

CONFER

presents

**Clinical Enquiry V**

# Reviewing Perversion

**Diagnoses, meanings, and psychotherapeutic approaches to working with eroticised trauma and sexualised hatred**

**3 conferences at which international speakers discuss the concept and clinical issues**

**Friday afternoon and evening  
17th February, 3rd and 31st March 2006  
London**



## Information

### Venue

Royal College of GPs, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7

### Dates

Friday afternoon/evenings:

**17th February, 3rd March and 31 March 2006**

### Times

1.30pm registration for 2pm start

9pm end

### CPD

Certificates of Attendance are available on request.

Total CPD hours 16.5 (5.5 per conference)

### Refreshments

Tea and a 2-course dinner will be provided.

### Fees

#### To attend any single part of this event:

If you are paying for yourself: £100 plus VAT = £117.50

If you are funded by an organisation: £180 plus VAT = £211.50

#### To attend all 3-parts of this event:

If you are paying for yourself: £250 plus VAT = £293.75

If you are funded by an organisation: £390 plus VAT = £458.25

Tickets may be available on the day, but you are advised to check first by calling 0207 254 2323

**Director of Confer** Jane Ryan

**Academic Consultant** Brett Kahr

### Further Information

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### Booking Conditions

Refunds of 50% will only be given if you cancel your pre-paid place in writing at least 14 days before the event.

Your place is for your own use only and cannot be passed on to another person unless by prior agreement with Confer

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## Introduction

At some point in every psychotherapist's career they will find themselves faced with sexual behaviour in the life of a person they are working with that they find disturbing at an emotional or moral level. Behaviour over that line of acceptability may be experienced and diagnosed as perversion. But history shows that this is a fluid and subjective concept which shifts with social mores making diagnosis problematic. At one historical moment perversion may be clinically defined as homosexuality; in another masturbation. This may result in the therapist feeling confusion about how to relate to sexual behaviour that concerns them, and left to rely on countertransference responses for guidance - that may be filled with anxiety or disgust - or to refer to their own or institute's moral framework.

What is perversion? What can be considered harmful to the patient's self or to others? What is a responsible psychotherapeutic intervention? These are some of the questions that will be explored at this set of three conferences that bring together an international list of experts in this field. We will consider the social framework for the concept of perversion, the traumatic roots of harmful sexual behaviour, psychotherapeutic approaches, and the goals of treatment.

## Programme Friday 17th February

2.0

### **Dr Dany Nobus** **The Pervert and His Therapists**

In this paper, I shall first of all argue that Freud's famous assertion that neurosis is the negative of perversion not only conveys how these two 'structures' relate to one another in terms of their constitutive mental economy, but is also representative for the complementary way in which they have been described, explained and treated by authoritative clinical discourses, since the "birth of the clinic". Drawing on concrete historical and contemporary clinical examples, I shall subsequently compare and contrast psychiatric, psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic approaches to perversion, demonstrating how these discourses, regardless of their divergent theoretical and epistemological assumptions, have shared a common interest in taming the insurrectionary power of perversion as a discourse in its own right.

3.0

**Film: Belle de Jour** Director: Luis Bunuel (1967) followed by tea

5.0

### **Dr Lisa Downing** **Perversion – which version? History, Ideology, Ethics**

This paper will attempt to identify some of the problems inherent in the concept of sexual perversion, via a consideration of the complex relationship between its histories and applications as a diagnostic category within sexology and psychoanalysis on the one hand, and as a political label on the other. I will invite participants to rethink perversion ethically, by recognising and calling into question the underlying ideologies and values that may continue to inform the use of the concept in contemporary psychoanalytic writing, thinking and practice.

## 6.0 **Discussion groups**

6.30 **Dinner**

7.30

### **Dr Fiona Bowie** **Taboos and Boundaries**

The concepts of normality and perversion are common to all societies, but the content of those categories can vary widely. Anthropologists pay particular attention to categorical boundaries and mechanisms for enforcing these when seeking to understand the types of behaviour considered acceptable or unacceptable in any given social group and situation. There is often a close link between what is dangerous, taboo or forbidden and what is considered sacred; who may or may not traverse this boundary can tell us about the social structure, cultural norms and mores of a society. In this talk I will look at symbolic boundaries, pollution and purity and how we deal with anomalies, using the work of Mary Douglas. I will discuss some of the cultural variation that occurs within societies with respect to the expression of emotion, and in dealing with violence and sexuality.

