Editorial

Editorial comment

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It is with great excitement and a deep sense of responsibility to the history of this journal that we take over as editors from Lynne Layton and Peter Redman, our distinguished predecessors. Beginning with Mark Bracher's founding vision, and under the able tutelage of Simon Clarke, Lynne and Peter, this journal has evolved into a distinguished and critical space for interrogating the intersections of psychoanalysis, culture and society. We live in troubled times in which, as Auestad and Treacher Kabesh (2017) note, subjectivity is being erased by rhetorics of power and coercion that seek to replace singularity and difference with blind allegiance to violent and totalitarian discourses. The power of psychoanalysis, as these authors note, is that through the mechanisms of free association new discursive possibilities are imaginable and speakable, and the possibility of political resistance is made present.

Under such conditions, not only does psychoanalysis have much to offer in formulating a critique of the neoliberal state, but, picking up threads from the Frankfurt School, which made vibrant contributions to the critiques of totalitarianism and the creep of fascism in an earlier era, there is room for new political and social critique. We are well-equipped and perhaps obligated to provide a riposte to the violence of the intransigent and monological discourses of those who manipulatively portray anything other than their received view as "fake news."

As well as continuing the pluralistic traditions of *PCS*, in which diverse psychoanalytic traditions are valued, we invite contributors to develop a sustained critical encounter of the theorization of social theory, history, and politics, seeking to understand the ways in which subjectivities are

structured not only in the service of neoliberal, globalized “free markets,” but also potentially the ways in which political theory, educational practices, and the structure of mass media can lead to the undermining of agency and political resistance.

PCS has also long had an interest in the local cultural contexts, exploring particularly the ways in which oppressions are foisted on different communities, as well as the possibilities for transgressive and activist collaborations that foment resistance. Thus, community workers, film makers, educators, health care workers, environmental activists, and social justice advocates who are able to join in conversation with psychoanalytic theory all have a place in this journal. We welcome writing that documents activist work using psychoanalytic and cultural frameworks, and we encourage contributions to our Field Notes section and our new Environment and Sustainability section. For Field Notes contributions, we also invite authors to experiment with different narrative styles, and we welcome interviews with key contributors to the work.

Freud's Free Clinics (Danto, 2005) created the possibility of a politically located, activist psychoanalysis. We invite clinical writers to problematize the clinic, and to explore ways in which the clinic can move beyond bourgeois practices of adjustment to addressing privilege, inequalities and marginalization, and the possibility of the examined life as the basis for life as the practice of freedom. We are well aware that political conditions vary by locale, and that different thinkers bring different understandings to bear on their experience. Therefore, we welcome commentary from across the diasporas and around the world, and we welcome proposals for special topics or special issues that generate conversation and critique across boundaries, and that invite in voices and perspectives that interrogate the asymmetries and privileges of psychoanalytic work and understandings of subjectivity from culturally located perspectives.

The editorial board of *PCS* consists of distinguished academics who give generously of their time to provide comprehensive reviews of submitted manuscripts. In that capacity, they define the character and quality of the journal. In order to render board members and their work more visible we have created a place in the journal called Intersections, where our board members have a standing invitation to give updates on the pressing questions their work seeks to address. In this, our inaugural issue, we are very pleased to present the work of five board members, and we will present further submissions by board members in future issues.

Through our association with Palgrave and Springer, *PCS* now has enormous reach. It is accessible electronically in thousands of academic libraries across the globe. You, our readers and editors, serve the journal well by maintaining a high standard in reviewing our submissions, and by submitting your new work to *PCS*. Most importantly, we encourage our readership to spread the news of the journal's work by word of mouth, and by citing it generously in future research.

The interdisciplinary character of PCS is clearly evident in the Intersections articles by some of our editors that appear in the present issue. Stephen Frosh explores the intersection of ‘psychoanalysis, culture, society’ with the psychosocial field, and its significance for a world, as he claims, much in need of more fluid, trans/disruptive boundaries. Psychoanalysis, he argues, which began as a way of reading trauma in the late nineteenth century, can be judged as fully attuned to its ‘psychoanalysis, culture, society’ responsibilities only when it is able to consider how trauma repeats itself, how it leaves traces and how it continues to insert itself until it is recognised and laid to rest. Drawing on Hofstadter, Lasch and others, Barry Richards focuses on contemporary mental states, arguing that in fragmented societies it is much more useful to identify *states of mind* active in specific situations rather than to search for encompassing cultural diagnoses. Richards exemplifies the intricate relations between culture and psyche with the case of leaders and followers, offering an insightful commentary into malignant narcissistic and paranoid states of mind, and addressing, in particular, the case of President Trump.

In his position paper, Vamik Volkan addresses the question of group identity, or, ‘who are we now?’ in the context of a global neighborhood marred by cultural and religious confrontations. Drawing on his vast experience of facilitating dialogue between large groups, Vamik discusses the close affinities of shared identities with ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas’, shedding light on peacetime phenomena like terrorism, the refugee crisis and worrying trends in voter behavior in the USA.

Fred Alford chooses trauma and Bion’s concept of O as the springboard for his reflections on the clinical and cultural future of psychoanalysis. Alford argues that not just Bion’s theories, but every psychoanalytic theory is a defense against O. Since psychoanalysis is more reflective than most enterprises about what it is doing, and because its theories presume to be *about* nameless dread, we should not forget that they are, at the same time, a sophisticated defense *against* such dread. In Alford’s approach, Bion’s work provides a pathway to thinking the contemporary and future role of psychoanalysis as therapy and cultural critique.

Candida Yates offers a sensitive personal testimony and an insightful account of the profound links between psychoanalysis and cultural studies from the eighties until the present. She proposes the *psycho-cultural* as a distinct approach to political culture, with particular emphasis on how leadership-followerhood is fostered through processes of attachment, mirroring and identification, as well as through unconscious processes of illusion and play within the political field. Using examples from the UK and USA, Yates draws attention to the perilous affinity of political flirtation and death.

Finally, drawing on Lacan’s concept of the Four Discourses and in particular the role of analysts and the relationship between knowledge and capitalism, Robert Samuels critiques the knowledge economy in which capitalism and are

inter-mixed. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* can be a critical space for challenging social conformity and for continuing to unsettle the collusion of institutions – psychoanalytic, academic or otherwise – with dominant ideology. This issue also contains two original articles, one by Julian Manley and Myrta Trustram and one by Dana Amir, and two book reviews, one by Angelika Bammer and one by Berverly Haviland.

About the Authors

Michael O'Loughlin is Professor in the Ammon School of Education and Derner School of Psychology at Adelphi University, New York. He writes about childhood subjectivity, intergenerational and collective trauma, the psychosocial origins of psychiatric distress, psychiatric rights, and current political issues including the dynamic of racial identity, the politics of migration, and the dynamics of populism and fascism. He has a private practice for psychotherapy and psychoanalysis on Long Island, New York.

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