

# Jung's dissociable psyche and the ec-static self

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*Abstract:* Much of Jung's later work assumes that the self is an *a priori* phenomenon in which centripetal dynamics dominate. There is, however, another current in Jung's writings which recognizes the self to be an emergent phenomenon. This view is increasingly prevalent in post-Jungian discourse, and Louis Zinkin's exploration of a post-Jungian-constructivist model of the self can be seen as part of this tendency.

My paper privileges an emergent understanding of the self by focusing on the 'unravelling', 'de-centring', centrifugal experiences of otherness in the psyche. It offers a post-Jungian reading of a number of writers who have been influenced by the psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche and proposes a model of the self which focuses on our fantasies, terrors and longings about coming undone and bringing others undone.

This model is then linked to Judith Butler's understanding of the self as an ec-static phenomenon, in which the self is, of necessity, outside itself, such that 'there is no final moment in which my return to myself takes place'. I suggest that Jung's early clinical researches into the dissociability of the psyche and the clinical tools which he developed as a result of this work are especially suitable for engaging with these emergent, centrifugal dynamics.

*Key words:* Judith Butler, centripetal and centrifugal dynamics, ec-static self, inner otherness, Jung's dissociable psyche, Laplanche, Zinkin

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## Introduction

In his paper 'Your self: did you find it or did you make it?' Louis Zinkin argues that Jung's Lutheran stance 'of a single individual standing alone and surveying his fellow creatures' (1991/2008, p. 396) affects his model of the self, and contributes to an unfortunate and unnecessary polarization of the personal and collective unconscious (1991/2008, p. 395). Zinkin's response to this polarization is to try to marry Jung's idea of individuation (1991/2008, p. 389) with the constructionist, social interactionist views of Harré and Vygotsky in which the self is understood to exist socially before it exists privately. Problematically, the constructionists do not share the psychoanalytic assumption of the central role of the unconscious in subject formation, making it extremely difficult for Zinkin to develop a clinically usable body of ideas from this marriage of models.

From a wider perspective, however, the writings which formed the basis of Zinkin's (posthumously published in 2008) 1991 paper were part of his work

on developing a post-Jungian model of the self which, in contemporary terms, could be called 'emergent' (see also Zinkin 1998). This emergent view sees the self as something which arises from (i.e., is a manifestation of) the complexity of our being-in-the-world<sup>1,2</sup>. Like Zinkin, I am interested in the understanding of the emergent self that is embedded in Jung's work, although my approaches to drawing it out and applying the results are quite different from his.

My intention is to extend the Jungian/post-Jungian emergent self through Judith Butler's idea that the self is *ec-static*. By this Butler means that our sense of self is located 'outside' ourselves (2004a, p. 24) because it is an assemblage of the alien pockets of inner otherness that make up our experience of interiority. On this basis I suggest that what matters most in our experience of selfhood is not how we come together, and/or what we come together around, but what it is like when we come apart or come undone, what shapes and informs how and when we do so, and the ways we long to be (and fear being) brought undone by others. Of course, these longings and fantasies are interwoven with our terrors and longings about bringing others undone<sup>3</sup>.

This concentration on processes of coming undone also draws on Laplanche's idea that our unconscious is structured around signifiers which arise from our incorporation of complex, enigmatic unconscious communications from our primary others. Laplanche's model offers a self which is *both* based on the psychoanalytic idea of the unconscious *and* is formed through social interaction, hence its appeal in the light of the question Zinkin raises in his 1991 paper.

These ideas are then drawn together through my work with a woman whom I called Meg in a previous paper (2009). In that paper I focused on 'what happened' in the work with Meg. Here I try to say more about how this idea of *ec-static* selfhood underpinned 'how' I worked with Meg, especially in relation to one of the images which emerged in her analysis.

In a subsequent publication I will explore the central role of loss, lack, grief and mourning in the formation of the *ec-static* self, building further on work by Judith Butler (2004a), Warren Colman (2006a) and Joseph Cambray (2002). Here, however, I concentrate on 1) relating this model of the self

<sup>1</sup> My use of the term being-in-the-world indicates that, like Stolorow, Atwood and Orange (2009) I value Heidegger's challenge to the Cartesian doctrine of the isolated mind. However, like those authors, I also find Heidegger's later reification of Being unacceptable – hence my use of Heideggerian language is meant to gesture towards a broad questioning of the Cartesian position only.

<sup>2</sup> John Holland (1998) provides a useful general introduction to the idea of emergence across a number of fields of inquiry and, similarly, Warren Colman (2000 & 2006) provides valuable explorations of how the self can be understood as an emergent phenomenon.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, as Giles Clark's observes, one of the motivations for seeking therapy is what he refers to as 'self preservation', by which he means 'the desire not to fall to bits, not to lose control or go mad: to preserve a sense of self and self-esteem. Under this there is a need to collapse, to lose control and break down' (1995, p. 345).

to the centrifugal dynamics in Jung's writings and 2) exploring how Jung's dissociationist-based understandings of the psyche offer the clinician techniques for working with emergent and ec-static experiences of selfhood.