8.30 **Panel and discussion**

9.0 **End**

## Programme Friday 3rd March

2.0

### **Fiona Ross** Perversion and Symmetry

The paper will explore theoretically and clinically how the memories and fantasies of patients whose lives are dominated by a perverse personality structure cluster in a complex around feelings of deception and humiliation. Rather than being wrapped as whole beings in parental care, they recollect being targeted and fragmented. The themes of deception, addiction and greed are symmetrically reflected in the unconscious and militate against whole person adult relationships. This symmetry is experienced by the analyst in the countertransference and can be used to move the patient towards integration.

3.0

**Film: Bitter Moon** Director Roman Polanski (1992) followed by tea

5.0

### **Dr Estela Welldon** Why we need to hate those we love

Challenging the usual expectations that Sadomasochism is concerned only with bizarre activities, Welldon will tackle the dynamics of power and control encountered in everyday family life and sexual relationships as well as offering examples from literature, film, opera and other media. Her investigation deepens to include the downward spiral of domestic violence and child abuse, and the “malignant bonding” between couples.

## 6.0 Discussion groups

### 6.30 Dinner

7.30

### **Dr Claire Pajaczkowska**

### **Sado-masochism as a defence against thinking**

First discussing an example of perverse acting-out in adolescence we will then consider the forms in which perversion can manifest itself as a defence against learning. The concept of fetishism, defined by Freud as one variant of the psychic mechanism of splitting of the ego, is a ubiquitous feature of perverse states of mind. We can consider perversion and fetishism as intellectual, emotional and sexual dimensions of human experience. It is also important to remember that the unconscious structures generating perverse thought are always active in normal subjectivity, and that the concept of perversion offers a splendid opportunity for understanding many aspects of art and visual culture.

## 8.30 Panel and discussion

### 9.0 End

**Programme** Friday 31st March

Chairperson: Professor Andrew Samuels

2.0

**Dr Paul Verhaeghe** **Perverse structure versus perverse traits**

The contemporary DSM-approach to perversion has obliterated sound diagnostic thinking. Focussing solely on a behavioural assessment must necessarily end in a social normative diagnosis, followed by a corrective psychotherapy. Understanding the difference between a perverse structure and perverse traits permits a different form of diagnosis that also has clear implications for psychotherapeutic approach.

3.0

**Film: Mysterious Skin** Director: Gregg Araki (2004) followed by tea

5.0

**Alan Pope**

**Trauma, grief and perversion: barebacking, thanatos and countertransference**

Developing the notion propounded by Stoller that perversion is the erotic form of hatred, and that it is on some level an attempt to triumph over trauma, this paper examines the growing phenomena amongst gay men of barebacking (penetrative anal sex without the use of a condom) as a way of understanding the underlying unexpressed grief that is at the root of the perversion of desire. Using clinical observation and published material, the paper will reflect on how the patient, by processing their experiences of loss, can be helped to move towards relocating their desire away from thanatos and back to libido. When this work is achieved deep personal desires and relational mutuality may be experienced. Countertransference dynamics, in which the therapist experiences the lost feelings of grief via projective identification, will be considered.

6.0 **Discussion groups**

6.30 **Dinner**

7.30

**Dr Muriel Dimen**

**Perfect Wholes and Part-Objects: Clinical Stances on “Perversion”**

A clinical approach to “perversion” must unpack its cultural and moral, unconscious and intersubjective over- and undertones. These sub- and meta-texts, which saturate the countertransference anxiety that accompanies sexuality in general and “perversion” in particular, inform the prevailing narrative of illness and healing: progress from part- to whole-object. This developmental narrative, meant to organise clinical process and manage the anxiety of sexual countertransference, may create as many problems as it solves, as some clinical illustrations will suggest.

8.30 **Panel and discussion**

9.0 **End**

## Speakers

**Dr Fiona Bowie** is a social anthropologist at the University of Bristol, and a member of Wolfson College, Oxford. She has written and taught in the areas of the anthropology of religion, gender, spirituality, ethnicity, identity and kinship. Her published works include *Beguine Spirituality* (SPCK, 1989), *Hildegard of Bingen* (SPCK, 1990), *Women and Missions* (Co-Ed Berg, 1993), *The Coming Deliverer* (Ed. University of Wales Press, 1997), *The Anthropology of Religion* (Blackwell, 2000) and *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Adoption* (Ed. Routledge, 2004).

**Dr Muriel Dimen** is Professor of Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis in the New York University Postdoctoral Program and former Professor of Anthropology at CUNY. She is Editor of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, and Associate Editor of *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. Teaching and supervising at many institutes, she is a founding board member of the International Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. She has written or co-edited six books, the most recent of which is *Sexuality, Intimacy, Power* (The Analytic Press, 2003).

