

**THE PROBLEM OF THINKING IN BLACK AND WHITE:
RACE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLINICAL DYAD**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand.**

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of PhD in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.

Signed: - .

Date: 6th of May 2022

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the assumption that race, as an inextricable dimension of subjectivity, is ubiquitous in the clinical encounter, shaping the intersubjective overlap between patient and therapist, fundamentally impacting the passage and integrity of the therapeutic task. Whilst the thesis considers race against the backdrop of psychoanalytic thinking globally, its particular focus is on the South African psychoanalytic environment, taking into consideration the moulding influence of context on the idiosyncratic ways in which race is insinuated into the clinical space. The study progresses through four core papers, the first of which offers commentary on, and a critique of the relationship between mainstream psychoanalytic thinking and race. It contends that the absence of a consideration of race in the forces which shape the psyche, betrays an avoidance of the potency of race, and its capacity to destabilise the mainstays of psychoanalytic thinking, including analytic neutrality. Drawing on the experience of a working group of clinicians grappling with race, the second paper engages with the interpersonal violence of race and racism, considering the iterative cycles of rupture and repair which inevitably accompany engagements margined by race. Through the use of clinical vignettes, the third paper investigates the subjectivity of racialised encounters in the intimacy of the consulting room, considering, in particular, the impact on the therapist's capacity to think when race enters the room. Qualitative in nature, the thesis is intentionally self-reflexive throughout. This reflexivity is foregrounded in the fourth paper wherein the researcher/clinician's subjectivity, and the way in which it has been disrupted by race, and indeed by the progression of the thesis, is engaged with. This subjectivity, and the influence of the researcher's particular lens, is intrinsic to the passage of the research, and to its outcomes.

Key words: race, psychoanalysis, South Africa, reflexivity, rupture and repair, mutual recognition, counter-recognition, decoloniality, normative unconscious

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Dad, who just missed witnessing my completion of a task which he never ceased to believe I would accomplish. His delight, joy and pride in my achievements, and his unfailing belief in my capacity, spurred me when self-doubt emerged.

This is for you, Dad, I know you would have been so proud, and I'm so sorry you won't get to come to my graduation, as you so wished to do.

Cecil John Esprey

03/05/1941 – 27/11/2021

For peace comes dropping slow

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Introductory remarks

In the North American summer of 2010, I had the opportunity to spend some time as a postgraduate Clinical Social Work student at Smith College in Massachusetts. Smith is a liberal arts college, widely recognised for its anti-racism policy, and for its commitment to intentional engagement with racism and its multiple manifestations. During this time, conversations about race and racism permeated every class I attended. I was struck by the transparency and rawness with which students and faculty of all races engaged around racism, and around its potentially insidious impact on our work as clinicians. I was taken aback by the forcefulness with which students and lecturers invited participation around highly sensitive and emotive issues, and I began to allow myself to engage with an honesty and self-reflectiveness that I had not experienced before, grappling with my whiteness and the meaning it carried into my professional spaces. I was aware that as much as the discussions I engaged in were deeply uncomfortable for me, they were still far more comfortable than they would be if I were having them with colleagues at home, and therefore far easier to have. Until that time my thoughts about race and its imprint on my profession had shimmered somewhere just beneath the surface of my consciousness, prompted to the surface intermittently when an issue in my practice or my teaching forced it to do so, to be hastily scurried below by avoidant discomfort. For the most part, I had been relieved to co-opt the illusion of neutrality offered to me by my psychoanalytic orientation, keeping my own racial subjectivity out of the therapeutic mix. I had been loath to interrogate my racialised self and its impact on the therapeutic and supervisory environment I offered, and I had been equally reluctant to acknowledge any traces of my own prejudiced and racist positions or thoughts in the countertransference. And yet I had also begun to be curious; curious about the experience of newly qualified black colleagues who were entering an historically white-dominated professional domain, curious about what happened in the therapeutic in-between, when race penetrated the space. My embryonic curiosity, bolstered then by my experience of speaking and listening at Smith, prompted me to embark on this doctoral study. Initially I was

intent on asking the question: *what happens when race enters the therapeutic dyad*, and, further, *what role does the therapist play in the racialised narrative, and how does she navigate racially-charged waters*. From the start it was clear that I was inevitably implicated in this line of questioning, that an enquiry into race could not be conducted from the sidelines, and I was prompted to begin an engagement with my own racedness, to consider the ways in which my history and subjectivity impacted on my development and performance as a psychoanalytically-oriented clinician. In parallel and as a consequence of this self-scrutiny, a reflexive consideration of my role as a white researcher investigating race became embedded in the architecture of the research from the outset. The processes and outcomes of my questioning and self-interrogation are documented in this doctoral thesis.

What follows is a thesis about the intersection between race, and psychoanalytic thinking and practice. As will be elaborated further below, the thesis coalesces around four central chapters, each of which concentrates on an angle of enquiry into race and psychoanalysis. In the first of these papers (presented in Chapter 4) the thesis interrogates the presence and performance of race within the historical and current mainstream psychoanalytic paradigm, surfacing the ways in which race has been considered and largely avoided in psychoanalytic praxis, and positing possible reasons for this. The paper advocates for the application of a relational psychoanalytic sensibility as a framework for understanding race as an aspect of identity which inevitably impacts the therapeutic dyad, engaging both therapist and patient in a racially margined engagement. Through the elaboration of a group case study, the second paper (Chapter 5) draws the thesis directly into the South African context, describing the experience of a reading group of clinicians who meet to consider the role and impact of race on ourselves as clinicians, and on our work. This paper deepens the consideration of a relational framework, drawing in particular on experiences of thirdness, examining how these feature in the cycles of rupture and repair which characterise the group's vicissitudes. In the third paper (Chapter 6), the enquiry is taken into the experience-near of the South African psychoanalytic psychotherapy consulting room, focusing specifically on the subjectivity of the therapist. In this chapter I draw on clinical vignettes from my own practice to identify and examine the performance of race in the dyad and the potential for the therapeutic task to be derailed if race is not intentionally considered and engaged with. As a sequel to this paper, the fourth and final of the central papers (Chapter 7) focuses directly on my own subjectivity

as a white South African practitioner. In it I deepen the study's reflexive enquiry as I consider the impact of the wider socio-historical context on my own capacity, as a clinician, to de-colonise my mind, in the service of the therapeutic task.

The thesis follows an evolution, then, from a consideration of the role of race in psychoanalytic work more globally, to an interrogation of the specific manifestations of race within our own South African milieu, to an enquiry into the impact of race on the individual subjectivity of the therapist (and researcher) herself.

Significantly, this is a study which has evolved over a decade, witnessing the rapidly shifting backdrop of the South African political and social landscape and its concomitant impact on the South African psychoanalytic milieu as it has been strong-armed into a reckoning with its identity politics. It is also a work of advocacy through which I have endeavoured to facilitate and deepen dialogue within my profession around the salience of race to our work, and to increase interrogation of the relationship between the social external, and the psychic internal. As such it is a thesis which is broadly couched within a Critical Social Science tradition, one which eschews the notion of a "disinterested" social science, engaging instead with the historical moment against which a research endeavour unfolds. In parallel it is a reflexive documentary on the deepening conscientisation of its author, of myself, of my own process of self-reckoning in relation to my historicised and raced self, and the consequent position I inhabit as a 50-year old white clinician, in this country, at this moment in time.

Gopnik, (in Leary, 2006) notes that: "The frame placed around a work serves as a comment on the play of forces within it". This statement captures the centrality of context, and of the socio-political and historical landscapes which have stood as scaffolding around the creation of this project. Whilst my enquiry has included a consideration of how race is regarded and written about in the global psychoanalytic arena, the author's eye has consistently re-turned reflexively towards the South African context, both historically and currently. Thinking and writing about race cannot be done without a consideration of context; it is the broad historical and socio-political landscape which shapes and nuances any interpretation or understanding of the ways in which race may impact on psychoanalytic praxis. This is evident in contemporary clinical writing around race which tends to be specifically located in the social

and political context within which it is being written. Morgan (2002), for example, a British writer, locates her racially imbued clinical material within the British context in which fear of migrants and increasing multiculturalism manifests as racist thinking and enactment. Davids (2011), writing from a more classically Kleinian perspective, contextualises his book on internal racism by referring to the prevailing social and political climate in Great Britain, and to the covert racism which permeates social interactions. Similarly, North American theorists, such as Leary (2000) and Altman (2000) write specifically about the racial history of their country and how it predicts the schisms and discrimination which persistently mould North American society. Altman (2010) describes racism as “the raw nerve of America”, suggesting that it manifests both consciously and unconsciously in clinical settings. Similarly, South African writers located abroad, such as Suchet (2004), Ipp (2010) and Straker (2004), contextualise their countertransference responses to race in the dyad, within their particular upbringing and experiences in Apartheid South Africa. This is in contrast to much clinical writing which is not similarly contextualised, suggesting that race as a dynamic, in its clinical manifestation, is inextricably linked to context. It suggests further that the way in which race presents clinically communicates something about the broader social culture and history.

The centrality of context has shaped this project from the outset. I was acutely aware of the ‘rainbow nation’ sentiment which buoyed South Africa following the 2010 World Cup, serving to facilitate denial of the racial splits which were so readily apparent in our society. Similarly, within the context of our psychoanalytic community there was deep avoidance of naming and encountering the racialised reality of an unintegrated and unconscientised professional body. It was to this context that I returned from Massachusetts in late 2010, intent on continuing my own internal dialogue, and on pursuing academic enquiry into race and my profession. This starting point stands in stark contrast to the current moment, to the finish line which I have reached after a decade of reading, thinking, speaking and writing about race. The context now is one in which all pretences have fallen; our country confronts head-on the unrelenting presence of racial fractures, having navigated multiple racialised moments such as Fees Must Fall, and Black Lives Matter. This confrontation is reflected, to some degree, in the conversations and encounters which have become part of the fabric of the psychoanalytic community. Race has well and truly been outed, and the arc of the rainbow has faded. Each of the four papers which constitute the core of this study has been written at

a particular moment in time, between 2011 and 2021, and while each of them is indelibly margined by the context of racial oppression which is the defining feature of our country's history, they also each communicate particularities of the current moment in which they were written. The preface which introduces each of the core papers will elucidate the temporal context against which they were written.

Just as the significance of context is a defining feature of this study, so too is the focus on the subjectivity of the therapist. At the outset of the research endeavour, whilst there existed a substantial body of South African psychological literature which interrogated race, racialised identities and racism, I was struck by the paucity of writing from an experience-near perspective within the psychoanalytic psychotherapeutic context. Of this literature, little had been published, and much of what had been written had foregrounded the patient as subject of inquiry with little interrogation of the therapist's role or participation in the dynamics which unfold around race in the consulting room (Mbele, 2010). This was mirrored too in the notable lack of discussion of the relevance of race in clinical supervisory, training and ongoing education contexts within the South African psychoanalytic profession. The dearth of writing about race in the dyad, and the emotionally charged and painful nature of that which had been written, indicated just how difficult it was for South African clinicians to translate the reality of race in the dyad into thinking and writing. It seemed that most difficult for us was to take Moss' (2001) suggestion that in order to be able to *think* psychoanalytically about race and racism in our work, we would need to take ourselves as objects of scrutiny and to develop an intimate familiarity with our own prejudice and racism. Foregrounding the experience of the therapist, rather than that of the patient, has been an over-arching objective from the outset of this study. I have sought to understand how our racialised, relational histories impact on the clinical dyad, how our perception, understanding and management of race-related dynamics and clinical material might be impacted on by the particular socio-political history from which we emerge, by our own pre-transferences (Curry, 1964), stereotypes, prejudices and relational histories. Inevitably, then, this focus has implicated my own subjectivity and I have been both participant and observer in the autoethnographically inflected process of the thesis. Throughout I have applied what I hope to be an adequately reflexive lens, through which I have striven to interrogate my own role in the crafting, execution and interpretation of the research.

In considering the pivotal themes of *context*, *therapist subjectivity*, and *advocacy*, I had to seek a theoretical sensibility which would look beyond the limited internalist focus represented by traditional psychoanalytic thinking. I found this theoretical attunement in the relational psychoanalytic paradigm, with its emphasis on the social and the historical, on social constructionism and social regulation, with its identification of a two-person psychology which surfaces the intersubjectivity between therapist and patient, with its understanding of thirdness as pivotal in the therapeutic relationship, and with its positioning of countertransference as ubiquitous within the encounter. Having been raised as a clinician within the more mainstream psychoanalytic tradition, I found my reading around the relational paradigm to be both exciting and intimidating. Its expansiveness in engaging various aspects of psychoanalytic theory, without prescribing theoretical dogma, allowed me to practice a new flexibility in my own thinking, and to be creative in my engagement with more mainstream theoretical constructs. I felt challenged to step outside of the anonymity and alleged neutrality prescribed by my theoretical base and to begin to engage the contours of my own subjectivity and its manifestation in my work. I equally felt held and accompanied by writers such as Swartz, Altman, Leary and Suchet who led by example in their self-scrutiny, and in their transparent exposition of their own processes of encountering (and tripping over) their racial selves. Mostly I felt a profound relief at finding a language, and being given permission, finally, to begin my own process of racialised self-reckoning both personally, and in the context of my profession.

I have described here the cornerstones of the work which is to follow. The core of the thesis is captured in four papers which I will introduce more fully below. In these papers and in the supporting chapters which frame them, this quartet of themes, of *context*, *subjectivity*, *relationality* and *advocacy* appear as constant and grounding compass points.

Rationale

Understanding the dominant rationale for this thesis necessitates a rewinding to the point of departure in 2011, when I first began to conceptualise a doctoral study which would focus on race. In the South African psychoanalytic arena at that time, the impact of race on our work as clinicians and on our professional community, was not readily engaged with or discussed

in clinical training, in supervisory contexts, nor in continuing education contexts, and there were few professional spaces in which the pervasive impact of race, both historically and currently, could be thoughtfully unpacked and reflected on. Much of what was being written locally at the time, focused on race, racialised identity and racism as psychological phenomena, or on how to work effectively in cross-cultural clinical settings (Eagle, 2005). Apart from some exceptions (see Swartz, 2007b) the focus on the experience-near within the psychoanalytic dyad was largely absent. More globally, whilst relational psychoanalytic writers were very much at the forefront of engaging with race and other aspects of identity and their place in psychoanalytic thinking, mainstream psychoanalytic renderings remained notably adhered to an internalist perspective, one which failed to consider the inter-dependence between the social and the psyche.

Against this backdrop, and prompted by my own personal engagement with race, the following questions emerged: where was race in mainstream psychoanalytic thinking and practice? More specifically, where was race in my own context of South African psychoanalytic work, and why was it not being thought about, spoken about and written about? I was curious about what role race played in the clinical encounter itself, why such encounters were not written about more intentionally, and what (and why) we were avoiding by not engaging race more transparently.