The paper ends by linking these ideas back to Giles Clark's observation (based on Santayana's work) that 'normal madness' (i.e., sanity), is 'madness put to good use' (2006, p. 81). This idea formed the basis of my previous discussion of how the aggressive fantasies and energies expressed in anorexic self-hatred can be recycled to become the basis of subjectivity and psychological growth (Austin 2009) and it also underlies much of the clinical thinking in this paper.

### Centripetal and centrifugal dynamics in Jung's work

While Jung was explicitly committed to an *a priori* view of the self, there are currents in his work which support a more emergent view of self experience. Susan Rowland's identification of centripetal and centrifugal dynamics in Jung's texts helps to clear a space in which to draw out this emergent aspect of his thinking. Rowland's distinction is based on the ideas of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin who suggests that:

language and social representation... [are] a constant battle between centralizing energies that aim to standardize meaning and linguistic form, versus centrifugal forces of dispersion and difference as language is embodied in actual social situations.

(2005, pp. 100-01)<sup>4</sup>

### Centripetal dynamics in Jung's view of the self

The centripetal, centralizing energies which dominate much of Jung's work on the self are visible in his many discussions of the subject which are arranged around themes of wholeness and unity and which grant the self an *a priori*, universal, ahistorical status. This privileging of centripetal dynamics in the concept of the self was cemented into place by a number of Jung's followers whose writings on it placed strong emphasis on structure, order, wholeness, completeness and processes of 'coming together' (e.g., Jacobi 1975).

This focus needs, however, to be seen in context. For example, Marilyn Nagy writes that 'Jung's psychology of individuation must be seen *not only* in terms of its practical merits as a theory of psychic process, but *also* in its historical context as one kind of attempt at resolution of the dilemma between science

<sup>4</sup> Louis Zinkin also refers to Mikhail Bakhtin's work and uses his dialogical principle to point out that both therapist and patient have access to 'a' truth (neither has 'the' truth). Zinkin writes: '[i]f each can address the other (as a Thou), both benefit from the exchange as a point of view is developed in relation to each other. In the process each confirms as well as affirms the other' (1998, p. 201). Again, I read this, along with Zinkin's discussion of relational and group processes (1998, pp 195-210), as an indication of his interest in what we would now call emergent processes as the basis of self-experience.

and religion which formed the major issue for turn-of-the-century intellectuals' (1991, p. 236; italics in original)<sup>5</sup>.

Zinkin contextualizes the power of the centripetal dynamics in Jung's work in a different way, suggesting that Jung's thinking bears the marks of having developed out of his own need to manage the deranging centrifugal dynamics he found within himself: 'whatever the value may be of seeing experience as archetypal, it seems likely from Jung's autobiographical material that for him personally it had the value of helping him feel sane through recognizing that his strange fantasies were not his alone but belonged to the whole of humankind' (1991/2008, p. 398).

### Centrifugal dynamics in Jung's view of the psyche

In contrast to this focus on wholeness and coming together, the centrifugal, unravelling energies in Jung's thinking are more visible in his earlier work on the dissociability of the psyche. That is where Jung was most engaged with the irreducibly unresolvable, fragmented and fragmenting nature of subjectivity. That is also where I believe his most powerful clinical insights and techniques reside and it is important to understand why these insights were and are more easily available to Jung and the post-Jungian traditions than they are to other psychoanalytic traditions.

Freud was aware of the dissociative split in libido (in other words, its tendency to fragment into seemingly disconnected parts), but saw it as pathological and pathogenic, while Jung saw it as normal and a natural prerequisite for the movement of psychic energy (Hartman 1994, internet paper). Indeed, as John Haule points out, Freud chose to stay away from the ideas of the dissociationist movement of the late nineteenth century (with its links to spiritualism), wanting psychoanalysis to be regarded as a science, with its own independent credibility (1992, p. 247).

Jung, on the other hand, was strongly influenced by the dissociationists who:

held that every aggregation of ideas and images possessed, in some measure or other, its *own personality*. The guiding image for this was the phenomenon of multiple personality, for which there was already a hundred-year-old therapeutic tradition, going back to Mesmer, Puysegur, Despine, Azaam [and others].

(Haule 1992, pp. 239–40; italics in original)

Like Freud, most post-Freudian thinkers (including many object relations theorists) assume that dissociation is simply part of a pathological spectrum of disorders of which multiple personality is an extreme expression.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Michael Horne's 2007 paper in which he points out that (as the products of human endeavour) all theoretical and practical developments are shaped by the context in which they are embedded.

Jung, however, like the dissociationists, saw multiple personality as an exaggerated form of the normally dissociable psyche (Haule 1992, p. 247). This difference in perspectives has important implications and Sonu Shamdasani argues that locating Jung as primarily a Freudian thinker who broke away misses the point of much of Jung's work. Shamdasani traces the influence of Janet's work on Jung (through Flournoy) and offers strong evidence that Jung's model was far closer to the French dissociationist tradition than it was to Freud's work (1998, pp. 115–16).

In Jung's work the dissociationist heritage gives rise to the theory of complexes, a word whose use originates with Eugene Bleuler (Meir 1992, p. 202). Meir observes that '[m]any impressions are obliterated in the moment of perception on account of their incompatibility with the habitual attitude of the conscious mind; this seems to occur automatically and unconsciously' (1992, p. 205). These ego-dystonic impressions cluster together to create centres of 'not-I-ness', or inner Otherness—complexes—in the psyche.

