

STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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

1974–1990

1991–2024

STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Notebooks 1991–2024

Christopher Bollas



KARNAC
firing the mind

First published in 2025 by
Karnac Books Limited
62 Bucknell Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 2DS

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80013-261-0 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-80013-263-4 (e-book)

ISBN: 978-1-80013-264-1 (PDF)

Typeset by vPrompt eServices Pvt Ltd, India



www.firingthemind.com

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Preface

Like many of the entries in the first volume, these notes can be sketchy, incomplete, contradictory, and meandering. Never intended for publication, they were meant to evoke and note arriving ideas. Most involved explicit or implicit questions that could generate “answers.”

Sometimes I opened the notebook when I had a *feeling* that something on the rim of consciousness was ready to arrive and basically I took down dictation. Indeed, readers may find an entry on a particular topic that vanishes for several years before it pops up again. The risk, of course, is tedium for the reader but however tempting it was to edit the text down, it was decided not to go for the perceived best bits but to include as many entries as possible, no matter the “quality.”

Although the first volume contains some entries on political and cultural issues, this volume pays considerably more attention to the psychoanalysis of culture and contemporary politics. For several decades I had provided psychoanalytic consultation to groups and to people involved in government, and some of the entries allude to the development of negotiating techniques aimed at mitigating conflict.

In the 1990s I continued to teach in Rome, Arild (Sweden), and London.

In 1991 I opened a seminar in Chicago that would meet three times a year for sixteen years. My thanks to the remarkable clinicians who took part and helped us form a home away from home.

I opened workshops on unconscious thinking and free association in New York, Los Angeles, and Seattle that met during the 1990s. Ed Corrigan and his partner Pearl-Ellen Gordon had for decades been instrumental in connecting British analysts with societies in New York. A history of their endeavors would illuminate how Enid Balint, Nina Coltart, Jock Sutherland, and others impacted the relational group in particular.

I am most grateful to the analytical community in Seattle and especially to the Northwest Alliance as well as to PINC (Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California) and LAISPS (Los Angeles Institute and Society for Psychoanalytical Studies). I am grateful for the support provided by Marion Solomon over two decades when hosting seminars in her home in Los Angeles.

In the 1990s I taught seminars on hysteria in Tel Aviv, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. I am grateful to Itamar Levy (Jerusalem), Sérgio Lewkowicz (Porto Alegre), and Bill Cornell (Pittsburgh) for their support during this period of time.

In the early 2000s I turned towards fiction—novels, plays—and cultural studies.

I lectured on character issues: hysteria, perversion, paranoia, normopathy, and other character patterns.

By 2017 the world was deteriorating at an alarming pace and, as we were living in increasingly dangerous times, I believed I should begin to address some disturbing psychological aspects of this changing world. These entries had a writing project in mind, even if I did not yet know its ideational matrix or its shape. *Meaning and Melancholia*, published in 2018, addressed various aspects of the world crisis.

Amnéris Maroni, a Brazilian psychoanalyst, opened a website (*Por que Bollas?*) for discussion of psychoanalysis and culture. Along with many of her colleagues in Brazil—shocked by Bolsonaro—Maroni was determined to organize a space for psychoanalysts to meet and talk.

In 2016 and 2017 I was invited by INSEAD to be a guest lecturer for a week at their campus in Singapore and for a weekend in Fontainebleau. INSEAD had three psychoanalysts on its staff and these became opportunities to consider globalization as an ordained future—although looking back it already seems very much in the past.

After 2019 I was involved in confidential consultations with figures in the international community who were increasingly alarmed by geopolitical events. The task of trying to bring psychoanalytical thinking into useful and practical application in politics and international relations is challenging and remains so.

World events since then have amplified and deepened the terms of this crisis.

Transcribing the notebooks took some ten years. My handwriting is almost unreadable and transferring them to print was laborious. The decision to do this was predicated on the unacceptable fate of the notebooks going into an archive. An archive is ordinarily a good place to house most potentially useful historical material, but unfortunately this is not so in psychoanalysis where the entries would ordinarily contain references to patients and risk violating confidentiality.

By scrolling through the entries over their fifty years I was able to edit the text to remove any references to patients that might identify them. (There were very few, but even so I had to check everything.)

An archive would also illustrate influence. Who had the subject read? What works or people influenced the thinking? Any writer is subject to the hunches of their readers who speculate about influence and I am no exception. I made the decision to name all of my teachers,

supervisors, and fellow academics or clinicians who were of influence; all those, at least, whom I could recall. But no doubt I have forgotten some who should be included and that is always a matter of regret.

Finally, those who taught me the most—and who guided my career as a psychoanalyst—are my analysands.

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 analysts 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 present the history—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 brief history to address the important question of influence is found in the first volume.

The Notebooks

1991-2024