The foundational rationale for the study, then, was to spotlight the relationship between race and psychoanalysis, and, by default, to examine the relationship between broader socio-historical contexts and the psyche. Intrinsic to this rationale was an impetus to examine the basic psychoanalytic tenets which safeguard a more classical, internalist perspective. In tandem, I was compelled to consider the silence around race within my own psychoanalytic community and, indeed, within myself. A primary motivation for the research came from a desire to broaden and deepen thinking about race and its impact on the clinical encounter, with a particular emphasis on the role and experience of the therapist. The impetus to understand more fully the workings of race extended also to our professional contexts, beyond the consulting room. In particular, it was notable that in spite of the increasing number of black clinicians completing their training, our professional bodies remained stubbornly untransformed with whiteness remaining strikingly dominant, and conversations

about why this was the case were difficult to have and largely avoided. Related to this overarching rationale was the impetus to make sense of the apparent scotomisation of race, to understand the impulse to avoid, rather than approach, the presence of race in our professional lives. This impulse to think more about race sat aside the growing trend within international relational arenas to engage with aspects of identity – race, gender, sexual orientation – and their workings within both the clinical milieu and professional contexts.

Understanding race was and still is especially relevant within the South African milieu where race has historically played a central role at a macro-level in moulding all aspects of society, playing an equally powerful role at a micro-level in influencing and shaping identity and relationality (Stevens et al, 2013). Kovel (1995) asserts that the particular ways in which racism was legitimised through Apartheid legislation, creating the scaffolding which structured life at all levels, makes the South African situation distinctive. In spite of the fact that we are now almost 30 years post-Apartheid, this racial scaffolding remains a feature of our political and social landscape. Inextricably linked to our Apartheid history is the preceding period of colonisation, the vestiges of which remain as stubbornly imprinted as does the legacy of Apartheid's architects. I reference here the work of Maldonado-Torres (2007) who asserts that coloniality is a process within society which outlasts colonialism. It is seen in long standing patterns of power which influence every aspect of life and which become internalised as a way of being in the world, impacting on, *inter alia*, self-image and aspirations of the self. The decolonial turn, then, is about making visible the invisible, and analysing the mechanisms that produce invisibility or distorted visibility. As this research has progressed, an engagement with the decolonial turn has become embedded in the primary rationale for the study. This emphasis has guided the momentum behind my questioning of the broad psychoanalytic tenets which frame our profession, seeking to potentially disrupt the internalist assumptions which have resulted in race being regarded as a social psychology phenomenon, rather than as an aspect of identity which inevitably manifests in the psyche.

A secondary, but inter-related rationale for the study came from a curiosity about the relational psychoanalytic perspective which remained largely unfamiliar within South Africa. Aside from small pockets of clinicians, notably emerging from the Western Cape self-psychology groups, an engagement with a relational sensibility was absent in psychoanalytic

South Africa and I was drawn to reading and thinking more about relationality, and the ways in which its principles might be applied to our local professional context, and to our clinical work, particularly when considering race. A relational framework holds all aspects of this thesis and lends itself too to the reflexive, qualitative methodology which has guided the endeavour throughout. Intrinsic to the relational paradigm is the humanisation of the therapist as a mutually engaged participant in the therapeutic dyad. It was this emphasis on the subjectivity of the therapist, herself moulded and pummelled by historical and current social discourses, that cemented my intention to apply a relational psychoanalytic lens to the study as I sought to consider my own raced subjectivity, in relation to my research, and to my work as a psychoanalytically-influenced practitioner.

Aims of the research

The aims which have guided the research gather around the following broad objectives:

- To make sense of the relationship between race and mainstream psychoanalytic thinking and practice, and to understand the relative scotomisation of race within this paradigm.
- To apply a relational psychoanalytic lens to thinking about race and its role in the South African psychoanalytic encounter, its influence on both patient and therapist subjectivity, and its impact on the profession itself.
- To interrogate the apparent avoidance of race in South African clinical and professional spaces and to apply a relational lens in making sense of this avoidance.
- To understand the impact of the therapist's subjectivity on her capacity to engage race in the clinical encounter, and to consider the impact of race on a clinician's capacity to think about and work with her patient.
- To deepen and broaden conversations about race within the South African psychoanalytic fraternity with the objective of reducing dissociation from race within our professional activities and encounters.
- To advocate for increasing activism within the South African psychoanalytic profession, locating it alongside other disciplines which are engaging with the decolonial turn.

- To engage my own process of conscientisation and self-awareness through reflexive engagement with my research task.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis has been consolidated according to the parameters set for the degree of *PhD Including Publications*, within the Humanities Faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand. A core requirement for this form of PhD is to generate four articles for publication within reputable peer reviewed journals (of which at least one must be published internationally), and that these papers need to be related in focus around the research question/s. It is relevant for the reader to note that within the parameters which prescribe the process of a *PhD Including Publications*, is the stipulation that once published or submitted for publication, the core papers cannot be worked on or elaborated further, and therefore appear in the final thesis as completed documents, not open to editing. At the time of submission, three papers have been published and a fourth has been submitted, peer reviewed, and suggestions for edits have been received. The articles in question form the main body of this thesis, and are presented in Chapters 4 to 7. These papers are held by supporting chapters which frame the thesis through a literature review, a method section, ending with a discussion and conclusion.

This introductory chapter, in which I contextualise the research and state my aims and rationale, is followed in Chapter 2 by a selective literature review. As a substantial review of relevant literature is included in the core papers presented in Chapters 4 to 7, Chapter 2 is not a duplication of this literature, rather it offers an overview of the literature to be covered, and outlines the philosophical and theoretical traditions which frame the thesis, focusing specifically on articulating the relational psychoanalytic lens which sits as central to the project. Chapter 3 presents the study's methodological approach with specific emphasis on the centrality of reflexivity and voice. The ensuing 4 chapters are each introduced through a preface which locates the article contextually and temporally, and links it to the other articles and to the thesis as a whole.

In Chapter 4, *The Self in Jeopardy*, this co-authored paper offers a desk review of sorts, identifying the trend in mainstream psychoanalysis to edit out race as a salient and therefore legitimate focus for analytic enquiry based on the assertion that race belongs to the conscious, the external, and does not belong to the realm of psychic events. The paper unpacks the fundamental constructs which underscore this internalist position, offering an alternative lens emerging from the relational framework. It introduces the underlying themes which flow through the thesis, viz. the assumption that the valency which race holds for both therapist and patient has the capacity to interrupt the clinical task and to collapse thinking; engaging race in the dyad has the potential to threaten and jeopardise the self of the therapist which is largely why race is relegated to the realm of the social and not the psychic; what is needed to facilitate a return to thinking about and working through the impact of race on the relationship are third positions which allow for the thirdness/reverie which is key to analytic work. The paper engages the possibility of an alternative psychoanalytic project, one which allows for the interchange between the psyche and the social and one which accepts the premise that (the self and) the other can never be truly known or recognised. This was a collaborative paper, written with my research supervisor. His appearance at the beginning of the thesis is relevant, as is the fact of his blackness; throughout this research my whiteness has been mirrored back to me by him, margined by his racial identity and consciousness, urging me to consider, from multiple angles, the impact of my racedness on the process and content of my work. Without doubt, the cross-racial pairing of our supervisory dyad has shaped this project indelibly.

Chapter 5, *Raids on the Inarticulate*, is a collaborative paper which describes the life of a group of clinicians who meet monthly to speak and think about race. It shows how the group moves iteratively between rupture and repair, specifically unpacking the idea of various third spaces and the related experiences of thirdness/reverie which potentially facilitate movement through complementarity and into dialogue. The paper highlights the violence of our particular racist history and the potential for relational fracture which is a direct heir of that history. It describes the frustration of not ever fully knowing the other and also the possibility for mutuality even in the face of difference.

In Chapter 6, *The problem of thinking in black and white*, the paper pulls the focus onto myself as therapist/researcher, using clinical vignettes to illustrate how racially saturated clinical encounters can cripple the therapist's capacity to think if race is not engaged with as implicating both patient and therapist in a repetition of historical and current discourses. The paper shows too the potential for clinical relationships in which race can be thought and talked about in ways which deepen the encounter and facilitate the task of therapy. In Appendix 3, I include the three commentaries which were published alongside the paper. Permission to reproduce the commentaries is granted by Taylor and Francis if the articles are to be used in a dissertation.

In Chapter 7, I present my response to these commentaries in the paper, *Penetrating subjectivity: Response to commentaries*. This paper deepens the reflexive narrative introduced in the previous paper as I engage directly with my peer reviewers. A primary focus is on the ways in which a colonised state of mind is stubborn to abdication, and how the achievement of a decolonised mind can only ever be a work in progress.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, presents a discussion of the primary themes which have emerged through the thesis and the core papers, considers the study's limitations and makes recommendations for continuing research endeavours. The chapter closes with concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review: Locating the thesis philosophically and theoretically

Introduction

Every piece of research begins with a first reading. For me it was Altman's (2000) seminal article, *Black and White Thinking. A Psychoanalyst Reconsiders Race*. My choice of his paper in particular, as the first step in my enquiry, carries synchronistic meaning; at that point I had no way of knowing that Neil Altman would appear in reality as one of the discussants for my published paper, *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White* (Chapter 6) and that the conversation I had one-sidedly begun with him would evolve into a reciprocal engagement of its own. This personally rewarding coincidence symbolises for me the deepening relationality which has characterised my research endeavour, emphasising the *two-ness* which sits at the centre of the relational psychoanalytic project.

On revisiting Altman's (2000) paper in my writing of this chapter I found in it the preliminary seeds of enquiry which informed the direction and scope of my reading over the ensuing decade. In the paper, Altman criticises classical psychoanalysis for not acknowledging the ubiquity of race and identifies the ways in which racism is built into structural psychoanalytic theory, in the splitting off of the rational ego from the "primitive", irrational id. When Freud said "where id was, there ego shall be", he couched the goals of psychoanalysis in terms which invoked the ideals espoused by coloniality in its privileging of rationality and control, over the irrational (Altman, 2000). Altman names race as a socially constructed aspect of identity which - because of the layers of racism which are embedded in societal structures both historically and currently - is ever-present in the patient/analyst¹ relationship. As such, we should expect to encounter racism in our countertransference, in all of the ways in which we respond subjectively to the patient. Drawing on a clinical case, Altman illustrates the performance of race, emphasising in particular his countertransference in which he enacts a racialised dynamic. In this example he describes how his Jewish identity

¹ Throughout this thesis I use the terms 'therapist' and 'analyst' interchangeably

intersects with his patient's African American identity, creating a unique relational bind which repeats the broader discourses which define their shared socio-historical context. Altman emphasises the intersubjective nature of the clinical enterprise, the interplay between two subjectivities both of which are shaped by a shared context and history. This shared context constitutes what he refers to as the third person in the room or the societal third, bringing race and racism from the 'out there' into the 'in here'. Altman's relational psychoanalytic orientation frames the paper, evident in his emphasis on a two-person psychology and in his use of Ogden's (1994) conceptualisation of the analytic third, an intersubjectively created space in which both patient and therapist exist anew, accessed by the analyst through reverie. He emphatically calls on analysts to privately reflect on and bring to conscious awareness the internal racism and racialised selves which are an inevitable presence in the dyad. This, in the pursuit of authentic analytic engagement, and in the interests of promoting constructive and reparative action within psychoanalytic praxis.

I offer a precis of this article as a way of introducing my reader to the primary themes which have shaped the thesis - the critique of mainstream psychoanalysis and its privileging of the internal over the external; the psychoanalytic scotomisation of race as relevant in the shaping of the psyche and the concomitant denial of the mind-society synapse; the centrality of intersubjectivity and thirdness; the emphasis on the subjectivity and countertransference of the therapist/analyst and the related need for deepening self-reflection; the relevance of considering the broader socio-historical context; and the call for transformation within psychoanalytic thinking and within our psychoanalytic communities. These are the mainstays of the literature which underpin this thesis.

It is relevant for the reader to note that this literature review differs substantially from the review of literature traditionally found in a doctoral thesis. In a traditional thesis the literature which serves as the foundation for the research enquiry would typically be comprehensively unpacked in the Literature Review chapter. However, as the literature which informs this project is covered in depth in the core papers presented in Chapters 4 -7, I offer here a selective introduction to this literary weave, to be expanded on as the thesis progresses.

I have elected in this chapter to expand on two foci as a way of introducing the reader to the literary themes which present throughout. Firstly I position the thesis by looking at the historical relationship between psychoanalysis and race, emphasising the denial of context – and therefore of race - as relevant in psychoanalytic consideration. Secondly, I expand on the philosophical and theoretical scaffolding which frames the core chapters to come, as well as the thesis as a whole; in particular I propose Critical Social Science as an appropriate philosophical framework, and I expand in depth on relational psychoanalytic thinking as the theoretical mould for the research.

Race and psychoanalysis, and the denial of context

The content of the unconscious may be compared with an aboriginal population in the mind (Freud, 1915, p. 194).

This thesis is centrally concerned with the relationship between psychoanalysis and race, an enquiry which is engaged with in depth in Chapter 4, and to varying degrees in each of the ensuing core chapters. In considering this complex relationship, O’Loughlin (2020) urges us to recognise the racialisation and residues of colonisation which he considers to be sedimented in the foundations of psychoanalytic thinking and which, he asserts, result in an unexamined and, I suggest, dissociated, whiteness which sits at the core of analytic work. O’Loughlin (2020) reflects on attempts within mainstream psychoanalytic communities over the last few decades to engage race through, for example, diversity seminars and workshops, concluding that these are perhaps well-intentioned but ineffective in their capacity to fundamentally shift “a deep melancholic residue that resists easy symbolisation or facile remedies” (p. 355). The ineffectiveness of such attempts at creating a more ‘woke’ psychoanalysis lies in the fact of the racialisation which is deeply embedded in the very lexicon which defines and describes psychoanalytic thinking and practice. Aron (in Brickman, 2018. P. xiii) goes further to say that the intransigence of this dissociated racialisation lies too in the reality that “we have all internalised colonialism as a way of being in the world...and there is no transcending race as we internalise both sides of the relationship of the coloniser and the colonised, the oppressor and oppressed”.