The evidence for the existence of complexes comes from Jung's work on the word association test, which he was experimenting with between 1901 and 1904 at the Burghölzli Psychiatric Hospital in Zürich (Bair 2003, p. 66). Earlier scientists such as Kraepelin and Sommer had expected these kinds of tests to show up differences in intelligence, but Jung realized that they showed up differences in emotional terrain as the subject's consciousness was moved around their field of interiority by the impact of stimulus words (Leys 1992, p. 151).

What Jung found was that words whose associations took the subject into unconscious, emotionally charged internal spaces generated delays (whose duration correlated to the intensity of the emotion encountered), non-responses, perseverations, rhymes, self-references and so on. He argued that these interference phenomena occurred when the subject encountered within themselves a feeling-toned 'complex', and the key idea here is that of variations in the 'tone' or affective charge between different regions of the psychic landscape.

Hartman describes how Jung applied this dissociationist, complex-based understanding of the inner landscape to form a clinical approach which focused on centrifugal dynamics in the psyche and in the analytic process:

First, he tried to recognize and attend to the aspects of the patient's personality which were 'Not-I' and, second, he allowed the time necessary for the characteristics and personality of the 'Not-I' to emerge.

(Hartman 1994, internet paper)

These dissociationist-based strategies of Jung offer clinicians extremely valuable ways of engaging with the inner othernesses which dominate our experience of selfhood. Butler describes these phenomena as follows:

the 'I' repeatedly finds itself outside itself, and ... cannot put an end to this repeated upsurge of its own exteriority. I am, as it were always other to myself, and there is no final moment in which my return to myself takes place.

(2001, p. 23)

Butler's comment also resonates with Lucy Huskisson's reading of Jung's model as one in which the ego experiences the self as a violent other (2002), whose existence is known to the ego through repeated, disruptive upsurgings over which it has no control.

From this perspective, the self is an inner otherness, a 'not-me' in me which (necessarily) remains alarmingly other to the ego. This is also the self that Stephen Frosh describes when he questions how our ideas of selfhood based on psychic integrity can be maintained 'when I have the feeling, always and everywhere, that something else is speaking within me – something over which I have no control (the defining feature of the unconscious), and the voice of which I cannot even hear properly' (2002, p. 397). This comment of Frosh simultaneously points to Jacques Lacan's idea of the real *and* to the aspects of the Jungian and post-Jungian understanding of the unconscious in which I am interested.

### Self as an ec-static phenomenon

Likewise, Paul Kugler draws our attention to the central role of an irreducible inner otherness (out of which our consciousness arises) that lies at the heart of self-reflection (and by implication, the self) in the Jungian model when he writes:

[the] model of self-reflection found in classical psychology and philosophical epistemology works from the assumption that self-reflection is a mirror reflection. The subject-*imago* being objectively reflected upon is symmetrical (identical) to the subject doing the reflecting. This model of reflexivity adopts the logic of physical reflection. When applied to psychology, the process keeps the reflecting subject always caught in the solipsism of ego consciousness . . .

Self-reflection in Jungian depth psychology is a process through which the personality turns back on itself in an asymmetrical fashion. This provides a way out of the philosophical solipsism and therapeutic narcissism inherent in the humanistic model. *The mirror at work in the Jungian hermeneutic does not reflect the self-same face. Rather it mirrors back the face of the Other.*

(Kugler 1993, internet paper; italics added)

Kugler's comments point beyond the emergent self towards how our experience of selfhood arises through encounters with inner otherness and recent work by Judith Butler furthers this insight. I will quote Butler at length because I believe that her argument that the self is formed through processes of recognition which bring us undone (in contrast to the usual analytic assumption that recognition offers self-identity) is an important one, and deserves to be given in detail. The following text is taken from the latter part of a discussion in which Butler is pointing out how her interpretation of Hegel is very different from Jessica Benjamin's:

When Hegel introduces the notion of recognition in the section on lordship and bondage in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he narrates the primary encounter with the

Other in terms of self-loss. 'Self consciousness . . . has *come out of itself* . . . it has lost itself, for it finds itself in an *other* being (III). One might understand Hegel to be describing merely a pathological state in which a fantasy of absorption by the Other constitutes an early or primitive experience. But he is saying something more. He is suggesting that whatever consciousness is, whatever the self is, will find itself only through a reflection of itself in another. To be itself, it must pass through self-loss, and when it passes through, it will never be 'returned' to what it was. To be reflected in or as another will have a double significance for consciousness, however, since consciousness will, through the reflection, regain itself in some way. But it will, by virtue of the external status of the reflection, regain itself as external to itself and, hence, continue to lose itself. Thus, the relationship to the other will be, invariably, ambivalent. The price of self-knowledge will be self-loss, and the Other poses the possibility of both securing and undermining self-knowledge. What becomes clear, though, is that the self never returns to itself free of the Other, that its 'relationality' becomes constitutive of who the self is . . .

In my view, Hegel has given us an ek-static notion of the self, one which is, of necessity, outside itself, not self-identical, differentiated from the start. . . . To be a self is, on these terms, to be at a distance from who one is, not to enjoy the prerogative of self-identity (what Hegel calls self-certainty), but to be cast, always, outside oneself, Other to oneself.

