnicott. We were joined by Margret Tonnesmann whose grasp of Winnicott and clinical acumen were appreciated by all of us. Our group would pick a theme, for example "use of the object", and spend several hours spinning it round through our minds. It was a most intellectually enlightening group experience.

Austen Riggs and the University of Massachusetts 1985–1987

In 1985 I took up posts as Director of Education at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and as Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts. One of my responsibilities was to invite speakers for the monthly Friday Night Lecture, attended by members of the Riggs community and local townsfolk, including a fair number of psychoanalysts from Boston and New York. The visiting speakers would spend the week at Riggs, with a few days at the University of Massachusetts where they would give a seminar led by Murray Schwartz, who was a dean at the university.

The staff at Riggs were the most inspiring group of people with whom I have worked and it is impossible to trace their influences on my thinking. I owe a great deal to Daniel Schwartz, Jim Sacksteder, Gerard Fromm, and Betty Homich for supporting my work. To Erik Erikson, Otto Will Jr., Martin Cooperman, and others, I am grateful to have learned from people whose use of ego psychology, object relations, and the unique American "school" of psychoanalysis (the "aw shucks, what do I know?" trope exemplified in Mark Twain) created a fascinating intellectual grasp of the stunning clinical challenges of working with psychotic patients.

Workshops on unconscious thinking 1988–1998

During this period I offered seminar-workshops in New York and several other American cities. Most of these were on "unconscious communication". We met in small groups of eight or nine people to listen to a case. This was presented without describing the gender, age, or

circumstances of the patient, and with no additional comments from the clinician. The words of the session were the one shared, objective reality. No questions were allowed, and no theoretical formulations. Every few minutes I would intervene to ask the group for their free associations. Gradually a tree of associations would grow, and after seventy-five minutes the presenter would take fifteen minutes to track these, informing us of striking connections. Only then would we hear the age, gender, and other details of the patient. This form of study, based on the unfolding chain of associations, illuminated what Freud meant by "propinquity in time".

For sixteen years I met three times a year in Chicago with four study groups of nine colleagues each. I am grateful to the gifted analysts and psychotherapists who took part and represented that "can-do" mentality of the American grain: licensing degrees of individual clinical inventiveness that was often very creative. On each visit I dined with my dear friend Ernest Wolf and his wife Ina, and as the years passed I found Ernie's accounts of why he chose to follow the works of Heinz Kohut compelling and moving. His theory of clinical empathy chimed with some of my own ideas about the "celebration" of the analysand.

Supervision and clinical discussion

Psychoanalysis as a practice is usually discussed by analysts through the individual case presentation. In London in the 1980s, I enjoyed collegial clinical discussions with my cohort within the Independent group, and I found the exchange of views with Michael Parsons, Jonathan Sklar, and Roger Kennedy especially important. For some years we met monthly as "The Spanish Club".

In the 1990s a group of European analysts came together and met in Stockholm, Zürich, Tübingen, and London, to constitute a study group that aimed to examine unconscious thinking and communication in analytical sessions. Many clinicians were to be involved over time, including Arne Jemstedt, Eva Schmidt, Sarah Nettleton, and Peter Wegner.

The influence of conversations with colleagues was formative, including a few dear friends whose influence on my thinking and practice is too deep and ramifying to identify. Nina Coltart and I became life-long friends and on vacations, over dinners and innumerable teas (really an excuse for meeting up), there were hardly any nooks and crannies of psychoanalysis we did not discuss. Nina's understanding of the role of silence and the positives of present absence—how it elicits very early ego memories—influenced my way of thinking and practising.

Marion Milner was a close friend for life and we visited one another regularly. Joyful and naturally playful, Marion opened the door to endless conversations about the aesthetics of pleasure, the joy of being in analysis, and she was another important influence on my concept of the "celebration of the analysand".

Enid Balint, who had accepted me for training (and insisted early on that one day I would write) was inspiring. In time we became very close friends and we travelled together in the States in the 1980s. When I returned to live in London, we met up for enjoyable discussions of ideas,

especially her disagreements with my thinking that were based in particular on her view that there was no such thing as the self!

My own reading of Freud was somewhat offbeat at the time, and I was also developing a clinical theory that was rather different from that of the mainstream of colleagues in Great Britain. Many people found this hard to grasp, so I was surprised and grateful when, in the late 1990s, Sarah Nettleton came for supervision and immediately understood the gist of what she would later term my metapsychology. She had previously been a pianist and I was to find in subsequent years that musicians tend to understand sequential thinking, and easily grasp what Freud means by the logic of free association.