O'Loughlin (2020) echoes the position taken by Brickman (2018), who offers an intricate and thorough explication of the centrality of the evolutionary notion of 'the primitive' in psychoanalytic theory, suggesting that Freud's reliance on the concept of primitivity evinces a covert, racialising subtext which underscores the psychoanalytic canon. In her post-colonial critique of the concept of primitivity, Brickman (2018) explores its disturbing anthropological connotations, highlighting the undeniable racial implications of Freud's seminal theories:

In sum, not only psychological difference (as in neurosis) and behavioural difference (as in homosexuality) but also racial difference (assumed to be lower on the evolutionary scale) were positioned as primitive, as regressions to and/or arrests at an earlier developmental and evolutionary time. And because pathology and perversion, too, were defined as regressions to or arrests at earlier stages on the developmental scale, racial difference became psychoanalytically legible as perversion or pathology. The racial other, by virtue of his or her divergence from western norms, could only be more primitive. When one regresses, one becomes more primitive: one goes back in evolutionary time; one "goes native," "goes instinctual," "goes black." (Brickman, 2018. p. 92)

Brickman (2018) suggests that Freud was aware of the racial coding implicit in the practice of psychoanalysis. In recounting a holiday taken by Freud, his biographer, Ernest Jones, recalls that, "he took with him an American patient, whom he referred to as his 'negro'" (Jones, 1957, p. 105). Freud is known to have enjoyed sharing with his colleagues a joke which alluded to his referring to his psychoanalytic patients as "negroes". The joke, referenced by Jones (1957), refers to an 1886 cartoon which depicted Freud as a yawning lion, with a caption "Twelve o'clock, and no negro". Brickman (2018), suggests that the analogy between "negroes" and psychoanalytic patients implies that the racial undertone of psychoanalysis was present both in its theoretical scaffolding as well as in the clinical relationship. The presence of 'the primitive' and allusions thereto in Freud's foundational texts became, then, assimilated into the blueprint for the therapeutic encounter (Brickman, 2018).

...hidden connections in Freud's work between the psychology of primitivity and the psychology of the transference have contributed to the susceptibility of the clinical relationship to place the doctor in the role of the coloniser, and the patient as the colonised people (Brickman, 2018, p. 196).

Brickman (2018) does not assert that, *therefore*, the psychoanalytic clinical relationship is inevitably a colonial repetition. She does, however, suggest that unless the potential presence of racialised assumptions in foundational psychoanalytic theory is recognised and acknowledged, there remains the potential for these assumptions to inadvertently mould the clinical encounter into one which perpetuates and maintains a racialised (and racist) blueprint.

Whilst Brickman (2018) brings a unique perspective to the racialisation which is tap-rooted into the bedrock of psychoanalytic theory, she is not alone in her focus on the racial scotomas inherent in psychoanalysis. Over the last three decades there has been an increase in analytic writing which calls for an urgent reckoning with race, with writers such as Bhabha (1994), Harris (2019), Layton (2006), Leary (1995), Rozmarin (2011) and others (summarised by O'Loughlin, 2020), commenting on the lack of self-reflexivity displayed in mainstream psychoanalytic theory and writing. These commentators suggest that whilst psychoanalysis is primarily concerned with subject formation and is therefore well positioned to explore notions of racialisation and the dominant discourse of whiteness, it has not shown an investment in self-reflexivity about the dynamics of race within its own theory and teachings, nor has it concerned itself adequately with the continued manifestation and impact of racial dynamics within Western societies. It has been striking, in fact, to recognise how very little has been written about race in the psychoanalytic library over the last century.

Schacter and Butts (1968) are widely considered to have been one of the first to write specifically about race in the analytic encounter. Their article interrogated the particular manifestations of race within cross-racial dyads when both patient and therapist are black. In 1992, Holmes continued the discussion in a seminal article which engaged with the range of meanings that racial difference potentially mobilises, both consciously and unconsciously, in

the transference/countertransference matrix. Black writers such as Leary (1997) began too to emphasise the fact that psychoanalysis, in the way it was taught and practiced, favoured the elite and the wealthy, privileging whiteness in terms of who had access to training and analysis. She asserted, too, that whiteness held the universal standard against which a patient of colour is understood to be different (Leary, 1997). As Javier and Herron (2002, p. 159) noted, “the culture of the analyst’s office is the culture of whiteness, regardless of how one apparently “rainbows” the room”. Altman (1995) called out psychoanalysis for tending to exclude racial minorities on the pretext that they were unanalysable when viewed against a culture- and class-specific formulation of ego strength. Writing from within the relational tradition, Altman (1995) was outspoken too in his criticism of psychoanalysis for its separation between the psychological and the social register, resting on an understanding of psychopathology as located exclusively within the psyche, essentially obscuring the central influence of social and political factors on psychological suffering. Altman (1995; 2000) stood in tandem with other relational writers (see Dimen, Layton, Suchet) in calling for a recognition of the social embeddedness of the self, as well as for a less authoritarian and more relational psychoanalytic relationship. In the 2000s and 2010s, the journal, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, offered a platform for contributions which explored the relevance and impact of racialised thoughts, feelings and actions as they arise in the encounter. These writers also began to emphasise the essential relevance of the autobiographical and socio-political inheritances of both therapist and patient, locating a contemporary psychoanalysis within the broader social and political milieu.

In highlighting the absence of race in the psychoanalytic canon², these (and other) writers have sought also to make sense of reasons for this absence. This is an enquiry which is taken up in Chapter 4 of this thesis, engaging specifically with the ways in which mainstream psychoanalysis defines a ‘mental event’ (Shill, 2004) as existing exclusively within the intra-

² Whilst a consideration of race as significant in psychoanalytic thinking and theorising has been absent in the mainstream canon, it is relevant to note that analytic forefathers such as Freud and Jung did include in their writing a consideration of culture and its imprint on the individual and the collective. Although beyond the scope of this literature review, discussions around a decolonised psychoanalysis should include considerations of, for example, Freud’s cultural works, and the ways in which his model of human development underwrote an assumption of racial hierarchies.

psychic apparatus, with no causality attributed to an individual's identity or social context. In making sense of the absence of race, Holmes (2016) names an over-identification with analytic forefathers in their lack of consideration of the relevance of how external events and experiences impact on neuroses. This results in an elevation of intra-psychic factors and a denial of what Holmes (2016) describes as the cultural trauma of racism, as well as of the human rights violations (such as colonialism, the Holocaust, Apartheid etc.) of the 20th century. Guralnik (2016) notes what she describes as a dissociative split between the private and the social, a dissociation caused by the impotence which is felt when facing the enormity of societal trauma. She suggests that focusing solely on the internal furniture of the mind is far more accessible and manageable, resulting in a privileging of familial drama over external factors. She suggests further, that taking into consideration the identity and incumbent history of both patient and therapist, potentially threatens the dynamics of power which rest on the analytic concept of neutrality, and which define (and safeguard) the analytic relationship.

In considering the impact of race, and other aspects of identity such as gender and sexual orientation, on the dyadic dynamic, Straker (2006) identifies the danger of the emergence of what she terms the anti-analytic third, defined as "a mindlessness generated by a particular set of circumstances that implicates our social histories as well as our personal ones" (p. 729). Here, Straker (2006) proposes that when there is the entry into the dyad of noxious social discourses - either/both current and historical – which implicate as subjects both patient and therapist, there is the potential for an experience of mindlessness, or non-thinking, in both parties. This thesis, in all core chapters but most directly in Chapter 6, explores in detail the notion of non-thinking through Bion's (1962) theory of thinking. Through this exploration I suggest that it is an experience of non-thinking which potentially ensues when race enters the clinical endeavour, and I suggest further that it is an attempt to avoid such an experience of mindlessness which contributes to the psychoanalytic avoidance of race. In addition to the attempts to avoid mental discomfort and disorientation, I suggest in this thesis that there is a parallel investment in avoiding the experience of racial melancholia which potentially accompanies an engagement with race. O'Loughlin (2020) refers to the inevitable melancholic residue which sits alongside the history of race in Western societies. He refers here to the seminal writings of Eng and Han (2000) who describe the racial melancholia experienced by persons of colour in their pursuit of the (unattainable) ideal of whiteness. In

this thesis, in all core chapters, I engage as a constant strand both this understanding of racial melancholia, as well as the racial melancholia³ which Straker (2004) describes as the experience of whites in recognising the inescapable beneficiary status of whiteness.

A consequence of mainstream psychoanalysis' privileging of the internal to the exclusion of the external has resulted in a decontextualised canon of writing emerging from consulting rooms ostensibly vacuum-packed against the impact of prevailing social and political circumstances. A cursory glance at the contents of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, during the war years from 1940 – 1945, suggests that whilst psychoanalysis was deeply committed to nuancing its understanding of the psyche and its concomitant manifestations in the analytic encounter, the content of published articles infers that writers and analysts were seemingly dissociated from the drama and trauma which must, surely, have rattled the windows of consulting rooms all through Europe and Britain. World War II was a global event which shaped psyches for generations to come and yet its booming presence remained unacknowledged by analytic theorists and writers of the time. A similarly cursory assessment of the journal's contents over the last century evinces a startling absence of writing about race as it may impact psychoanalytic theory as well as the dyadic relationship; this, against a backdrop of intensifying racial politics and conflict throughout the world. Proponents of classical analysis will defend these absences by referring back to foundational analytic theory which holds that it is the intra-psychic apparatus, and not the external world, which is the discipline's focus. It is my task, in the core chapters, to challenge this defence and to consider what it may mean theoretically, for a more contemporary psychoanalysis, to include in its orbit the impact of the external on the development of the internal.

With this objective in mind, whilst in this project I have considered the relationship between psychoanalytic writing and race from a global perspective, I have also held as a primary point of focus this relationship as it pertains specifically to the South African context. I contend in the thesis to follow, that we cannot write about race without writing about context. In the

³ Whilst Straker's (2004) notion of racial melancholia is useful in the context of this thesis when considering that whiteness too carries with it the potential for a melancholic experience, the analytic accuracy of the construct of melancholia (as opposed to mourning) in this context bears discussion beyond the purview of this thesis.

majority of articles which I draw on to illustrate and substantiate my hypothesis, there is a social and historical contextualising of the articles and/or of the writer/s. In David's (2011) work, for example, he refers to the racism which he, personally, has experienced in his British homeland; Eng and Han (2000) locate their articulation of racial melancholia against the backdrop of North America; Ipp (2010), Straker (2004), and Suchet (2007) all position their writings on race from the perspective of being white South African ex-pats; similarly, Swartz (2007b) engages with what it means to work with race against her native South African landscape; Da Conceicao and De Lyra Chebai (1987) write about the appearance of race in their Brazilian analytic consulting rooms, etc. Race cannot be written or thought about in a context-vacuum.

In the body of this research I orientate my thinking and writing within a triadic confluence of contexts; firstly I consider the South African-specific political, social and historical circumstances which scaffold the study throughout; secondly I engage with the status of psychoanalytic thinking and practice in South Africa, against the growing trend more globally towards a relational psychoanalysis which takes into consideration the social third (Altman, 2009) and its impact on our work; thirdly I attempt to engage reflexively throughout with the ways in which my own personal internal and external contexts - moulded by my status as a middle-aged white South African woman and by the particular enclaves of love and hate in which I was raised – shape and nuance every aspect of this research. The result is a thesis which strives to be contextually located, rather than dissociated or disembodied.

I have identified in this section the most consistent strands of literary enquiry into the relationship between psychoanalysis and race, which are deepened in the thesis to follow. It is my task in the ensuing chapters, through engagement with the literature, to understand more fully the tension between a mainstream, internalist approach to race, and a more relational perspective, and the impact of each of these sensibilities on the psychoanalytic project. Through this I endeavour to understand the reasons for the dissociation from/denial of race in classical psychoanalysis and to examine the impact of race on the subjectivity and mind of the therapist.

A philosophical and theoretical framework

My emphasis in this study on shifting away from the mainstream, internalist psychoanalytic lens to one which recognises the relevance of considering a broader social, political and historical context necessitates an intentional adoption of philosophical and theoretical paradigms which support this position. In the section to follow, I begin by proposing Critical Social Science (CSS) as such a philosophical foundation. I consider the fundamental tenets of CSS, their relevance to the scope and aims of the study, and their alignment with the relational psychoanalytic principles which hold the study theoretically. I engage then more specifically with relational psychoanalysis, its core principles and alignments which, I then argue, position it as a potential vehicle for activism and resistance, considering specifically whether it has a role to play in the decolonial turn which will, I suggest, unavoidably and increasingly call mainstream psychoanalysis to account.

This research project evolved from an initial curiosity about race in the South African psychoanalytic dyad - and specifically about its influence on the person of the therapist - into an inquiry about the ways in which race is, and is not, understood and positioned in psychoanalytic thinking more broadly. It has been clear through my reading that whilst relational psychoanalytic writers and those who write from an applied psychoanalytic perspective are engaging with the relevance of race in psychoanalytic praxis, mainstream psychoanalytic theorising and practice remains stubbornly enclaved in a system of beliefs which relegates race and other aspects of socially constructed identity to the realm of social psychology, separate from the forces which impact on and shape the psyche. This is evident not only in the mainstream journals which show little shift in the content of their publishing, remaining loyal to writing which reinforces mainstream, internalist psychoanalytic tenets and beliefs, but also in the content of professional discussions which arise amongst psychoanalytic practitioners in the context of group supervision, reading groups and the like. I am referring in particular here to the discussions I have been privy to within my own South African psychoanalytic community. Unless a conference or a reading group or a workshop is specifically located within a discourse which includes considerations of race, racism and intersectionality (such as the annual South African Psychoanalytic Initiative – SAPI - conference which has become increasingly conscientised, or in self-defined ‘race’ or intergenerational trauma reading groups), gatherings of psychoanalytic practitioners remain overwhelmingly white in leadership and composition, and whitewashed (of race) in content.

Supervisory discussion of clinical cases, for example, infrequently include a consideration of the ways in which our racially manipulated shared history margins the therapeutic relationship, and often there is a skirting of this reality, and an avoidance of really grappling with the social third which is, ultimately, always present.

It has been the recognition of this stubborn lack of transformation alongside a deepening of my own self-reflection, which has nudged this research away from its early apolitical enquiry towards a critical assessment of the status quo, and a wish to participate in a more active way in the conscientisation of psychoanalytic thinking and practice in South Africa. With this in mind, the adoption of a Critical Social Science perspective as a presiding philosophical framework for my thesis seems apposite.

Critical Social Science

Schwandt (2001, p. 46) describes Critical Social Science (CSS) as engaging “in inquiry that fosters self-enlightened knowledge and effective social-political action...it rejects the idea of a disinterested social science and emphasises attending to the cultural and historical conditions on which the theorist’s own intellectual activity depends”. CSS, then, and Critical Social Psychology (CSP) in particular, is a self-reflective endeavour which elevates the significance of reflexivity and activism in research practice. It is also a political undertaking, a challenging of the assumptions which traditionally underpin psychology which, according to Droguett (2006), manifests in two ways; the *critical* component of CSP questions practices of knowledge production, and the *radical* strand seeks actual transformation of the prevailing order.

Both of these objectives are relevant to the study at hand; in all of the core papers - in Chapter 4 in particular - I interrogate the denial of race within psychoanalytic thinking and practice, and render a critique of some of the fundamental psychoanalytic premises which serve to exclude consideration of the social third. In terms of (radical) action, alongside my reading and writing throughout the course of this study, I have been active in my professional community in terms of speaking about the necessity to foreground race and all of its multiple

meanings and manifestations in our work. I have done this informally, through workshops and talks, and in the Race in Psychotherapy reading group which has run throughout the course of this research. In parallel, the publication of at least two of the core papers, (see Chapters 5 and 6) have prompted discussion and engagement within the community in ways which I hope have contributed to a deepening awareness of our contextually-specific mind-society synapse, and the need for its inclusion in the ambit of our thinking. Boticelli (2004) is critical of psychoanalytic writers and practitioners who claim a political agenda, but who do not manifest this beyond the consulting room or writing desk:

I hold a rather traditional view of political practice, believing that involvement in actual struggles of people fighting oppression or exploitation (e.g., helping to organise a demonstration, joining a picket line) constitutes a political act in a way that practicing psychoanalysis or writing an article on racism for an academic journal does not (p. 637).

