

## INTRODUCTION: SYMPOSIUM ON THE WORK OF JOSEPH FERNANDO

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The following papers were originally presented in Toronto on 8 December 2012 at a conference organized by the *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis / Revue canadienne de psychanalyse* under the auspices of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society. This was the second of two such conferences so far, whose purpose is to focus attention on subjects of special interest to Canadian psychoanalysts and mental health professionals.

Both conferences dwelt on the question of trauma. The first (14 May 2011 in Montreal) linked trauma to the problem of translation (Legoretta, Levaque, & Levinsky-Wohl, 2012a, 2012b). Translation was conceptualized in the broad sense—not only as a transaction between French and English speakers, or other language groups, but also within the “same” language and between different psychoanalytic orientations using similar terminology (see also Levin, 2011; Tubert-Oklander, 2011). The proceedings were enacted in both French and English without simultaneous translation. This meant that the social presence of the other language was inescapable; it generated a new kind of psychoanalytic dialogue. The keynote speaker, Max Hernandez of Peru, emphasized the benefits for psychoanalysis of the Latin American mestizo culture (see also Tubert-Oklander, in press). The conclusion of this multilingual dialogue was that perhaps it is not such a bad thing to be living in a psychoanalytic milieu where different groups literally struggle to comprehend each other—otherwise, the inherent problem of translation in psychoanalysis may become obscured and left unattended, especially in psychoanalytic cultures that misrecognize themselves as homogenous, when in fact they are not.

The Editorial Board of *CJP/RCP* felt that a symposium in appreciation of Joseph Fernando's work would follow naturally from these considerations about the problems of translating back and forth between theory and practice, and between different theories and different practices. His Gradiva Prize-winning book, *The Processes of Defense: Trauma, Drives and Reality—A New Synthesis*, has certain unusual qualities. There is something about Fernando's way of reflecting on clinical concepts and using them in his work that is unusually refreshing, clarifying, and provocative (Levin, 2013). He organizes his theory in a remarkably transparent manner: the reasoning is step by step, undisguised, with copious, continuously unfolding, highly detailed clinical illustrations. Whether one agrees with him or not, one cannot deny that Joseph is a generous teacher who works hard to make further learning possible. Candidates and supervisees have found his systematic exposition of the defences, combined with his attention to very difficult dilemmas of contemporary practice, extremely helpful. There is something magnificent about Joseph Fernando's book—though in another sense it is very modest in its conception. You don't have to fall in love with Joseph's work to be transformed by it.

It was decided to bring together a group of senior Canadian analysts from Montreal to comment on Joseph's work, and to ask Werner Bohleber of Frankfurt to provide a formal critique of his contribution, supported by an IPA travel grant. In addition to Fernando's opening remarks and Bohleber's penetrating analysis of Fernando's central claims, Brian Robertson, Josette Garon, and Steve Rosenbloom of Montreal presented case material illustrating their understanding of Fernando's work.

In addition to the redacted versions of the original presentations, we have included in this collection another text that provides rare insight into the relationship between trauma and translation in psychoanalytic culture. Although it does not address Fernando's work, "The Analysand Writes Back" belongs in this group of papers because it provides privileged insight into the normally hidden infrastructure of psychoanalytic discourse, with its multiple transition points, each laden with potential for (mis)communication and (mis)understanding. The anonymous author offers this remarkable document with great generosity in response to Brian Robertson's report on her analysis to the conference. The idea to do this emerged from their discussion of his request for permission to publish. It raises important questions about the ethics of case reporting, and the problems of "disguise or consent" (Gabbard, 2000; see also Stimmel, this issue; Levin, Furlong, & O'Neil, 2003). The reflections of "Paula" also tell us a great deal about the role of siblings in psychic life (see Mitchell, 2013, this

issue; Kaës, Kancyper, Legorreta, Levaque, Levinsky-Wohl, Mitchell, and Palacios-Boix this issue). As she unfolds her complex personal responses to reading an “alien” narrative of herself, “Paula” also movingly conveys the experience of changing consciousness and working through in the psychoanalytic process.

The editors hope that these avatars of an important conference will help to stimulate and guide further psychoanalytic research and dialogue on the vexing challenges of the traumatized psyche. There is a phrase in the subtitle of Werner Bohleber’s important recent study, *Destructivity, Intersubjectivity, and Trauma*, that speaks to the heart of the issues raised by Joseph Fernando’s work. Bohleber writes of the “the identity crisis of modern psychoanalysis.” This phrase suggests that psychoanalysis is undergoing an identity crisis that is directly related to the question of how it has traditionally handled and also mishandled the troubling reality of trauma, not only in the patient population, but also in our collective social history as a healing profession. Psychoanalysis itself can be understood as the product of trauma, that is, as a new and often self-conflicting response to what Freud later called *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Civilization and Its Discontents). The perennial debate around Freud’s *neurotica* and his shift of emphasis in 1897 away from the “actual” trauma of the childhood “seduction theory” (sexual abuse of children) to the internally generated conflictual fantasy of seduction has never been resolved satisfactorily. Perhaps the reason for this chronic undecidability in our theory and in our practice is that it reflects a fundamental ambiguity in our conception of the psyche. Is the psyche a normal organic unfolding of a developmental schedule that is merely interrupted by trauma? Or is it in some way, in its very foundations, also constituted by trauma? More broadly, is psychoanalysis merely a possible treatment for trauma, which can be perfected? Or is it always complicated by the fact that psychoanalytic thought is itself the reflection of a traumatic history and may even be considered a product of collective cultural and social trauma? It is important to keep these questions in mind as we consider the translation problems—the inevitable conceptual misunderstandings and theoretical disagreements—that emerged during the conference around these issues. We hope that in the next issue we will be able to publish an edited transcript of the fascinating audience discussion that occurred on that day.

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