**Lisa Downing** is Reader in French Discourses of Sexuality at Queen Mary College, University of London. Her research focuses on the construction of “perverse” sexualities in the history of sexology and psychoanalysis, and their representation in cultural production. She is the author of 4 books including *Desiring the Dead: Necrophilia and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (2003) and of numerous journal articles and chapters. Her publications as co-editor include: *Perversion: Psychoanalytic Perspectives/Perspectives on Psychoanalysis* (with Dany Nobus, 2006). She is the co-organiser of Critical Sexology, a London-based seminar series for clinicians, therapists and academics of all disciplines with a critical interest in the construction and management of gender and sexuality in the medical and cultural spheres.

**Dr Dany Nobus** is Senior Lecturer in Psychology and Psychoanalysis at Brunel University, where he directs the MA Programme in Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Society. He is the author of *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2000) and *Knowing Nothing, Staying Stupid: Elements for a Psychoanalytic Epistemology* with Malcolm Quinn (Routledge, 2005), alongside numerous papers on the history, theory and practice of psychoanalysis. He is also the editor-in-chief of *Journal for Lacanian Studies*.

**Dr Claire Pajackowska** is Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture at Middlesex University, teaching the textual analysis of art, film, design and popular culture. She is translator of several psychoanalytic books and is author of *Feminist Visual Culture* (Edinburgh University Press 2000) and *Perversion: Ideas in Psychoanalysis* (Icon Books, 2000). She is the Leverhulme Research Fellow at Middlesex University on Sublimation and the Sublime. Her recent publications include ‘Urban Memory/Suburban Oblivion’ in *Memory and Oblivion in the Modern City* (Ed M. Crinson, Routledge 2005), ‘Perversion in French Avant Garde Art 1912-1916’ in *Perversion* (Eds D.Nobus and L.Downing, Karnac Books, 2006), ‘Sex, Shame and Knowledge: The Garden of Eden’ in *Shame and Sexuality* (Freud Museum, 2006), and ‘Vermeer’s Femininity’ in *Vermeer Beyond Art History* (Ed G. Pollock 2006).

**Alan Pope** is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, who works in private practice and for Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust. He trained at the Philadelphia Association and is a founder member of The Site for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. He has contributed to the Site's Sunday Public Lecture series on topics around sexuality. He was formerly Chair of the Board of Trustees of River House HIV Centre in Hammersmith.

**Fiona Ross** is a Jungian Analyst and Professional Member of the Society of Analytical Psychology and is also an Educational Psychologist. She has researched the internalised victim-perpetrator relationship in survivors of child sexual abuse, has contributed to *Contemporary Jungian Analysis* (Eds. Alister and Hauke, Routledge 1998) and is the author of *Understanding Perversion in Clinical Practice: Structure and Strategy in the Psyche* (Karnac, 2003).

**Professor Andrew Samuels** is Professor of Analytical Psychology at the University of Essex, a Training Analyst with the Society of Analytical Psychologists, and Scientific Associate with the American Academy of Psychoanalysis. His current research interests are the application of psychoanalytic thinking to politics, social and cultural aspects of transference and countertransference, and the father. He is a prize-winning author who has been developing ideas about gender and sexuality, cultural and political contexts for many years. His most recent book is *Politics on the Couch: Citizenship and the International Life* (Profile Books, 2000).

**Professor Paul Verhaeghe** is Professor at the University of Ghent, Belgium, Chair of the Department for Psychoanalysis in the Faculty of Psychology, where he teaches Psychodiagnostics and Psychoanalytic psychotherapy. He is also an analyst in private practice. He has published more than 100 papers and 4 books, the latest being *On being normal and other disorders: a manual for clinical psychodiagnostics* (The Other Press, New York, 2004). The central argument of this book is that psychic identity is acquired through one's primary intersubjective relationships. Professor Peter Fonagy writes, "A major achievement from a major scholar." Professor Bernard Burgoyne writes, "The themes of his book are real and urgent: they bear directly on everyday forms of suffering... Invaluable for anyone seeking an account of the relations of psychoanalysis to psychiatry; the clarity of the style with which he presents is a rarity."

**Dr Estela Welldon** works in private practice as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. She is an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy at the Tavistock Portman NHS Clinic, Founder and Honorary Elected President for Life of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy, a Member of the British Association for Psychotherapy and a tutor at the Institute of Group Analysis. She was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science at the Oxford Brookes University in 1997 for her contribution to the field of forensic psychotherapy. She is the author of many publications including her famous book *Mother Madonna Whore: The Idealization and Denigration of Motherhood* (The Other Press, 2001).

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