Whilst I take this critical comment to heart, I also believe that the pen and picket placard each have potent (if different) value and each has a place in mobilising for change. It is through the act of writing/speaking to and with colleagues that I find the greatest possibility for measurable change in our professional contexts. In this I prefer to align myself with Gadamer's (in Cushman, 2005) insistence on the power of dialogue. He suggests that it is through engaging with the Other, through a "fusion of horizons" that there can be a momentary flash of insight which invites the possibility of change in one's perspective about both self and other. Cushman (2005) explicates this further, suggesting that dialogue which is entered into in good faith, has the potential to shift the worldview of the participants, helping them to recognise that theirs is not the only possible cultural and political frame, and that their vantage point is not the only one available. *Raids on the inarticulate* (Chapter 5), is a paper which expands further on the use of dialogue as a vehicle for real social change. The paper describes the experience of a group of clinicians speaking to one another about race. It draws, most notably, on Benjamin's (2007) and others (eg. Gerson, 2004; Orange, 2010) understandings of intersubjectivity, thirdness and (mutual) recognition and articulates in particular the cycles of rupture and repair, the finding and losing of recognition, of self and other, which occur through the process of dialogue.

Droguett (2006) goes on to outline further the fundamental principles which inform Critical Social Psychology. The first is an assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and that social reality is an historical and symbolic construction which is constituted in a world of meanings agreed upon and shared amongst a group of individuals. Intersubjectivity, therefore, is an essential component of meaning construction. Secondly, it follows that when conducting research, knowledge is always interpretive; it develops from and is grounded in the researcher's positionality. Reflexivity, then, is core to any CSP enquiry. Finally, there is an assumption of transdisciplinarity, that knowledge is not siloed, rather there is exchange and flow among the sciences. These core values align with the methodological approach which has directed this research. In particular, the concepts of reflexivity and voice are elaborated on in the following chapter, where I outline the broadly autoethnographic orientation which frames the project.

Relational Psychoanalysis

These core CSP values align too with the relational psychoanalytic paradigm which has provided the theoretical scaffolding for this study. In this section I signal the relational concepts which frame my research, viz. social constructionism and social regulation, intersubjectivity and thirdness, and dissociation and the multiplicity of the self. I also consider the potential role which relational psychoanalysis has to play in political resistance and activism.

The formative roots of relational psychoanalysis presented in the early 1980's through Mitchell's (1981) critique of the way in which psychoanalysis had 'treated' homosexuality, describing the approach as overly moralistic and insufficiently psychoanalytic (Harris, 2011). Together with Greenberg, Mitchell (1983) became the voice for a radical alternative to one-person drive theory, the beginnings of which they identified in the theories of Klein, Winnicott, Kernberg and Kohut; all theorists who were committed to the primacy of object ties and to the centrality of relational experience. Mitchell posited a framework for a new therapeutic paradigm which was attuned to the omnipresent reality and meaningfulness of relationships, challenging the Cartesian framework which underpinned one-person

psychology (Cushman, 2015) and emphasising the two-ness implicit in any relationship. In this, he challenged psychoanalytic fundamentals such as the analyst as blank screen, and as the unquestioned mediator of reality. In Gadamerian style, Mitchell subscribed to the power of conversation to shift theory and practice, and in 1991 he founded the journal, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, a forum for relational psychoanalytic discussion and debate (Harris, 2011); the journal which provided the platform for my dialogue with Neil Altman.

The relational turn in psychoanalysis shifted attention from the intra-psychic to the intersubjective, from the examination of drives to a focus on the relational world, subscribing to the basic premise that human existence cannot be meaningfully understood in individual terms (Botticelli, 2004). There was a growing recognition that the understanding of individual clinical difficulties required more than the traditional focus on family narratives, patterns of relating and attachment; it made increasing sense to regard psychic life as comprising equally of inner and outer worlds (Dimen, 2011). Such a shift in focus opened up the potential to consider social and political dimensions and their impact on the mind of the individual. This dawning recognition of the interplay between the psyche and socio-political forces coincided temporally with the emergence in the American cultural and political landscape of liberatory movements from civil rights to feminism and gay liberation. Relational psychoanalysis was (and still is), as Cushman (2015) describes it, a paradigm which fit and fits well with our times. Not only is it a psychological healing practice, it is also a social phenomenon which reflects the socio-political tides of the moment.

Social constructionism and social regulation

The basic principles of relational psychoanalysis correspond with those espoused by a critical social science. Most relevant is the assumption of social constructionism and social regulation, and the recognition of cultural identity and experience as formative in the constitution of the psyche (Harris, 2011). Fundamental to this is the premise that intellectual and clinical practices are implicitly historical, linguistic, political and contextual (Dimen, 2011). With this assumption comes a focus on how psychological, political and social forces intersect in both conscious and unconscious ways. This recognition of the fundamentally binding exchange between the individual and the world in which she lives pushes relational

psychoanalysis into an interdisciplinary space, intersecting with feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, philosophy etc (ibid). Social constructionism, for relationalists, positions as central “the crucible of the family (as) shot through with grids of power and meaning through which social forces at many levels function(ed) to define and shape individual and collective lives” (Harris, 2011, p. 712).

Dimen (2011), deepens the understanding of how the individual is constructed against and in the face of a prevailing sociopolitical context. She identifies three inter-related concepts which she regards as core to relational psychoanalytic thinking and practice, viz. the notions of discourse, interpellation and resignification. The concept of discourse links the psyche to the social (Foucault, 1977, in Dimen, 2011). It is defined in critical theory as that which constrains both how we think, and how we think about how we think (Dimen, 2011). The potency of discourse is in its exclusions, and in the ways in which it both overtly and tacitly manipulates what we may and may not think. “Discursive formulations...are networks of socially located ideas, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and action patterns that systematically fashion and inform subjectivity and its practice” (Dimen, 2011, p. 5).

The notion of discourse is centrally applicable to this doctoral study, relevant, firstly, to the ways in which South African society has historically been shaped by broader discourses around aspects of identity, and in particular, race, and how these limits on how subjectivity is construed and positioned have, in parallel, placed limits on how we think and what we do about race in our professional spaces. Secondly, the concept of discursive power is relevant when considering the potency of classical psychoanalytic thought and theory in regulating and defining how we may think about the mind – in a one-person, rather than in a two-person, way - effectively excluding the post-classical understanding that mind exists between bodies, and also that minds exist and develop in response to cultural and social forces. A theme which links the core papers to come is a commentary on the fact of avoidance of race which continues to be a feature of the South African psychoanalytic arena. Whilst relational psychoanalysis has been in development for four decades now, it is quite striking that the most dominant South African psychoanalytic bodies remain loyal to a classical, one-person model, struggling to embrace an opportunity to broaden the ways of thinking about ourselves, as psychoanalytic practitioners, and our patients, within a framework which considers the

deeply moulding influences of our historical and current socio-political contexts. In all of the core papers to come, I deepen a consideration of *what* holds us fast to an out-dated mode of praxis, and *why* such a modality remains compelling and, I argue, sheltering.

Interpellation, a construct named by Althusser (1971, in Dimen, 2011) describes the political process through which subjectivity is hailed into being. Subjectivity, then, is constructed based on the discourses and the laws of a particular state and authority. This is quintessentially relevant to the South African context of Apartheid through which a person was constructed as a raced subject before even coming into being. Whilst Apartheid laws were overt and unambiguous in their hailing of subject states, other less legislated and more tacit discourses – around, for example, gender, sexual orientation, health and wealth status - serve also to limit and delimit subjectivity. So too does the discourse of psychoanalytic ideology corral the ways in which we experience ourselves as practitioners, and the ways in which our patients are formulated and diagnosed. Engaging this ideology of interpellation, questioning its relevance and offering a refreshed view of the psychoanalytic approach to subjectivity is a constant seam throughout the chapters to follow. Relevant to this engagement is a consideration of the decolonial tide which is drawing closer to the ways in which we must, by necessity, begin to challenge our ways of thinking and working. The notion of counter-recognition – of construction and recognition of the self based solely on one's own terms (Swartz, 2018) – runs in direct opposition to interpellation, and is a core component of this renewal in thinking.

Dimen's (2011) third core concept, resignification, aligns with a counter-recognition lens. Resignification refers to the freedom and capacity to change or shift one's self-experience and to endow old enchainments with new meaning (Dimen, 2011). In the context of re-imagining psychoanalytic prescriptions, this is an important concept as it suggests that whilst a renewal of understanding is essential, this does not necessarily mean a wholesale discarding of cherished theoretical concepts, rather it invites a creative application of ideas which remain useful and powerful. This is a position taken by Swartz (2018) in her application of Winnicott's 'true self' in her attempts to create coherence in the face of a fundamentally restructuring experience of self. In my understanding, relational psychoanalysis offers a platform on which to play with old concepts and explore new ones, crossing historical

disciplinary boundaries and finding creative ways to consider the role of psychoanalysis in a contemporary world heaving with social challenge and change.

Intersubjectivity and thirdness

Relational psychoanalysis holds as central the notion of a two-person therapeutic dyad inhabited by two subjectivities which together create a unique intersubjective exchange. This core assumption challenges the notion of analyst neutrality to which the classical model has traditionally subscribed. The notion of analyst neutrality versus subjective participation is one which holds central significance in this thesis and is explored throughout the chapters to come. Whilst understandings of countertransference have shifted significantly over time, allowing more space for the analyst's real and subjective response to the patient - seen, for example, in Sandler's (1976) explication of the analyst's role-responsiveness - Aron (1991) suggests that the so-called 'blank screen' has been replaced by the notion of an empty receptacle. Winnicott's "good-enough mother", the notion of a "holder", alongside Bion's naming of analyst as "container" have been useful in their focus on unconscious communication between object and subject, however the analyst is instrumentalised and denied any subjective experience. Ivey (2017) suggests that whilst Bion's interpersonalisation of projective identification provides the conceptual tools to understand the relationship between the intrapsychic and intersubjective dimensions of psychological life, container-contained implies an empty mind receiving the patient's projections, vacant of any prior or influencing content. In this commentary, Ivey (2017) echoes the position taken by Hoffman (1983, p. 412) in his seminal paper:

...although the emphasis is on interaction, the metaphor of the container lends itself, ironically, to yet another asocial conception of the situation since somehow the analyst's personality has once again been extricated from the process. (Hoffman, 1983)

This view of the analyst as an instrument with a function elevates the idea of the analyst as an object and not a subject, somehow immune to the vicissitudes and vagaries of a psychic life of her own. As such, this allows the assumption that only the patient can have an experience

of the transference. In the early days of relational thinking, Aron (1991) noted that whilst more contemporary renderings of countertransference had increasingly acknowledged the analyst's subjectivity, they had not adequately considered the patient's experience of that subjectivity. He contended that the analyst, just like the patient, could experience a transferential response which emerged from her own psychic experience, rather than in response to the patient's subjectivity. In his words:

The relational approach that I am advocating views the patient-analyst relationship as continually established and re-established through ongoing mutual influence in which both patient and analyst systematically affect, and are affected by, each other. A communication process is established between patient and analyst in which influence flows in both directions. This approach implies a two-person psychology. (Aron, 1991, p. 33).

Aron's (1991) conceptualisation of a relational psychoanalytic engagement found its roots in Sullivan's assertion that the analyst is a "participant-observer" in the therapeutic encounter, foregrounding the analyst's subjectivity, and emphasising the subject-subject, rather than subject-object, nature of the interpersonal exchange within the dyad. Recognising the analyst as participant in the relationship means that she will observe not only the patient's attitude towards the analyst, *but also the patient's view of the analyst's attitude toward the patient*. The analytic situation then, whilst being asymmetrical, is also mutual and reciprocal⁴ (Aron, 1991).

Benjamin (2004), defines this intersubjectivity as a relationship of mutual recognition, where each participant experiences the other as a 'like subject', another mind that can be 'felt with' whilst simultaneously maintaining a distinct and separate core of feeling and perception. She contends that any analytic work which is grounded in an intersubjective view of the two

⁴ Aron's (1991) highlighting of the therapist's potential to experience *transference* responses (aside from countertransference reactions) is relevant to this thesis in which vignettes presented, notably in chapter 6, show that the therapist has responses to the patient which are internally bidden, emerging from her own psychological history and encumbrances, rather than being solely in response to the patient, or his material.

participants, must be oriented towards the conditions of *thirdness* in order to navigate and comprehend what she describes as:

...the confusing traffic of two-way streets. To recognise that the object of our feelings, needs, actions, and thoughts is actually another subject, an equivalent centre of being, is the real difficulty. To the degree that we ever manage to grasp two-way directionality, we do so only from the place of the *third*, a vantage point outside of the two (Benjamin, 2004, p. 6).

Thirdness, for Benjamin (2004), goes beyond the particular *third* platform which facilitates a vantage point outside of the dyad. It is in *surrendering* to the third that an experience of thirdness is experienced. In attempting to decipher the enigmatic texture of thirdness, Benjamin, like Ogden (2004) and Gerson (2004), refers to thirdness as a quality of intersubjective relatedness which has, as its correlate, the intermediate or potential space described by Winnicott (1953, p. 95):

There is no interchange between the mother and the infant. Psychologically, the infant takes from a breast that is part of the infant, and the mother gives milk to an infant that is part of herself. In psychology, the idea of an interchange is based on an illusion in the psychologist.

This intersubjective realm, in which the distinctions between self and other are replaced by boundaries which surround rather than separate, stands in opposition to “the myth of the isolated mind” (Stolorow and Attwood, 1992, in Gerson, 2004, p. 70). Ogden (2004), as an extension of Winnicott's (1960, p. 586) notion that “there is no such thing as an infant”, applies this to the analytic situation, saying: “I believe that in an analytic context, there is no such thing as an analysand apart from the relationship with the analyst, and no such thing as an analyst apart from the relationship with the analysand” (Ogden, 2004, p. 3).

Intersubjectivity and thirdness⁵ are central relational concepts which appear at different points in the thesis to come. In Chapter 5, I grapple with an application of thirdness to a group experience where, through various *third* portals, I suggest that we, as a collective, through iterative processes of rupture and repair, access experiences of intersubjective relatedness which facilitate mutual recognition. In my analysis and appraisal of clinical vignettes in Chapter 6, I apply Benjamin's (2004) understanding of intersubjectivity, and in particular her formulation of a moral third to make sense of the vicissitudes described in the clinical vignettes. In Chapter 7, I draw on Gerson's (2004) synthesis of the various meanings attributed to the *third* to respond self-reflexively to my commentators.