Writing

My job at Riggs allowed me time to write and it was there that I put together the collection of essays that became *The Shadow of the Object*: *Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (1987). It was after the publication of this first book that I began to enjoy writing. Between 1989 and 1999 I published four books of essays: *Forces of Destiny: Psychoanalysis and Human Idiom* (1989), *Being a Character* (1993), *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience* (1995), and *The Mystery of Things* (1999).

While I was at Berkeley I had written some plays (to the amusement of my friends), but these were lost in a fire. At that time I could not bring myself to continue, but in 2004 I decided to return to fiction, with the first of three linked novellas: *Dark at the End of the Tunnel, I Have Heard the Mermaids Singing,* and *Mayhem*. I also produced a volume of plays, entitled *Theraplay* (2006). I found that writing fiction allowed me "to stage" psychoanalysis, enabling me to explore complex psychic issues in a new way.

When I resumed "proper" analytic writing, my main aim was to illustrate and explore how we can listen to free associations. I rethought Freud's theories—he had many on free association—and elected his concept of the immediate chain of ideas: that one finds this form of thought in the leaps from one topic to the next. What seems insensible—in this leap—reveals a remarkable "chain of ideas" if patiently noted over time.

The Freudian Moment (2007) confronted extremes in practice that threaten the intellectual freedom released by Freud's discoveries. *The Infinite Question* (2009) used close study of clinical material to show the complexity and logic of the free associative narrative. *China on the Mind* (2013) was prepared for a Korean analytical association that disinvited me when it was clear I was going to refer to ancient Chinese texts. I pushed on and turned the lectures into a small book that reflected the struggle of this Western person to comprehend the Chinese mind which, paradoxically, seemed curiously familiar.

Meaning and Melancholia (2018) took many years to write and is something of an end-piece, although events since its publication naturally invite us to continue to think, speak, and write in protest about the pathology of our times. By the time these notebooks morphed into a book-in-waiting, sometime in 2022, I was no longer using them as a form for writing-thinking, but rather

as a means of addressing the catastrophes of our era. What will become of human thinking? Is *Homo sapiens* approaching its end?

Who knows?

But in the meantime, these notebooks are some of my traces in the sand.

I preface the *Notebooks* with an essay published in 1974 but written in 1973 before my emigration to the UK. It organizes and indicates many of the interests that will occupy me for the next fifty years and is a good point of embarkation.

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Lastly, I thank all my patients over these fifty years for teaching me how to be an analyst. It is awful that I cannot name you and ask you to take part in what was always a collaboration between two people: only one of whom is present in this text. I remember each and every one of you—even your dreams!—and you have never left my mind. To have been your psychoanalyst was a great privilege and I shall always be grateful.

Note to the reader

Most quotations from Freud's texts refer to the *Standard Edition*, for example, SE10, 21 (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* London: Hogarth 1957, Volume 10, p. 21).

Every effort has been made to track down references I make to the works of other authors. However, after several house moves many of the books to which I refer have vanished. Where it has not been possible to locate quotations I reword them, so the author's ideas are acknowledged even if the specific source is not given.

The only changes made to the original text are details of punctuation and the occasional omission of a fragment that was unclear or insignificant. All references to analysands are, of course, fully anonymized, and they are few and far between as these were never intended to be clinical notebooks.

The index does not include all authors. So many are referred to in the text that I felt this would be overwhelming. It is intended instead to help the reader track particular areas of thought, such as "the structure of evil", or issues of analytical interest such as "hysteria" or "perversion".

To recap the history (see above)—in short—from 1973 through 1975, I was working at the Personal Consultation Centre in London. I began my psychoanalytic training at the Institute of Psychoanalysis and was in five times a week training analysis. In September 1975 I joined the Adult Department of the Tavistock Clinic where I undertook a training in adult psychotherapy meant to prepare the students for duty in the NHS as consultants, a promise that was abandoned by the government.

In 1977 I opened my private practice in North London. I qualified as a psychoanalyst in 1977 and left the Tavistock in 1978.

From the late 1970s I was teaching literature—at Richmond College in London and psychodynamic theory at the North East London Polytechnic. From the late 1970s through the late 1990s, I taught regularly at the University of Rome and in Stockholm and Arild in Sweden. In 1985, I took up a post at the Austen Riggs Center (as Director of Education) and at the University of Massachusetts (as Professor of English). In 1987, I returned to England and resumed analytical practice.

A short history on the period 1990 to 2024 can be found in the preface of volume two.

The Notebooks

1974–1990