(2004, pp. 147–48; italics in original)<sup>6</sup>

Like Kugler, I see the kind of ec-static, unsettling self which Butler describes as emerging from the exteriorities (inner othernesses) that surge up in us as the basis of the centrifugal aspect of the Jungian hermeneutic. And if, as Butler suggests, selfhood is ec-static, working with our pockets of alien, inner otherness (as Jung did through the techniques he took from the dissociationist tradition) is a way of working with the field out of which experiences of ec-static selfhood can emerge. Indeed, privileging centripetal dynamics of coming together or wholeness in the analytic process actually *gets in the way* of creating the kind of environment in which the contradictory and unsettling (but inherently potentially more relational) experiences of ec-static, centrifugal selfhood can emerge.

This idea that selfhood is entwined with our unravelling experiences of inner otherness also resonates with Laplanche's model of the unconscious and its formation which Allyson Stack summarizes as follows:

those aspects of the adult message that the infant *cannot* translate, metabolize, or assimilate are *repressed* in the form of 'an internal foreign body' or 'psychical other . . . Thus the unconscious is an 'alien inside me, and even one put inside me by an alien' . . .

(2005, p. 65; italics in original)

<sup>6</sup> I am aware that Jung disliked Hegel's work (see note 6 of Barbara Eckman 1992 for a useful insight into this), and strongly preferred the works of Kant. I am, however, interested in the possibilities which Judith Butler's use of Hegel in this essay opens up for thinking anew about the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge and/or the relationship between the inner and outer other.

Living with this alien unconscious, an unconscious put inside me by an alien (which feels both profoundly 'me' and 'not-me' at the same time), is my understanding of what is involved in coming to live from the mind-body-world field out of which ec-static self-experience can arise.

For Laplanche, the traumas which invade a child and become the signifiers around which they are organized are the complex communications which the child receives from the adult world. These (unconscious) communications cannot be assimilated by the child's still relatively unformed psyche, and the undigested excess introduced by them is repressed by the child (Laplanche's primary repression). This process gives rise to enigmatic signifiers in the child's psyche which, being unconscious, are no longer knowable through direct means, but which nonetheless organize the child (and later the adult's) inner and outer life. Laplanche describes these alien, internalized messages which structure our psyche as 'enigmatic' because they are 'not puzzles or riddles that can one day be solved by learning or applying the proper codes' (Stack 2005 p. 65). Crucially, these messages harbour 'an irreducible, interrogative kernel – a question neither sender nor receiver can ever completely answer' (ibid., p. 66).

From this perspective, individual development arises from the need 'to master, to translate these enigmatic, traumatizing messages', a process which continues for as long as we live (Laplanche 1999, p. 165). As Laplanche points out however, the predominant response is to 'domesticate' the enigma of the other, so that 'the receiver of an enigmatic message is not translating the enigma of the message itself; rather she is simply translating her old translations' (Stack 2005, p. 68). In contrast to this, the enlivening, engaged response is a different form of repression: one which '*preserves the sharp goad of the enigma*' (Laplanche 2002, p. 45).

As a Freudian, Laplanche views the unconscious communications which become the enigmatic signifiers around which we are organized as relating primarily to the sexuality of the child's adult carers. I suggest a broader reading so that enigmatic signifiers arise from unconscious, intergenerational, unsettling and fascinating questions and fantasies about how pieces of people's minds, lives and bodies do (and do not) get into each other.

Bringing these threads together I read Butler's ec-static self as a radically emergent self which seeks to engage with the presenting edges of the enigmatic, unravelling and overwhelming unconscious communications around which it is organized and which constantly cast it outside of itself. I also suggest that Jung's centrifugally-focused, dissociationist-based analytic techniques provide ways of working with the inner othernesses out of which such an experience of selfhood can emerge. Again, in drawing these ideas together I am trying to take up Zinkin's interest in a self which is formed socially, but without losing the psychoanalytic idea of the central role of the unconscious as Zinkin does when he turns to the constructionist, social interactionist views of the self of Harré and Vygotsky.

### A clinical illustration

As indicated earlier, in order to explore these ideas further I will revisit my work with a woman whom I called Meg in a previous paper (2009). In that paper I focused on 'what happened' in the work with Meg and how the recycling of her aggressive fantasies and energies into a sense of aliveness formed the basis of her analysis and emergent subjectivity. Here I want to focus on how the idea of the self as an ec-static phenomenon underpinned 'how' I worked with Meg, especially in relation to one particular image which emerged in her analysis.

The image in question was from Joseph Heller's novel, *Catch-22*, in which the author describes an incident from World War II. In it, the protagonist (Yossarian) has a flashback memory to an incident in which he tried to administer first aid to a wounded radio-gunner. As Yossarian undoes the gunner's flak suit the gunner's insides slither to the floor leaving Yossarian with nothing he can do to help the man but to cover him with a parachute and say, over and over, 'there, there' (1961, pp. 460–64).

Meg used this image to describe her sense of her mother as a woman with irreparably shot-up insides and that she, as her daughter, must, at all costs, keep everything 'zipped up tight' around her mother to prevent a horrifying Catch-22 kind of unravelling. It took a long time for Meg to get to the point where her unconscious fantasies, terrors and experiences could coalesce into this image, and it was the first of a number of nightmarish images which gestured toward what her inner landscape was like.