Multiplicity of self and dissociation

Bromberg (1996, p. 520) describes this experience of thirdness as:

a space for thinking *between and about* the patient and the analyst – a space uniquely relational and still uniquely individual; a space belonging to neither person alone, and yet, belonging to both and to each...It is, above all, an intersubjective space which, like the 'trance' state of consciousness just prior to entering sleep, allows both wakefulness and dreaming to co-exist.

Bromberg (1996) suggests that such an interchange is made possible by the fluidity of multiple self-states in both patient and therapist. The concepts of multiplicity of self and dissociation are key elements in the relational understanding of subjectivity and identity. Relationalists suggest that shifting states of identity, powered by dissociative processes, are central to analytic dyadic work (Harris, 2011). Bromberg (1996), posits the notion of normal multiplicity of self, suggesting that even the most stable-functioning personality structures are shaped by vertical dissociation between various self-states and that there exists, within these structures, an ongoing dialectic between separateness and unity. Such dissociation, like

⁵ Whilst considerations of thirdness are central to the arguments and discussions posited in this thesis, it bears noting that understandings of thirdness vary, and a true conceptualisation of this somewhat enigmatic term remains elusive, and invites continued interrogation and distillation.

repression, is an adaptive function of the mind; healthy functioning presents as the ability to “stand in the spaces between realities without losing them ...to feel like one while being many” (Bromberg, 1996, p. 520).

The idea that different parts of self or identities co-exist with varying degrees of dissociation operating defensively between them has been helpful in making sense, in this thesis, of the ways in which race and racial identity can operate in a dyad without being acknowledged or addressed. I suggest throughout that it is partly the dissociation from our raced selves, particularly for white clinicians, which accounts for the apparent avoidance or denial of race in the dyadic relationship. To be able to consider that my raced self, as an aspect of identity, has the potential to sit in the room with me, but dissociated, makes sense of enactments around race which become apparent after the fact. Similarly, such a view of dissociated self-states deepens an understanding of what potentially happens when the capacity to think, to hold one’s therapeutic bearings, is thwarted when race enters the room, when a relatively dissociated part of self is activated. Such a process is illustrated in the clinical vignettes discussed in Chapter 6, when I consider my inability in my work with Denesh, to ‘stand in the spaces’ between my identities as therapist, and white woman. Similarly, in Chapters 4, 6 and 7, I consider what it means to consciously acknowledge dissociation, and to engage various third vantage points in the service of increasing unity and integration between parts of self, to experience multiple realities, without losing any of them.

Relational psychoanalysis as resistance

Whilst relational psychoanalytic writing occupies itself primarily with the nature of the clinical relationship and with how an adherence to relational thinking impacts practice, the emphasis on the exchange between inner and outer worlds, and the recognition of how the separate subjectivities of patient and therapist bring with them the influence of the social and political, locates relationality as a potential platform for social commentary and political resistance. An ongoing enquiry within relational analytic discussions is the role which its practice plays (or should play) in political resistance and activism. Cushman (2015, p. 450) suggests that “participating in relational psychoanalysis either as therapist or patient might

mean that one has begun preparing oneself for, or has enrolled in, a subtle school for political resistance”. He suggests that relational psychoanalysis draws its potential political potency from its focus on practices which facilitate a way of being which is authentic, honest, self-reflective, curious, respectful of and willing to learn from difference. Furthermore, relational psychoanalysis expresses value positions about what is essentially *good*, embodying cultural understandings about the correct ways to be human. Cushman (2015) reflects on the history of relational psychoanalysis, asserting that the discipline’s philosophical foundations challenge contemporary Cartesian-dualism, effectively advocating for integration over splitting. This favouring of integration allows for greater cross-over and permeability between disciplines, and facilitates more explicit forms of political content in therapeutic theory. Cushman (2015) notes that in the last two decades relationalists have increasingly engaged in more explicit commentary on political systems and discourses – addressing issues relating to gender, class, race, sexual orientation - effectively pushing for a deepening conscientisation of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

In considering the role which a relational psychoanalytic framework has played in this thesis, I realise that it is precisely this questioning of the status quo, this engagement with the current and urgent socio-political issues of our time which has given me permission, in this study, to embrace an increasingly activist stance in relation to my subject and to consider, as Guralnik (2014, p. 129) suggests “the ways history and nationalism shape our unconscious and organise our relationship to reality”. Relational psychoanalysis has given me a lexicon through which to frame what happens in the room when race becomes performed within the intersubjective space and it has allowed me to locate this interpersonal drama against a cultural and historical backdrop which renders it far more comprehensible. I contend that relational psychoanalytic practice has the potential, indeed, to nudge the South African psychoanalytic community onto a pathway of professional resignification, into a more conscientised, politicised engagement with the societal discourses which persistently interpellate our patients and ourselves. In particular, I suggest that engaging a relational psychology is the best chance we have to participate meaningfully in the decolonial surge which beckons radical change in our discipline.

CHAPTER 3

Methodological considerations: The centrality of reflexivity and voice

Introduction: Turning a critical eye

In this chapter I move to locate the thesis methodologically, positioning it within an overarching qualitative research tradition and particularly within an autoethnographic frame which most aptly describes the relationship between myself and the research, positioning myself as both primary research instrument and as subject throughout this doctoral study. Whilst formal research procedures have not dominated in the research endeavour, I have drawn on the case study method and thematic analysis in generating and gathering data for two of the core papers, and I outline these processes in the chapter. Most relevantly, the chapter explores notions of reflexivity and of voice which are pivotal to the style and process of the study.

In considering the methodological nature of my research, I have in mind Bloomberg and Volpe's (2019) emphasis on the congruence of a dissertation's theoretical framework, research design and methodology as an indication of a study's quality and worth. A tacit objective throughout the chapter, therefore, is a striving for methodological integrity through an alignment of the research dimension of the project with the philosophical and theoretical traditions which I described in the previous chapter. In particular, the philosophical tradition of Critical Social Science (CSS) - a frame of inquiry described by Schwandt (2001) as eschewing the notion of a disinterested social science, emphasising, rather, the cultural and historical conditions which contextualise both the researcher and that which is being researched – fits most comfortably with both the content and mode of my research enquiry.

The critical turn seen in the social sciences in the last two decades (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019), dictates that all research is intrinsically political with the critical research genres in particular taking a view of society as hegemonically structured, disadvantaging those marginalised along lines of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability etc. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A core value of critical social science research, then, is the challenging of existing social and institutional structures and traditions and the opening up of new practices

and meanings (Droguett, 2006), a value which aligns comfortably with my stated advocacy/activist agenda which sits as central to this study. It fits also with the currents of political resistance which buoy the relational psychoanalytic paradigm (Cushman, 2015) which holds the research.

A qualitative lens

Droguett (2006) suggests that qualitative research, in its turning away from the pursuit of generalisability and neutrality, and with its emphasis on the intersubjective, falls naturally within the ambit of Critical Social Psychology (CSP) research in particular. Qualitative methods emerge from a basic assumption that the social world is constructed from meanings and symbols, and that these meanings are articulated and expanded on in human interactions, nuanced and shaped by the players themselves (ibid). Processes of investigation and interpretation are therefore always situated, as is knowledge, and there can be no absolute notions of truth (Droguett, 2006). My positionality as researcher, then, is not of incidental importance, and notions of reflexivity and of voice are crucial to an unfolding of a research endeavour which has integrity and authenticity.

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) stress the impossibility of a singular definition of qualitative research, accommodating, as it does, multiple theoretical paradigms and a spectrum of methods and designs. They describe it as a set of complex interpretive practices with the researcher as central player, as ‘bricoleur’, emphasising the highly subjective and project-specific nature of the qualitative enterprise:

The product of the bricoleur’s labour is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s understandings, and interpretations of the phenomenon under analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4).

Rather than attempting to define the qualitative inquiry, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) suggest a set of generic defining characteristics which are broadly applicable, and which are congruent with this research. Qualitative research requires a naturalistic approach, ‘studying’ individuals in natural, rather than contrived, settings; it is philosophically constructivist in

nature, concerning itself with the ways in which the complexities of the social and cultural world are experienced and interpreted in a particular context, at a particular time; it is characterised by *thick description*, which refers to the highly detailed, in-depth way of contextualising and describing qualitative data.

Furthermore, in the qualitative endeavour the primary goals are description, understanding, interpretation and communication, and the sole instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher herself. The researcher makes use of multiple sources and methods which are reported as a part of the methodology, and which may include peer review and supervision. This process assures the triangulation which renders the research trustworthy. Design flexibility is core to qualitative methodology; methods and instruments used can be modified organically in response to the unfolding research narrative (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019).

The gathering and interpretation of data

Flexibility of method and design has played a central role in this project, allowing for an organic unfolding of the research process in response to a deepening understanding of my research questions and aims. Whilst rigid adherence to formal research procedures has not been a feature of this study, it is relevant in this chapter to position each of the core papers broadly within recognised qualitative practices and to elaborate, in particular, the use of case study methodology in two of them.

The first of the core papers (Chapter 4), *The Self in Jeopardy*, is a theory-driven paper which draws on the desk-review tradition, offering a scan and analysis of the literature which addresses race and psychoanalysis, creating a literary and theoretical foundation for the papers to follow. Whilst the voices and subjectivities of both myself and my co-author are clearly present throughout, the paper is predominantly theoretical in nature, an example of secondary research in which data is not gathered other than through a reading of existing literature. In Chapter 5, *Raids on the Inarticulate*, and in Chapter 6, *The Problem of Thinking*, variations of case study methodology are applied. I give more detail to these processes below. Chapter 7, *Penetrating Subjectivity*, is the paper which most clearly illustrates the notions of reflexivity and voice, sitting comfortably within an autoethnographic framework as I pull

together the strands of my own subjective engagement with my subject as I respond personally to the commentaries made by the reviewers of *The Problem of Thinking*. Further on in this chapter, I consider in greater depth the autoethnographic stance which defines this paper, and which inflects the thesis as a whole.

Raids on the inarticulate: The group as case study

The case study, an in-depth exploration of the richness and complexity of a bounded system (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018), is defined by Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 301) as “an **intensive** analysis of an **individual unit** stressing **developmental** factors in relation to **environment**” (my emphases). A decisive factor in case study research is the boundedness of the *individual unit* under scrutiny, it has a ‘casing’ which holds it. *Intensive* refers to the detail and richness with which the case is described, and *developmental factors* refer to the fact that a case typically develops over time, as a string of concrete and interrelated events that occur at a certain time and place. A case study exists in *relation to the environment*, referring to the context which surrounds the case, it does not exist in a vacuum. This definition of a case study is useful when seeking a methodological framework for Chapter 5. The individual unit under study consists of the Race in Psychotherapy group of which I was both facilitator and member. The group was bounded by the particularities of membership, of a shared objective, theoretical orientation and process, as well as by time parameters, location and regularity. The description of the group and its processes are, indeed, detailed and ‘thick’ (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018), and the group evolved over time, allowing for commentary on its development. Finally, the group emerged and sustained against a particular social and political backdrop which both mirrored and informed the group’s process and evolution.

Stake (2005) differentiates between intrinsic and instrumental case study research. The case study described in Chapter 5 is intrinsic and inductive in nature; rather than being used deductively to illustrate a particular issue, it was studied because of its uniqueness, and because of its potential to generate new ideas which may be useful in influencing professional practice or social action (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018). Case study research is highly flexible in terms of data collection and analysis. Multiple sources of data potentially contribute to a detailed description of the setting, the participants, the process and the

common themes which define the group. In this instance, data were gleaned through, inter alia, the documented reflections of individual group members, through informal conversations which occurred at the entry and exit points of group meetings, through notes made following group meetings. The data were analysed thematically with repetitive themes, patterns and issues being identified and described, and interpreted through a theoretical lens. Critical to the credibility of case study research is the concept of triangulation which refers to the input of others, aside from the researcher. In this case, the data and the analyses were cycled through a process of peer supervision which included all members of the group in a shared collaboration. In addition, the process of the research and the writing was witnessed and commented on by my doctoral supervisor.

Data for the group case study were not collected following formal case study guidelines, however case study design and thematic analysis have provided useful frameworks for locating the research methodologically. The paper emerged as a collaboration amongst group members positioning us all as researchers and data harvesters with myself as researcher-in-chief and as primary author. I was also the primary analyser of the data with my colleagues providing a secondary analysing filter during the process of triangulation. The paper emerged from an enquiry which sought to make sense of the group's longevity, an unusual phenomenon in a professional context where conversations about race were difficult to have, and racially integrated groups were rare. This primary question was put to the group and each one of us agreed to reflect on our experiences. The following four broad questions were posed as a way of shaping reflections:

- What is your experience of race in the practice of psychotherapy and in the profession of psychology?
- What has been your experience of being in the group?
- Has being in the group impacted on your clinical practice, and on your sense of racialised self, identity and/or history?
- What themes or questions or thoughts have emerged for you from your experience in the group?

The recording and collection of responses was not uniform. Some group members chose to respond directly in writing to these questions, others wrote unstructured reflections whilst a few preferred to give their reflections verbally, in conversation with me. The responses and interviews yielded a rich collection of data which lent itself to a process of thematic analysis which is not used in case study research for purposes of generalising beyond the case but rather for rich description of the case in order to understand the complexity of the case itself. As such, the goal in case study research is not generalisability but rather transferability - how the knowledge may be applied in comparable contexts and settings (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018).

Braun and Clarke (2006) champion the thematic analysis of data because of its atheoretical flexibility which allows it to conform to the theoretical influences of any given research. They describe their process as an interpretive analysis which goes beyond the surface naming of themes; it is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6) whilst also going beyond this to allow for interpretation of the data relative to the research topic at hand. Their 6-step approach to analysis guided my approach to distilling and organising the data at hand.

Phase 1 involves familiarising oneself with the data based both on the interview material itself, and on the thoughts and perceptions which preceded the data collection. They recommend ‘immersion’ in the data where it becomes ‘known’ in a rich and integrated way, allowing for the discovery and identification of latent themes (or narratives). My role as founder, facilitator and participant-observer in the group, as well as my personal investment in the group’s process and focus meant that my ‘immersion’ in and ‘knowing’ of the data was present throughout the research endeavour. I found the systematic process of thematic analysis to be very helpful in structuring and organising my own experience and subjectivity, allowing for a disciplined, yet involved engagement with the data.

Phase 2 involves the coding of material along either data driven or theory driven lines. This is a systematic way of organising the material. My initial coding was guided by data content as I identified repetitive utterances and common experiences. As has been described in the paper

itself, it was clear early on that responses fell into racially margined categories with similar and shared experiences coalescing around blackness and whiteness.

Phase 3 introduces the analysis of the coding by organising the data into themes, considering the relationship between themes, and identifying thematic trends. Phase 4 involves reviewing themes by re-reading the initial data, and organising themes in relation to one another.

Phase 5 calls on the researcher to define and name themes, which involves further refinement and analysis such that an objective reader is able to make sense of the themes, and therefore of the data, without reading the transcripts themselves. The organisation and naming of the responses thematically was guided by the relational psychoanalytic theoretical underpinnings of the research, using, in particular, understandings of thirdness, rupture and repair, and mutual recognition. These theoretical constructs were essential to the interpretation of the data, and to the meaning which was attributed to the research and to the way in which themes were distilled, named and described. The process of thematic identification and meaning-making was filtered through the lens of my group colleagues. At multiple points in the analysis the group was involved in the reviewing and sanction of what was being emphasised; from the initial teasing out of themes, to the selection of relevant theoretical constructs, to the decision about how to refine and describe the themes.

Phase 6 is the process of writing up the data which involves a ‘telling of a complicated story’ about the data collected. The final ‘story’ of the research was narrated by me aided, again, by the opinions, reviews and edits of the group, as well as by objective and guiding input from my doctoral supervisor.

This case study presented idiosyncratic ethical considerations around informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. In conventional case study research, anonymity of subjects and confidentiality are important ethical objectives, as is the securing of informed consent from participants. In this case study, all participants were also co-researchers. As such, transparency about the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the anticipated publishing journal were discussed and agreed on at the outset. All participants agreed to engage as co-researchers and co-authors of the final paper, with myself as primary author. It was also made

clear that the paper could potentially be included as a component of my doctoral study. These ethical dimensions of the case study were discussed in person at our group meetings, as well as through email correspondence. We also agreed that whilst the names of each of us would appear on the published article, we would strive for anonymity within the content of the article itself, using only identifying numbers and codes to organise the direct quotations and other subjective content.

The problem of thinking: Clinical case study

The use of clinical data has been employed as a way of creating and developing psychoanalytic theory since Freud first detailed his clinical encounters. It continues to play a central role in the examination and exploration of in-depth clinical phenomena; it is from the examination of these phenomena that psychoanalytic theory inductively grows and matures as writers draw on the lived experience of their patients in therapy to create a deepening awareness of the intrapsychic factors which shape them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In Chapter 6, I deductively drew on composite clinical case material to illustrate the primary hypothesis of the paper, viz. that the presence of race in the dyad has the potential to interrupt the clinical task and to collapse the capacity to think. The clinical material described comprises of heavily disguised composites or amalgams drawn in part from my own clinical practice, and from vignettes in the public domain.

Gabbard (2000) talks about the imperative as clinicians and academics to enhance and further knowledge, whilst doing so within an ethical framework which minimises harm. In this research, I have borne in mind specific issues around informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. In Chapter 6, the use of clinical vignettes to illustrate theoretical propositions necessitated the consideration of particular ethical issues. Whilst the use of clinical case vignettes is considered to be different to case-study based research where a therapeutic encounter is described and analysed in depth, there are some common ethical factors which bind them, viz. anonymity and confidentiality. In Chapter 6 a number of composite vignettes drawn from a variety of clinical sources, including from my clinical work and from work already made public, were used to illustrate aspects of theory. In order to maximise anonymity and confidentiality the examples drawn from my own practice were constructed

using heavily disguised material (Gabbard, 2000), in this way minimising the possibility of the material being recognised or betraying confidentiality and anonymity.

An autoethnographic stance

Whilst autoethnography was not an anticipated framework for this project at the outset, the process of the research has led to a deepening personal enquiry such that my experience as a White South African clinician engaging my own racedness has become a topic in its own right, interwoven into the investigation (Ellis and Bochner, 2011). Whilst the core papers are not strictly autoethnographic, I am embedded in each one of them, writing from the inside, rather than the outside. Considering the ways in which my subjectivity is intertwined with my choice of research subject, and with the research process as it has unfolded over time, it makes sense to apply a broadly autoethnographic orientation to frame the study. My subjectivity has nuanced the study's theoretical foci and has shaped the choice of research method and interpretation.

As with many concepts in qualitative research, a singular definition of autoethnography is elusive. Broadly speaking it is an autobiographical genre of research which involves the description and analysis of personal experience with the objective of illuminating the multiple layers of consciousness which connect the personal to the cultural (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Ivey, 2017). By implication it involves significant self-disclosure on the part of the researcher, however the depth and detail of this disclosure varies relative to the particular study being conducted.

Ivey (2017) considers how autoethnography complexifies countertransference experience in a way which invites a revisiting of the concept of projective identification. He suggests that the historical and cultural positioning of the therapist subverts the asocial depiction of projective identification as predominantly the patient's creation. Instead, there is a recognition of how a therapist's own internal conflicts around, for example gender or race, are activated and contribute to the dyad-specific manifestation of projective identification. Reminiscent of the stance on self-disclosure taken by relational psychoanalysis, Ivey (2017) cautions against gratuitous self-disclosure, emphasising that autobiographical divulgements, reminiscences and

subjective impressions should not be “incidental, decorative or self-indulgent” (Ivey, 2017, p. 50), nor should they detract from the patient or from the significance of what is unfolding therapeutically, rather, “they should reveal a patient, a therapist and a therapeutic couple we would never otherwise have met” (Ivey, 2017, p. 50). Whilst this application of autoethnography resonates most with the way in which the clinical case vignettes in Chapter 6 are presented and interpreted, and also with the reflexivity embedded in Chapter 7, I suggest that there is an autobiographical seam which travels through the thesis from the outset.

Chapter 4 constitutes a desk review of sorts in which the ways in which mainstream psychoanalysis ‘treats’ race is considered and critiqued and an alternative, refreshed psychoanalytic approach is proposed. Whilst this paper is theory-driven, the voices of myself and my co-author are acknowledged at the outset – myself as a white clinician writing alongside my black supervisor - and the paper is tacitly shaped by this cross-racial pairing, even though we do not write explicitly of our own subjectivities. I explore the impact of voice later in this chapter, highlighting the relevance of the racially paired authorship which penned the chapter. In the chapter the notion of the therapist in jeopardy is introduced; we link the avoidance of race in psychoanalytic thinking and practice to an anxiety about what of the analyst’s subjectivity will be exposed should race be engaged with as an intersubjective phenomenon in the dyad. Whilst our critique is aimed at the classical psychoanalytic establishment and those who uphold it, the vulnerability of which we speak is also my own. It was precisely my curiosity around my own subjectivity and how it is implicated in the face of race which acted as primary - albeit unconscious - impetus for the research at the outset. This first paper, then, is multi-layered; it constitutes both an investigation into and a critique of the psychoanalytic scotomisation of race, whilst simultaneously operating as a platform from which I explore theory as a way of making sense of my own process, seeking a theoretical resolution to my own grappling with race.

In Chapter 5, in which I present the group paper, as participant-observer my subjectivity is both present and absent. The paper describes the process of a group of which I am both founder and facilitator, a paper which I initiated and of which I am primary author. And yet in an attempt to flatten this hierarchy in the service of offering equal space to the voices of all

members, my anonymity remains somewhat intact as I position my unidentified voice alongside the narratives of my co-authors. In referring to Derrida (1997, in Stevens, 2021) Stevens comments that even when we believe something is absent, its representational absence signals its presence. I am struck by the veracity of this observation when considering my participation in the group paper. Whilst on one level it was a collaborative endeavour, the paper stands also as a private leg in my own autobiographical journey.

Ivey's (2017) application of autoethnography resonates with the way in which the clinical case vignettes in Chapter 6 are used as instrumental case studies (Stake, 2005) in which my self-experience is used as data to illustrate the collapse of thinking and of the capacity to provide emotional containment when race becomes salient in the therapeutic encounter. The focus in these examples is on the racial subjectivity which I, as therapist, bring to the interaction, nuancing and shifting the dyadic interplay between myself and my patient/s. The emphasis in these vignettes on my countertransference and on the ways in which my own sense of self and identity are challenged and altered through the therapeutic encounters, support a retrospective autoethnographic lens. Ivey's (2017, p. 50) comment that psychotherapy is not one-way traffic is resonant: "Our patients introduce us to our own unconscious, just as certainly as we introduce them to theirs... We have to be open to continuous self-surprise, to our endless complexity". In this paper, I claim the "I" far more intentionally, writing away from the familiar tradition of the unidentified third person in which I was academically raised. In this paper the autoethnographic orientation is more clearly owned as I take myself, as clinician, as subject of scrutiny in the clinical vignettes which are described. In this I explore countertransference reactions and how they deepen my comprehension of what happens in the intersubjective space between my patient/s and I. My role as both therapist and researcher in these clinical vignettes allows me to position it as a form of participant observation, both as a central method in qualitative research used to explain complex interactions as they unfold in natural settings (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018), and as a relational psychoanalytic concept in the Sullivanian tradition (Aron, 1991).

As mentioned previously, my presence and participation as autoethnographic subject is absolute in the final paper of the thesis, presented in Chapter 7. In this paper I partake in conversation with my three respondents to *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White*,

engaging with their comments not only in relation to the theoretical and clinical content of the paper, but also, and especially, to their engagement with me as author, clinician, and white South African. In my response I engage with the subjectivity of how it is to write about race from within a context which is so race-saturated, I contemplate too what it means to strive towards the decolonisation of a previously colonised mind, and I consider the meaning of entering into a deepening process of mutual recognition with my patients through which my subjectivity becomes increasingly transparent. This paper meets in full circle the notion of the therapist in jeopardy, introduced in Chapter 4, as I scrutinise my own self-jeopardy.

Woven in to the discussion of these research methods, and intrinsic to any qualitative research process, are notions of reflexivity and voice. I consider now my relationship to these core concepts.

Positioning myself reflexively

We not only *bring* the self to the field...we also *create* the self in the field (Reinharz in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 247),

Just as in relational psychoanalytic thinking, where the therapist's enactment is regarded as a source of information rather than as an error, Bannister (2006) positions subjectivity in qualitative research as a resource, not as a problem. In the qualitative enterprise, the self of the researcher sits as an essential strand in the weave of the endeavour. Amongst the myriad ways in which reflexivity is described in the literature, I suggest that the following, proffered by Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 246), aptly captures the performance of reflexivity in this thesis:

It is a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself. Reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with ourselves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting.

Essential to this understanding of reflexivity is the idea of a multiplicity of selves which articulate the researcher's voice. Reinharz (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) suggests that these selves fall into three distinct categories; the *research-based self*, the *brought self* – that which holds the historical and social context of the researcher, and the *situationally created self*, and that each of these selves needs to be interrogated in terms of how they nuance the research process and outcomes. Implicit in these understandings of the reflexive stance is the Bakhtinian notion of the “situated and participatory nature of being” (in Swartz, 2007, p. 183) through which all utterances are inescapably performative. All component parts of a text, then, taken as a whole, ultimately form a series of unspoken images which coalesce into a narrative which leaves the narrator with “no alibi” (Bakhtin, in Swartz, 2007, p. 183), rendering transparent her subjectivity.

The idea of a triad, or multiplicity of selves, all in performance, feels relevant to this research project as I consider my positionality, as researcher, in relation to my subject. In retrospect I am able to tease out the selves described by Reinharz (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) and to recognise how they have dovetailed as the project has developed. In considering the contours of my own subjectivity, what comes to mind is the warning issued by Lazard and McAvoy (2017) when they consider what they describe as the Sisyphean task which reflexivity can become. Personal reflexivity may seem straightforward, however the challenge is in developing a reflexive account which is relevant to the process of research and not simply a list of extraneous variables, nor the description of life-experiences which, in fact, do not sufficiently articulate their impact on the research. There exists also the risk of pursuing reflexivity endlessly, with one reflection leading to another, in infinite regress and to excessive, potentially narcissistic, self-analysis (Lazard and McAvoy, 2017). Reflexivity, therefore, must be deployed in the service of the research question, and not instead of it. I have this in mind as I seek to position myself more transparently as the central instrument in my study.

This research project, one which focuses on race and its role in psychoanalytic psychotherapy and in the profession of psychoanalytic psychotherapy more broadly, has been initiated and crafted by myself, an English-speaking white woman, born in 1971, into an Apartheid South Africa. These facts do little to contextualise the particular “familial and cultural enclaves of

love and hate” (Layton, 2006) in which I was raised and through which my normative unconscious processes were laid down, and which fundamentally nuance the *brought self* in this endeavour. The enclave of my nuclear family was characterised by internal conflict and violence, an inter-parental drama fuelled by my father’s alcoholism, consuming attention and energy, alienating us as a family from the social world in which we lived. My parents were consumed by relational survival until they divorced, when I was 6 years old, spiralling my older brother and I into an internally-focused childhood of splits, separation anxiety and depression. This internal drama unfolded in a small, conservative Kwazulu-Natal town, far from any hint of unrest or political dis-ease. The town’s conservatism matched the mindset of my parents, both well schooled in adhering to, rather than questioning, or thinking about the status quo. And so I grew up in a wholly racially segregated world, and, in turn, did not question or think until the violence and racial injustice of the mid-1980’s thrust itself into my consciousness through the firebrand rhetoric of my high school history teacher. This relative conscientisation resulted in what I now consider to be a naive performance of activism during my adolescence, enacted in the safety of Progressive Federal Party structures, but without any real encounter with my raced self, nor with my perpetrator and beneficiary status. In retrospect I can reflect on what was clearly an absence of any real *thinking about*. This avoidance of the truth and reality of the historical and current socio-political landscape, was paralleled too by my remaining closeted, to myself and to the world, in denial of my identity as a gay woman, of my own otherness. This, in spite of the fact that, at the age of 16, I began an intensely tumultuous, secret, shame-drenched and socially alienating 4-year lesbian relationship. I was engaged in a wholesale denial of multiple facets of my core identity.

The first fundamental shift in conscience and perspective occurred for me when I relocated from Kwazulu-Natal to Johannesburg, in my early 20’s and the then early 1990’s, where I continued my postgraduate studies at Wits University. For the first time I was able to tentatively explore my sexuality, at first under the care of a therapist who sat in the journey with me, normalising what I felt to be aberrant desire, and then eventually ‘out’ in the world where I began a long-term relationship. Working through and dissolving my internalised homophobia, has, however, remained a life-long project and I recognise in my own subjectivity the deeply riven scars of interpellation and concomitant vestiges of shame. In parallel with my nascent sexual awakening, confronted as I was by the unavoidable,

politicised context of Wits University, I began to ‘see’ the socio-political landscape more clearly and I began to question the decontextualised narrative of my childhood. My new best friend, a White fellow-student my own age, had enviable struggle credentials. She had met Nelson Mandela on his release, had visited him at his Soweto home. As an undergraduate student she had protested against the death throes of the Apartheid regime (she may even have been arrested). In juxtaposition to her and many new white peers, I realised how split-off I had been from reality and I began to question, painfully, my apathy and lack of involvement in the politics of my generation. It has taken many years for me to make sense of how the familial trauma of my childhood, coupled with the turn-a-blind-eye conservatism of my parental figures, drew my gaze away from the trauma of the external, cauterising any potential for awareness or conscientisation. More recently I have begun to make increasing sense, too, of how distracted I was by my internal struggles with my own gender-ambivalence and sexual orientation, and how different and apart I felt in a world of peer relationships which were consistently complex and in which I felt hidden.