### Love, hate, conscience and fantasies about coming undone

Meg's Catch-22 image opened up the edge of an enigmatic, unconscious, multigenerational system of fantasies (which she shared) about how parts of people's minds, lives and bodies do (or do not) get into each other. Again, Butler offers a useful insight when she writes:

we cannot represent ourselves as merely bounded beings, for the primary others who are past for me not only live on in the fiber of the boundary that contains me (one meaning of 'incorporation') but they also *haunt the way I am, as it were, periodically undone and open to becoming unbounded.*

(2004a, p. 28, italics added)

Butler's point is that we need and long to be brought undone by our others, even if we are terrified of it and dread it. Similarly, we need to know that we matter enough to our others to be able to bring them undone, even though we may be horrified by these longings. Butler puts this with effective bluntness when she writes '[I]et's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something' (2004a, p. 23)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> It is important that this comment is made in the context of grief in Butler's text.

Joseph Redfearn describes the same processes when (in *The Exploding Self*) he writes that 'love demands the dissolution of [the I/not-I] boundary' (1992, p. 65). But as Redfearn also observes (1992), these longings and terrors are often experienced as so threatening to the ego that they emerge as images of bombs, of being shattered or blown apart, or of shattering or blowing others apart.

Viewing selfhood as an ec-static phenomenon which emerges from this kind of field of centrifugal energies meant that I saw Meg's Catch-22 image as a way of starting to think about the enigmatic questions and traumatizing messages about interpenetration and coming undone which (unconsciously) shaped thinking, feeling and communication in her family, and which lived on in the fibre of the boundary that contained her. Again however, my aim was to use Jung's dissociationist techniques of trying to recognize and attend to the aspects of Meg's psyche (specifically as indicated in her Catch-22 image) which were not-I within, and to allow the time necessary for the characteristics and personality of the not-I to emerge (Hartman 1994). For example, I imagined Meg's primitive longings to get parts of her infant and child body-mind into her mother and bring her undone as having been unbearably frustrated by her experience of her mother's fragility. I pictured these longings as having turned in on themselves, becoming rigid with the shame, humiliation and despair which might arise from being unmet in this way. (As in: 'if she doesn't want bits of me inside her, there must be something terribly wrong with me – I don't know what it is, and I can't fix it, so I must just be a monster and, if so, there is no hope for me').

I also imagined these pockets of unmet longing hardening and become bullet-like over time, with a backlog of unexpressed desire building up explosively behind them. Add to this the rage, hatred and desperation which can coalesce into a fearful fantasy of the other's wilful (and perhaps sadistic) choice to refuse entry to such penetrative longings, and we get the possibility of Meg's Catch-22 image as expressing her fantasy that her desires to bring the other undone would leave them in the state of Heller's fatally wounded radio-gunner. Likewise, I imagined Meg as being terrified that the other's desires to get parts of themselves into her and bring her undone would be similarly nightmarish and deadly in their impact. And of course, either of these scenarios (and the many others which are possible if one explores Meg's Catch-22 image through the sub-personality positions available in it) offer their own disturbing range of pleasures, revenges, shames, griefs and despairs about the damage one could do and the damage one has already done to others.

Extending these ideas, I wondered whether these kinds of multigenerational struggles with fantasies and experiences of interpenetration might be what drove Meg's repeated preemptive attacks on sessions. I also conjectured that this might be what made it impossible for her to get from me the thing which (parts of her) clearly wanted: a powerful tussle through which she could find out what she was really made of, and in particular, whether her fantasies, terrors and

longings about bringing the other (me) undone and being brought undone by the other (me) could be recycled to form the field out of which an ec-static sense of selfhood, relationship and conscience might emerge.

However, to have offered my numerous reflections on Meg's Catch-22 image through interpretations at this stage in the work would have been persecutory, so instead I kept my thinking about these phenomena to myself in sessions. Again, the purpose of tracking these fantasies of mine and any patterns in our work which they might help me to think about was not to generate centripetally-structured experiences such as 'knowledge', a sense of self, individuation, or stability for Meg or myself. It was my way of trying to open up within myself a space in which I might be able to sit with Meg while she (as Stack puts it) found ways of translating (for herself) the multigenerational, enigmatic signifiers around which she was unconsciously organized, and which therefore organized us in sessions too. This was essential if Meg was ever to find ways of recycling the aggressive energies which had found expression in her anorexia and self-hatred into some experience of emergent/ec-static selfhood. It was also what was needed if Meg was to work with the sharp goad of the moral and relational enigma embedded in her self-destructive behaviours.

This approach also shaped how I thought about a countertransference image which arose while sitting with another anorexic patient (whom I called Clare), also discussed in my previous JAP paper (Austin 2009).<sup>8</sup> In one of the frequent, long, uncomfortable silences which dominated sessions with Clare, I found myself recalling a story reported in the newspapers shortly after 9/11. The account was of a man who had received a telephone call from his brother who was trapped on the roof of one of the towers, having made his way there after one of the planes had hit the building in which he was working. After talking for a while about what was happening around him, the trapped man asked his brother to tell his family that he loved them very much, and finished the call saying that he would have to go now because the smoke was making it impossible for him to breathe.

In the first instance, I felt like Clare was about to say something similar to me and I took this countertransference image as offering me a way of trying to imagine her terrible sense of helplessness and utter futility about analysis, or any other attempt to salvage or change anything in her world. But I was also interested in the world of the suicide bomber: I wondered if it represented my sense of some aspect of Clare's overloaded, perhaps superheated, perhaps icy cold rageful experience of exclusion by others (me included) and a resultant sense that the only possible way (maybe the only really satisfying way?) into me would be to blow me and/or my world up, forcing her experience of radical helplessness into me. Following this logic, my image might also indicate

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<sup>8</sup> The approach to countertransference which I am describing here and throughout this paper owes much to Andrew Samuels' work on the plural psyche (1989) and to his understanding of embodied countertransference (1993, p. 48).

unconscious beliefs that Clare's only available way of trying to get into me would destroy us both.

Again however, as suggested previously, I believe that the suicide bomber aspect of my image may also have been pointing towards inner othernesses in Clare which contained her potentially sanest parts and most healthy relational possibilities. Leo Bersani suggests that the socialized superego 'is merely a cultural metaphor for the psychic fulfilment in each of us of a narcissistically thrilling wish to destroy the world' (1986, p. 23). In other words, as we experience that thrilling wish to destroy (or the pleasures of having destroyed), we simultaneously experience the cultural metaphor for it, which is conscience. My sense is that my 9/11 countertransference image with Clare may have been gesturing towards a multi-generational, enigmatic pattern of longings to learn about love, hate, destruction and how pieces of people do or do not get into other people. In Bersani's terms, my image may have been pointing towards my sense of Clare's desire to develop a highly personal experience of conscience based on her own raw, bodily urges and the enigmatic signifiers around which they were organized, rather than 'sell out' and rely on a culturally manufactured standard of 'acceptable conscience'. But for Clare to have grown into a woman who was open to learning about the kind of conscience which my countertransference image indicated might lie in her bodily urges would have been devastating for her and her family: Clare was a 'good girl', and any other sense of self was (quite literally) unliveable, even though being a 'good girl' was killing her.

The profound relational questions that are often embedded in our madnesses (and the fragments of potential clarity and sanity they can give rise to) are split off for good reason, and we approach them at our peril. My sense was that Meg lived on the edge of a similar dilemma to Clare: the changes which might arise from our exploration of her Catch-22 image (and the aggressions and desires expressed in each of the subject positions packed into that image) threatened to earn her the label of being 'mad' in her family. In other words, our analytic work threatened to make her unintelligible to her key others and to herself. It also threatened to destroy the complex pattern of repression that was an important part her (and her family's) way of functioning.

In addition to these formidable obstacles both women faced another difficulty: any move towards a sense of ec-static selfhood based on the experience of their inner othernesses (and the seeds of aliveness and/or sanity that those fragments might contain) would involve letting go of their own fantasies of the kind of 'truth' offered by the somewhat *a priori* model of the self which circulates in the wider culture. Instead, they would be left with a sense that 'the truth of who they are' is a shifting, contextualized composite of emerging relationships to inner and outer others which can be pursued more or less honestly, but without any possibility of completeness or wholeness.

Thus I was aware that the approach I was taking in my work with Meg and Clare, and the insights that could emerge from it (especially the massive

experiences of loss and grief), could be extremely dangerous, and that the patient's 'resistances' to these processes needed to be taken very seriously. Indeed, these 'resistances' are powerful communications in their own right which need also to be accorded the status of inner othernesses, with their own perspectives and insights which must be learnt from.

### Working with unbearable inner Othernesses

In this final section I will try to describe an approach which evolved between Meg and me to work with these complex tensions and dilemmas. After some months of our working together I became aware of increasingly frequent periods in sessions when it was almost impossible for me to stay awake. I knew that I did not find Meg boring, but I realized that I dreaded seeing her and that some part of me responded with an urgent desire to sleep in order to escape something in me which her presence stirred up.

Consequently, in addition to working with the kinds of images described above, I spent much of the time in sessions trying to observe and reflect on the operation of the no-go zones which pulled and pushed around the thinking spaces/pockets of consciousness between Meg and me. This was my attempt to track what lived on in the fibre of her being, haunting how she was periodically undone and open to coming unbounded, and where she was absolutely defended against doing so in the dynamics that emerged between us as we sat together.

As Meg and I moved through sessions I imagined us moving around in Jung's field of unevenly distributed unconscious affective charge. Some of our communications seemed to occur in relatively straightforward zones where we were able to think and speak reasonably clearly with each other. But with (seemingly) no warning we would shift to a place where thinking suddenly became impossible, words vanished, and the longing to sleep would engulf me. It was as if we had collided with (what I came to think of as) a heavily policed no-go zone whose job it was to shut down all thought, movement, and, ideally, all consciousness in its vicinity. I say 'seemingly' because over time, we were able to slow things down enough to track what happened in sessions in quite fine detail. As we got better at this we were able to notice that, actually, there were often tiny warning signs that we were approaching the 'edge' of this kind of psychotic, mindless zone or pocket, but they were often subtle and easy to miss because of the almost overwhelming psychological and physical tension which existed around these regions of Meg's psyche.