The second moment in my history which acted as a conscientising catalyst and which prompted me to begin my research, occurred when I left South Africa to study at Smith College, Massachusetts, in 2010. As I mention in *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White*, I realise that the vantage point I gained by being away allowed me to see afresh not only the racial context of my country and my profession, but I was also able to see myself, as a raced, white person, starkly, possibly for the first time. This rendering of my history helps me to understand the intersecting aspects of identity which together contrived a childhood apart-from-context. It also allows me to articulate the altering moments in my life which steered me towards this research. It helps me to consider the self which was prompted to embark on the journey of a PhD, focusing specifically on race. In retrospect I recognise an impulse towards reparation, and a need also to orientate the first decades of my life within a political context. I recognise also a longing to ‘catch-up’ my understanding of our history in order to think about its interruption of the present, and to feel that I can participate meaningfully as a thinking person in my personal life, my profession, and in society. Such a history makes meaning too of my particular choice of theoretical paradigm, and of the journals and articles which have yielded the substance of my reading. Rather than looking to mainstream, internalist theory for an explanatory framework, I chose relationality precisely

because of the sense it makes of intersectionality and because of the permission it gives me to reach beyond the familial narrative.

My orientation at the outset of this project was towards the racial Other. As clinical supervisor, I found myself becoming curious about the experience of young black therapists; how it was for them to navigate professional spaces which remained dominated by whiteness. I was curious, too about the experience of black patients, and their negotiation of self. I continued to keep at arm's length the violence of my own raced identity, and the racism which had woven itself through my life. It is uncanny to rewind ten years, to when I first began to conceptualise my research question and when the notion of *thinking about* race in the dyad surfaced as the focus. Thinking, as understood through a Bionian lens, has been at the core of this endeavour, and I can say that the *situationally created self* is one which has increasingly been able to think, and to recognise that this research has been as much about encountering my raced self and the internalised Other, as it has been about the external Other.

Whose voice is this which speaks?

In the tradition of qualitative research which strives to move away from the third person - the “voice from nowhere” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018), the “proud but calcified voice of the academy” (Morrison, in Msebele and Brown, 2011, p. 454) - the style of this research is transparent in its mirroring of the writer's subjectivity. It is quite clear that I write with the voice of a middle-aged, white woman and that this lens must, by definition, carry with it embedded meaning. Voice is inextricably linked to reflexivity, being the mechanism through which the specific personal, social, theoretical and political influences on the research are articulated (Lazard and McAvoy, 2017). As such, my having voice - particularly when engaging with issues pertaining to race in South Africa – carries immediate and complicated significance. It was with the question of voice, and who has the right to speak, that I was preoccupied as I initially began to think about this study. Specifically, I questioned whether, as a white person, I should be putting forward a thesis about race. In her highly publicised paper, *How do I live in this strange place*, philosopher Samantha Vice called on white South Africans to adopt an attitude of silent humility, surrendering the talking space to the racially marginalised:

For white South Africans, work on the self, done in humility and silence, might indicate the recognition that any voice in the public sphere would inevitably be tainted by the vicious features of whiteness (Vice, 2010, p. 340).

This admonition has accompanied me throughout this project, and grappling with who should speak, how and when, remains an open question; one which, I suggest, is an inevitable accompaniment to any race-based research, particularly in this country. The dilemma of voice, and who has the right to speak, was raised by Eagle (2005) when she suggested that not everyone has the cultural warrant to speak when it comes to race. When engaging about race, the authority of the speaker is relevant as these conversations carry interactive and social meaning. Fairclough (1992, p. 4) suggests that “any discursive event...is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instant of social practice”. As such, there are no value- or context-free utterances when it comes to race. And yet in the context of South African borne psychoanalytic writing, much of what has been written about race has come from white authors. Long (in Long et al 2020) asks the question, “what does it mean to have a white voice?” She notes that the potential for white voices to dominate and for Black voices to fall silent is always present as an expression of the underlying, racialised power dynamics which have characterised the South African psychology, and psychoanalytic arenas.

Long’s (in Long et al, 2020) engagement with the issue of voice comes as part of a discussion published in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* in the context of a paper written by Long, Matee, Jwili and Vilakazi (2020) in which the three Black authors write about their experience of being patients in therapy with White therapists. Long is their White clinical trainer/supervisor who proposed and facilitated the paper. Straker (2020), who writes as one of the respondents to the paper, notes that Long is listed as the primary author and is therefore present throughout, yet it is not obvious that she has written into the text, and as such her voice is also absent. Long (in Long et al, 2020) engages with Straker, acknowledging the tension she experienced between falling silent, and wanting to engage, aware of the power differential which comes both with her whiteness and with her position of authority as the supervisor of her co-authors. Stevens (2020) also a respondent to the paper, notes that in psychoanalysis,

conversations have been skewed towards knowledge production that is gendered and raced, and therefore when black and white writers collaborate there is always the risk that the black voices will be invalidated because they sit alongside whiteness.

There may very well be instances where speaking of Whiteness or Blackness may be more appropriately conveyed by Whites and Blacks, respectively, but any form of reciprocal collaboration...will of necessity compel us all to make choices where the potential outcome is that we have to endure the accusations of appropriation or capitulation as part of a more integrative and generative process of addressing social alienation (Stevens, 2020, p. 720).

In two of my core papers I write in collaboration with Black colleagues; Stevens' (2021) commentary prompts me to reflect on the dynamics of authorship and voice in each of these. In Chapter 5, a group paper written alongside twelve colleagues, seven of whom are black, I am indeed aware of the fact that my white voice dominates, and that the structure, themes and conclusions communicated are voiced by me. I am pushed to ask, as Long (in Matee et al, 2021) does, whether my Black colleagues were able to speak with spontaneous voices in the presence of a senior white colleague who was also founder and facilitator of the group. I am aware of unsettling discomfort when I consider whether there may have been an experience for them of being compelled to participate in a research and writing exercise which, ultimately, benefitted me in the pursuit of my doctoral study. As Stevens (2021) suggests further, "For Black authors writing on our raced experience, there is often the injunction to speak about ourselves, and to own these experiences as a form of empowerment...But ...there is also the possibility that these accounts make us vulnerable and are fetishised by our interlocutors" (Stevens, 2021, p. 719). I must, on retrospective reflection, acknowledge both the centrality of my voice in this collaborative paper, and the possibility that the paper reinforces an imbalance of power between the black and the white voice.

In contrast, my retrospective analysis of voice in Chapter 4 - also a cross-race collaboration - yields a different conclusion. In this paper I write alongside Garth Stevens, my Black research supervisor whose presence in this thesis is tacit throughout. Chronologically, even though it is placed at the beginning of the thesis, this paper was the final one written, towards

the end of my decade of research and writing. In it I can see how my voice has changed since I first began to write into this topic, and I notice how much it has shifted in nuance and language to align more closely with Garth's voice. On contemplation I wonder whether this is because of the certainty with which he speaks into a subject area which he commands with confidence. In this collaboration the dynamic feels completely different, as I recognise that legitimate authority rests with my Black co-author.

Whilst I have been awake to the relevance of reflexivity and of voice to my study from the outset, it is only in retrospect that I am more fully able to grasp the meaning and performance of these concepts in my research. At this point, as the project draws to a close, I venture to suggest that I am more fully able to own the "I" which has crafted and shaped the endeavour, recognising in the same instance that in the "I" resides a multiplicity of selves which are not static and that, in the pursuit of life goals, when you finally get there, "there is no there there" (Stein, in Bromberg, 1996, p. 509), and that:

The direct experience of "self-change" seems to be gobbled up by the reality of "who you are" at a given moment, and evades the linear experience of beginning, middle, and end. (Bromberg, 1996, p. 509).

The question of ethics

Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) speak to the ethics which are raised in qualitative research when researcher is also instrument, highlighting issues related to power, authorship and voice. An ethically responsible study necessitates a degree of reflexivity which includes an openness to critical feedback and change, and a willingness to investigate the ways in which the researcher's subjectivity may privilege a tacit agenda in the writing up of the research. This is particularly crucial when research involves the Other, when blindspots, deeply internalised assumptions and biases risk skewing the interpretation and the writing-up (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2018), compromising the integrity of the project. The process of this doctoral study, the choice of research methods, the decisions made along the way in terms of research foci, authorial voice etc. have been monitored and held to account by my academic supervisor. In addition, at various points during the process, my research and writing has

been scrutinised by other supervisors and doctoral candidates as part of the peer review process which defines this particular pathway to a PhD. More specifically, as detailed above, the entire process of the group case study in Chapter 5 was vetted by my colleagues in the group. This degree of triangulation has facilitated conversations around my positionality and subjectivity, in particular my whiteness, and around the inevitable political dimension to the research. It has also validated the trustworthiness of the research.

Canella and Lincoln's (2018) call for a radical ethics which address issues of power and oppression, align with this project's critical stance and with its consideration of the decolonial moment. Similarly, Christians (2018) suggests that ethics within the social sciences should be engaged with at the worldview level, and that questions of method are secondary to considerations of paradigm. From this perspective the researcher's belief system, her politics etc. mould the endeavour not only in terms of choice of method, but also ontologically and epistemologically. Christians (2018) criticises the system of extrinsic ethics which typically informs quantitative research, asserting that the researcher's *intention* is more significant than rigour of design. Canella and Lincoln (2009, in Christians, 2018, p. 162) define qualitative research which is freed from neutrality and superficial design concerns:

Research conceptualisations, purposes, and practices (should) be grounded in critical ethical challenges to social systems, supports for egalitarian struggle, and revolutionary ethical awareness and activism from within the context of community. Research (should) be relational... and grounded within critique of systems, egalitarian struggle, and revolutionary ethics.

It is this approach to ethics which feels most relevant to my study's process, characterised by constant self-scrutiny and questioning of the intention and outcome of decisions that have been made along the way.

One of the consequences of this self-scrutiny and questioning has been a deepening relationality between myself as researcher and the methods and processes I have drawn on to facilitate and realise the project. Intrinsic to this relationality has been a flexibility and adaptability in relation to method and design. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) stress that design

flexibility is core to a qualitative methodology which has integrity. As such, methods and instruments used can be modified organically in response to the unfolding research narrative. This doctoral study has been characterised by such adaptability, most clearly identified in the discrepancy between the methodology which was outlined in the research proposal and that which is being described in this chapter. At that stage I did not anticipate that the group of which I was both founder and member would become part of this research; I had no way of predicting that the group would gain traction and momentum beyond its initial one-year contract, and that it would become, as a consequence, a logical portal through which to pursue a deepening enquiry into collegial conversations about race. As such, case study design and analysis were not considered in the initial methodology, and neither was a case study method formally executed. The data gathering and analysis evolved far more organically. Similarly, when I proposed the paper, *The Problem of Thinking*, I could not anticipate that it would generate three published responses which I, in turn, responded to, generating an unexpected paper which prioritised my own subjectivity in relation to my subject. This process of peer review and consequent self-analysis deepened the autoethnographic orientation which has, increasingly, felt appropriate as a methodological holding paradigm for the project as a whole. Whilst the unexpected emergence of these papers resulted in a significant modification of the initially proposed research methodology, the primary aims and objectives of this doctoral study have remained constant, providing a consistent and containing frame within which the research has dynamically, and quite unexpectedly, evolved.

CHAPTER 4

Paper 1: Preface

This paper stands as the dissertation's theoretical spine, introducing the reader to the overarching research enquiry and engaging with the key areas of literature and theory which scaffold the papers to follow. It is a co-authored piece, written in collaboration with my PhD supervisor, Prof Garth Stevens. Whilst this paper appears as the first of the four papers which together constitute the substance of the thesis, it is relevant that it was written last, completed in August 2020, and submitted to *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (IJP). In February 2021, we received feedback from the IJP outlining areas that reviewers felt require further development before publication will be considered.

The IJP as potential publishing journal was a considered and deliberate choice. Whilst we could have submitted to a more applied journal, one which has considerations of culture embedded in its mandate, we chose not to, as part of our intention is to disrupt the canon of which we are critical in the paper. It is the attention of mainstream psychoanalysis that we seek. As such, even though we have received feedback which will require some work in revising, it does seem indeed possible that we may succeed in publishing a critique of psychoanalysis in the very journal which stands as a symbol of the principles which we have striven to question.

In the paper we consider the relative absence of race in the psychoanalytic mainstream, suggesting that foundational psychoanalytic tenets are drawn on to defend the exclusion of race as a relevant factor in the development of the psyche. In particular, we look at classical versus relational psychoanalytic approaches to the nature of the unconscious, transference and countertransference. We challenge too the notion of analytic neutrality, suggesting that such neutrality is neither possible nor, in fact, desirable. The paper posits further that a driving factor which keeps race out of the analytic fray is the self-protection of the analyst, and an avoidance of engaging the subjectivity and vulnerability which race inevitably provokes in the interpersonal field. In closing, we propose a refreshed psychoanalytic project, one which engages with the external and allows for the mind-society synapse which, we suggest, is imprinted on the psyche.

The paper engages with themes which are expanded on in the papers which follow. These include initial thoughts on what happens to the therapist's capacity to draw on ordinary clinical skills (Swartz, 2007b) when race enters the room, specifically the impact on the therapist's capacity to think, to be a container of thoughts (Bion, 1962) and the potential to experience racial melancholia (Eng and Han, 2000; Straker, 2004). It introduces the reader to core concepts which have emerged from the relational canon, such as the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) and Layton's (2006) notion of the normative unconscious, which stands as central in my thinking about the relationship between the internal and the external. It considers too notions of thirdness (Gerson, 2004) as well as the social third (Altman, 2000), and it speaks to the potential for psychoanalysis to participate in the realm of resistance and activism (Guralnik, 2016; Frosh, 2018). Centrally, it flags the subjectivity of the therapist, and articulates my foundational assumption that patient and therapist engage as subjects together in a racially co-constructed space such that the therapist has no access to an alibi of neutrality.

The timing of this piece is relevant, firstly, because in its original conception, as outlined in my thesis proposal, the paper was envisaged as an exposition and contextual analysis of contemporary psychoanalytic writing around race in the clinical dyad. In particular, I was interested in investigating the various contexts from which writing about race has emerged, looking at how ways of writing about race reflect something of the socio-historical landscape of its origins. Had the chapter been written first, at that time, it would have been a largely apolitical endeavour and I would not as yet have claimed the advocacy/activist agenda which now stands as a pillar in the thesis and which is written into in this paper. I would also not have been able to write with the confidence that I have more recently been able to access, having walked the research path and engaged about my subject in multiple forums, developing my own opinion and sculpting my convictions. It is with a very different voice and insight that the paper was written, at the end of the research journey, benefitting from hindsight and providing the springboard for many of the primary themes which are developed in the ensuing papers.