In dissociationist terms, Meg's no-go zones were an active and crucial part of her inner life with their own story to tell—again, *they were not just 'defences' to be worked through or around*. Consequently, I also needed to try to create a space in which the unconscious dynamics, images, feelings and thoughts which were manifesting as these no-go zones, (as key elements of Meg's not-I within) might start to emerge (see Hartman 1994, internet paper). After all, these inner othernesses were controlling what we could and could not think about, speak

about or (at times) even stay conscious around in sessions. They were the most powerful phenomena in the room and needed to be acknowledged as such.

Based on this understanding I started to make observations about them. Sometimes I would comment on how it seemed to me that Meg had 'gone somewhere else' after she had said X/I said Y or we both became silent. Other times I would comment on my own process, noting aloud that I had been able to track Meg's comments until she had said X/I said Y or we both became silent, at which point I had noticed that (for example) my mind had fogged up and I could no longer remember how we had got to where we were. Meg was clearly relieved by such observations: she was aware that these phenomena affected her interactions with others all the time. She had previously had no language for them and was very ashamed of the way she 'just spaced out and lost stuff'. Over time we built a language for the aspects of these joint dissociative dynamics that we were able to track. Eventually we were both able to be quite direct in making links between phenomena such as feeling sleepy or bored and the possibility that we were trying to think in the vicinity of something that could not bear to be thought about.

### Sanity as 'madness put to good use'

What emerged in working with Meg was that I needed to use Jung's dissociationist tactics in two ways, simultaneously. The first way was to do my own thinking about how Meg's Catch-22 image might be gesturing towards multigenerational enigmatic signifiers and fantasies about how pieces of people's minds, bodies and lives do (or do not) get into each other. My image of Meg-as-bullet was just one example of my attempt to open up space within myself from which I might encounter the field of inner otherness out of which Meg's experiences of ec-static selfhood might arise.

The second and more immediate approach was to concentrate on trying to track the uncomfortable inner othernesses which shaped where the session could and could not go on a moment-to-moment basis. Over time I began to understand that this second tactic was actually a more interpersonally attuned version of the first tactic. Had I (for instance) offered my 'Meg-as bullet' image to her when I first started to think about it, Meg would have found it attacking, invasive and very frightening (given that that was how she experienced most things that tried to get into her from the outside world). It was, therefore, much more useful to sit with my own imaginings about the worlds within the world of her Catch-22 image and just try to reflect on how our interactions might be being shaped by her unbearable longings, terrors and shames (in the here-and-now) about what might happen if we actually 'met' and pieces of our worlds were exchanged.

Again, this concentration on working with layers and pockets of inner otherness as they presented in the room and pushed and pulled us about by making us sleepy and so on meant letting go of any notions of an overarching

*telos* for the whole psyche. Instead, the emphasis was on what a specific presenting pocket of Meg's psyche was trying to do, the world it operated in, what its specific *telos* or direction might be, even (especially) if that pocket or zone seemed to exist specifically to prevent or attack thinking.

Meg sensed that there were insights embedded in the seemingly mad and mad-making inner othernesses which she had previously tried to manage through anorexic food restriction. Our analytic task was to encounter these madnesses in such a way that she could translate and re-encounter them in other fields of her life in the way that Bersani indicates when he says that a work of art exists:

not in order to hide [desires], but *in order to make them visible*. If the sexual is, at the most primitive level, the attempted replication of a shattering (or psychically traumatizing) pleasure, art... is the attempted replication *of* that replication. That is, it repeats the replicative movement of sexuality as a domesticating and civilizing project of self-recognition.

(1986, pp. 110-11; italics in original)

## Conclusions

In spite of Bersani's overtly Freudian tone, the above comment speaks directly to the way I understand the post-Jungian ec-static self. We are called back to our own undoings and shatterings, discovering them over and over again through the patterns of our desires; we are also impelled to make our deepest experience of them visible to ourselves and others through our creative projects. This process of making visible our second-level replications of these experiences is not merely some form of exhibitionism or an attempt at mastering the terror of our desire: it is an attempt to see how they arrange us, and how they create us anew in different circumstances, and in different relationships. In other words, sanity is the by-product of our struggles to find ways of working with the 'sharp goad' of the enigmatic shatterings and longings around which we are organized, and which live themselves out through us.

Finally, linking this idea back to the point of departure of this paper and edition of the *Journal*, I suggest that this formulation of a post-Jungian, ec-static self can also be seen as a response to Zinkin's invitation to explore the idea of a socially formed self which is, at the same time, a product of unconscious processes.

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## TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Une grande partie de l'oeuvre tardive de Jung part du principe que le soi est un phénomène *a priori*, commandé par une dynamique centripète. Il existe cependant un autre courant dans les écrits de Jung, qui reconnaît au soi la qualité de phénomène émergent. Cette vision prévaut amplement dans le discours post-jungien. L'exploration par Louis Zinkin

d'un modèle constructiviste post-jungien peut être considérée comme une manifestation de cette tendance.

Mon article privilégie une compréhension émergente du soi en mettant l'accent sur les expériences centrifuges de « dé-centrement » et de « dé-nouement » de l'altérité interne de la psyché. Il suggère une lecture post-jungienne de certains auteurs influencés par le psychanalyste Jean Laplanche et propose un modèle du soi qui se focalise sur nos fantasmes, terreurs et désirs de dénouement de soi et des autres.

Ce modèle est ensuite rapproché de la conception de Judith Butler du soi comme phénomène ex-tatique où le soi est, par nécessité, hors de lui, de sorte qu'« il n'y a pas de moment final de retour à moi-même ». J'avance l'idée que les premières recherches cliniques de Jung sur la dissociabilité de la psyché et les outils cliniques issus de cette recherche sont particulièrement adaptés pour appréhender cette dynamique émergente et centrifuge.

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In vielen von Jungs späteren Schriften wird unterstellt, daß das Selbst eine *a priori*-Gegebenheit sei, in der zentripetale Dynamiken dominieren. Da gibt es jedoch noch eine andere Strömung in Jungs Schriften, die das Selbst als ein sich entwickelndes Phänomen auffaßt. Diese Sicht rückt in post-jungianischen Diskussionen zunehmend in der Vordergrund. Louis Zinkins Darstellung eines post-jungianischen konstruktivistischen Modells des Selbst kann als Teil dieser Tendenz angesehen werden.

Mein Text bevorzugt ein entwicklungsorientiertes Verständnis des Selbst durch Konzentration auf die 'enträtselnden', 'dezentrierenden', zentrifugalen Erfahrungen des inneren Andersseins in der Psyche. Es bietet eine post-jungianische Lesart einer Anzahl von Autoren die durch den Psychoanalytiker Jean Laplanche beeinflusst wurden und entwirft ein Modell des Selbst welches auf unsere Phantasien, Ängste und Sehnsüchte bezüglich Sich-Öffnen und andere zum Sich-Öffnen zu bringen fokussiert.

Diese Modell wird sodann in Verbindung gesetzt zu Judith Butlers Verständnis des Selbst als eines ekstatischen Phänomens in dem das Selbst, notwendigerweise, außer sich ist, so daß 'da kein abschließender Moment ist, in dem meine Rückkehr zu mir selbst stattfindet'. Ich vermute, daß Jungs frühe klinische Untersuchungen über die Trennbarkeit der Seele und die klinischen Werkzeuge, die er im Laufe seiner Arbeit entwickelte, besonders geeignet sind um sich diesen emergenten zentrifugalen Dynamiken zu nähern.

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Molti degli ultimi lavori di Jung sostengono che il sé è un fenomeno *a priori* nel quale dominano dinamiche centripete. Tuttavia esiste un'altra corrente negli scritti junghiani che considera il sé un fenomeno emergente. Tale modo di vedere è sempre più prevalente nei testi post-junghiani, e l'analisi di Louis Zinkin di un modello costruttivista post-junghiano del sé può essere visto come parte di tale tendenza.

Nel mio lavoro viene privilegiata una idea emergente del sé che si focalizza sulle esperienze centrifughe, 'decentranti', 'disfacenti' dell'alterità interna alla psiche. Ciò offre una lettura di un certo numero di scrittori post-junghiani che sono stati influenzati dallo psicoanalista Jean Laplanche e propongono un modello del sé che si focalizza sulle nostre fantasie, i nostri terrori e i nostri desideri di diventare liberi e di portare gli altri alla libertà.

Tale modello è quindi legato al modo di Judith Butler di intendere il sé come un fenomeno estatico, nel quale il sé è necessariamente fuori di sé, cosicché 'non c'è mai un momento finale nel quale ha luogo un ritorno a me stesso'. Penso che le prime ricerche cliniche di Jung sulla dissociabilità della psiche e gli strumenti clinici che sviluppa come risultato di tale lavoro siano particolarmente adatti per impegnarsi con queste dinamiche centrifughe emergenti.

Mucho del trabajo tardío de Jung asume al 'Ser' cómo un fenómeno *a priori* en el cual domina la dinámica centrípeta. Hay, sin embargo, otra corriente en los escritos de Jung que reconoce al ser cómo fenómeno emergente. Esta opinión es cada vez más dominante en el discurso post-jungiano, y en la exploración constructivista de Louis Zinkin de un modelo Jungiano del ser puede ser vista como parte de esta tendencia.

Mi trabajo favorece la comprensión emergente del ser por centrarse en el 'desenredar', 'de-centrar', experiencias centrífugas de la alteridad interior en la psique. Ofrece una lectura post-jungiano de varios escritores que han sido influidos por el psicoanalista Jean Laplanche y propone un modelo del ser que se centra en nuestras fantasías, los terrores y los anhelos acerca del deshacernos y traer a otros a deshacerse.

Este modelo entonces es ligado a la comprensión de Judith Butler del ser como un fenómeno extático, en que el ser es, forzosamente, fuera de sí mismo, tanto que 'no hay momento final en el cual suceda mi regreso a mí mismo. Sugiero que las investigaciones clínicas tempranas de Jung sobre la dissociabilidad de la psique y los instrumentos clínicos que él desarrolló a consecuencia de este trabajo son especialmente apropiados para comprometerse con estas dinámicas emergentes y centrífugas.

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