Secondly, writing the paper more recently has allowed me to do so alongside Prof Stevens, rather than on my own which would likely have been the case had I done it earlier. There is

something powerfully symbolic for me about us reaching a point in our supervisory journey which allowed us to collaborate as colleagues without me feeling the intimidation and novice-student shyness which I felt when we first met and in the opening stages of the research. Furthermore, and crucially, the co-writing invited a cross-racial lens which, I suggest, steadied the enterprise, holding race, at all times, in mind. Prof Stevens has consistently called me on my racialised blindspots, and I welcomed his attention to detail in this collaboration. In considering how this paper sounds and looks, in comparison to how it may have manifested some years ago, I am able to reflect on my shifting relationality and voice, and on the multiplicity of selves which have participated in and matured through this process.

In summary, this paper introduces the reader to the relationship between race and psychoanalysis, juxtaposing the ways in which race is ‘treated’ in relational versus mainstream writing, interrogating the ways in which some of the most sacrosanct of psychoanalytic principles can be creatively applied to thinking about race, and surfacing as key the subjectivity of the analyst/therapist. But what we do, most crucially in this paper, is to propose a disruption of the mainstream analytic canon as it currently stands, calling for a social contextualisation of the discipline, and for a recognition that the problem of race, and the ways in which it insidiously shapes the internal world and, therefore, the clinical encounter, is not one which can be resolved through a successful analysis. Rather, it sits as a pervasive social, interpersonal and intrapersonal dilemma which thrusts into focus the essential unknowability of self and other, calling on us, as clinicians, to tolerate this irresolution, to resist foreclosure, and to ride the recursive dynamic between knowing and not-knowing.

The self in jeopardy: The curious absence of race in psychoanalytic enquiry

Esprey, Y. and Stevens, G. Submitted to The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, August 2020.

Abstract

Drawing on a scan of psychoanalytic writing, this paper grapples with the persistent absence of race as a subject of enquiry within psychoanalytic thinking and practice. We suggest that engaging with race is largely avoided as it challenges foundational psychoanalytic tenets, whilst concomitantly provoking a jeopardy of the self of the analyst/therapist. The paper distills key conceptual issues that are contested when considering the relevance of the racialised societal landscape on the development of the psyche – in particular, the impact on conceptualising the nature of the unconscious, and of transference and countertransference. In addition, we consider the question of analytic neutrality and the manner in which racial melancholia may manifest to generate vulnerabilities for the analyst/therapist, when race is central to the analytic encounter. The paper posits that the internal world is not quarantined from external social discourses, practices and structures, but rather that these are reciprocally implicated in the structuring of the psyche. We propose a psychoanalytic project that engages with the psychic imprint of the external world, and allows for the possibility that the resolution of racial entanglements may not be the therapeutic ideal, and that ongoing work with such ambivalences and contradictions may in fact be desirable.

Introduction

The subject of race, and the role and influence it is afforded in psychoanalytic theorising, writing and practice, refracts some of the salient differences that distinguish divergent traditions of psychoanalytic thought today – most notably, along the axis that determines the extent to which these traditions view understandings of the mind as being socially inflected or not.

In particular, many proponents of the classical psychoanalytic traditions regard aspects of identity such as race and the external socio-cultural context to be extraneous or secondary to

the essential tasks of psychoanalysis as these are not considered to fall within the ambit of mental events (Shill, 2004), and as such, are not central to an understanding of the psyche. In contrast, writers emerging from the intersubjective, relational and self-psychology arenas have increasingly advocated for a consideration of the external socio-cultural context as being crucial to the shaping of the psyche, emphasising in tandem, the significance of the identities of those in the therapeutic dyad on the unfolding encounter. Whilst debates on whether race (and related socio-cultural factors) is peripheral or integral to the psychic field are not new (Swartz, 2007), what is notable is that the coliseum for the staging of these debates has been largely limited to applied, self-psychology, intersubjective and relational psychoanalytic journals and fora.

These divergences have their origins in a number of historical influences: the ascendancy of a model of science that was more focused on understanding the constituent particularities of the world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century; a retreat into the interiority of the subject in the face of the failed political projects of the early 20th century (Plotkin, 2001); the emergence of Neo- and Post-Freudian psychoanalytic traditions and their ruptures with the Freudians; the early influence of social theory on psychoanalysis (e.g. in the Frankfurt School); and the later influences of social movements on psychoanalytic traditions in the 1960s and again in the early 2000s; amongst others. Apparent from the above is that these differences across traditions are not simply of an applied and methodological nature, but reflect substantive ontological, epistemological and theoretical distinctions. In addition, psychoanalysis is clearly not monolithic, but is characterised by heterogeneity that reflects the varied temporal and contextual origins of its multiple traditions.

With the psychoanalytic positioning of race as its focus, the impetus for this paper is three-fold. First, we are invested in contributing to a centering and expansion of the debates on the valence of race within contemporary psychoanalysis, and not having them relegated to the periphery where they are often construed of as artifacts of attempts to recuperate one psychoanalytic tradition at the expense of another. Second, we are interested in some of the specific ontological, epistemological and theoretical conundrums that may emerge as we think about the role and function of race in current psychoanalytic thinking and practice. Here, our objective is not to elevate either internalist or socially inflected psychoanalytic

formulations, but to provoke a questioning of the prescriptions that circumscribe current psychoanalytic engagements with race, and to illuminate their consequences. Third, we are of course also writing about psychoanalysis in our time, and are attentive to our temporal and contextual conditions in which psychoanalysis is being re-fashioned. To this end, we recognise that maintaining a separateness between the context external to the consulting room and the psychoanalytic encounter itself, is no longer sustainable. This is particularly so in a world where the political and social external bangs loudly at the door, especially in the current historical moment in which there is a global grappling with issues pertaining to race, culture, class and belonging. As Leary (2006) noted, when a paper is written, it belongs to the context of its origin; this paper is written at a time when the overlap of politics and psychoanalytic inquiry cannot be occluded, and where the absence of mainstream psychoanalytic discourse around the politics of identity, surely, cannot be sustained.

We signal, from the outset, the paucity of attention which is given to race and its relationship to the psyche, and consequently in analytic praxis within mainstream psychoanalysis. We suggest that this absence represents, largely, a disavowal of race and a concomitant avoidance of thinking, theorising and writing about it as a legitimate subject of analytic inquiry. We propose that this avoidance emerges from two potential sites of jeopardy which complicate engagement with race; firstly, we argue that if the role of race in psychological development and expression is robustly interrogated, the analyst will be called to question deeply cherished tenets of internalist psychoanalytic thinking. Secondly, and in turn, race historicises and contextualises us, shattering neutrality, and has the potential to throw the analyst into a position of personal jeopardy. We suggest that these threats to theory and self are central to the trend to reduce layered social experiences that are racialised, to internal psychological events (Frosh, 2018; Davids, 2011; Dalal, 2001), obscuring an understanding of how the external world is directly implicated in the formation of the psyche. Similarly, we suggest that it accounts for the relegation of race to the margins of psychoanalytic practice where it is regarded as an applied or symbolic phenomenon, rather than as a rightful object/subject of psychoanalytic inquiry in and of itself (Davids, 2011). This paper is therefore concerned with what we are avoiding and why – not to impose a liberal moral imperative onto clinicians, but to reveal the underlying conceptual contestations and compromises to the self

that are surfaced, especially when we argue for an inclusion of apparently external dimensions of reality such as race in the terrain of psychoanalytic praxis.

The current historical moment is not one that is lost on us as authors – it is an instance in which global social movements are calling for an end to anti-Black racism in particular (e.g. Black Lives Matter), given its resurgence in several parts of the United States of America and Europe. But as history is relevant in the writing of this paper, so too is the identity of the authors, as we invest in our writing our own personal experiences and positions as two practitioners – one black and the other white – writing against the influencing backdrop of our own South African context. In addition to our clinical practice in which we must engage race as central to the work, we are both involved in the training and/or supervision of neophyte clinicians who wish to locate themselves within the psychoanalytic tradition, and who seek also to find ways to incorporate a complex and nuanced understanding of how the social is implicated in the psychical. Harris (2003) and Ogden (2005) both make the point that psychoanalytic writing allows for distance from the object in one's text, but also simultaneously allows for a meditation on and mediation of one's thoughts in a reflective function of sorts. The paper is thus inextricably veined by our particular contexts, experiences, investments and lenses.

The status of the literature

Since the early 1990s, writers such as Holmes (1992, 2016, 2020) have issued recurring calls for an urgent engagement with race in our thinking and practice. Convinced of the potent impact which race has on the psyche, Holmes (2020) speaks to the psychic costs of ignoring this. Calling to mind Fraiberg et al's (1975) notion of ghosts in the nursery, she asserts that split-off racial ghosts have the potential to weaken psychic strength unless they are intentionally evoked within the analytic setting. And yet the literature evidences a dearth of writing which addresses race and racism as relevant phenomena within mainstream British and North American psychoanalytic thinking (e.g. Davids, 2011; Dalal, 2001; Guralnik, 2016; Young, 1987). In other contexts, such as Brazil and South Africa, (see for example, Dias & Chibabi, 1987; Stevens, 2013; Swartz, 2007) the failure of analytic therapies to consider the impact of race and racism on treatment has similarly been documented. When

race is written about, it is predominantly done so by those who represent the marginalised – notably clinicians of colour - potentially positioning race as a minority issue which risks remaining sidelined (Davids, 2011). Holmes (2016) comments that the scotomisation of race is particularly notable considering that race as an issue is ubiquitous within Western cultures and exists therefore, inevitably, as a structuring factor in any psychotherapeutic situation. Similarly, Dias and Chibabi (1987), assert that race plays an inevitable and inescapable role in every analysis within Brazilian culture. And yet, a glance at mainstream psychoanalytic literature over the last century shows that race is largely invisible as an intentional subject for psychoanalytic consideration. In the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, for example, since 1920 there are ten articles which have race or racism in their title, seven of which are book reviews. When race is responded to, it tends to be done so through an applied psychoanalytic lens (Davids, 2011), through which it is considered to have symbolic valence, rather than being dealt with directly as central to the psyche and to development. Davids (2011), himself a British psychoanalyst, is critical of his peers for taking such an approach to race, and in particular, to racism. He says:

...the applied approach leads to a plethora of illustrations of how “our” concepts can be demonstrated in racism. The drive theorist can show that sexuality and aggression are projected across the race divide, the Lacanian that the Other is embodied there, the Kleinian that primitive object relations are played out there and so on, each then referring back to its theoretical corpus to shed light on the phenomenon. Racism becomes the newest canvas on which our concepts are illustrated (p. 11).

A number of reasons are posited for the absence of a discourse which actively interrogates the potential psychoanalytic role played by race within clinical practice. Holmes (2006, 2016) suggests that the overly narrow view of what should be the focus in analytic work reflects an over-identification with the primary analytic forerunners, beginning with Freud who, in what might be construed as a reaction formation, minimised and dismissed the impact of his racedness and consequent experiences of anti-Semitism on his own success neurosis. This he attributed rather to pre-oedipal and oedipal conflict, to a wish not to triumph over his father. In her thesis, which describes the potential wrecking effects of race and social class on self and success, Holmes (2006) argues against Freud’s limited formulation, suggesting that

internalised representations of factors such as racism and poverty contribute as much to the development of a success neurosis, providing the primary intra-psychic building blocks for a sense of guilt and self-recrimination when attaining a level of success. In this she echoes Fanon's (as quoted in Davids, 2011) understanding of racism as a universal feature of the human mind, resulting in what he described as the epidermalisation of inferiority, especially for black subjects.

In concert with this implied disavowal from Freud, an emphasis on the intra-psychic as separate from the external has been largely sustained, and psychoanalytic organisations and institutions have historically remained silent in the face of what Holmes (2016) describes as cultural trauma - "the layer within the psyche that contains the secret crimes of humanity and their history" (p. 642). Holmes (2006) asserts that "there is a culture-wide defensive barrier to recognising the implicit representations and derivative communications about the issue (racism and poverty)" (p. 221). Peskin (2012) furthermore castigates the 20th century analyst for remaining silent and impassive to social realities such as the Holocaust, ascribing a defensive, dissociative response to the reality of social trauma. Even those proponents of Freudian psychoanalysis as a form of liberating the self from its own false consciousness (Barratt, 2016), would have to concede that the formation of such a self, as well as its subsequent liberation, has to acknowledge the existence of an external reality in relation to which such a self is originally formed. Peskin's (2012) reference to dissociation thus reflects, potentially, a dissociation too from the subjectivity of the analyst, herself a subject in the violent and discriminatory social discourses and mass traumas which marred the century in which psychoanalytic thinking and practice emerged.

In unpacking what she describes as a dissociative split between the private and the social, Guralnik (2016) asserts that addressing the socio-political is complicated for psychoanalysis for a number of reasons. She suggests that when charged with the psychoanalytic imperative to help and to move towards a resolute cure, analysts face their own impotence in the face of overwhelming social and historical trauma which complicates therapeutic resolution. In addition, Guralnik (2016) asserts that authors face pressure from editors and publishers to translate the socio-political into the language of family drama when submitting for publication. Layton (2004), offers an example of such editorial practice which she

experienced when submitting an article to an analytic journal in which she noted the intersectionality (viz. race, class and sexuality) at play in the lived experience of men in a particular context. The edits she received effectively dehistoricised the text, positioning all men at mid-life as experiencing the same stresses and conflicts.

Layton (2006) and others (Davids, 2011; Esprey, 2017; Tummala-Narra, 2016; White, 2016) propose that there is an unconscious investment in splitting off whatever threatens the dynamic of power which defines and organises the psychoanalytic encounter. Moskowitz (as quoted in Holmes, 2006) maintains that knowledge is repressed when it challenges the class and power relationships within a culture, and that classic analytic interpretation tends to stop short of the fundamental ways in which race affects both analyst and patient. Similarly, Tummala-Narra (2016) asserts that naming cultural trauma and recognising its psychic impact impels us to acknowledge both the reality of cultural trauma as pervasive, and our unavoidably implicated role in its unfolding. In this, psychoanalytic practice is a system which rewards dissociation from the social external, providing, as it does, a sanctuary for the analyst from her own subject-hood and complicity, and maintaining the taxonomical hierarchy of patients and clinicians. Furthermore, engaging with race in the clinical dyad has the capacity to immobilise thinking, and to paralyse the analytic process (Davids, 2011; Esprey, 2017) because of the ways in which race implicates us.

Davids (2011) suggests that the reluctance to engage with the study of racism is further fuelled by fear of shame and guilt, and by the discomfort this creates, necessitating as it does a recognition of the ways in which we are all complicit in the enactment of racism. Engaging with race is dangerous, it exposes the self and subjectivity of the analyst in a way which threatens to alienate her from the safety of the psychoanalytic harbour – both in terms of psychoanalytic processes as well as the foundational theorisation that guides this practice. We contend that it is this danger which fuels the dissociation from, and avoidance of, race in the dyad.

A comprehensive exposition of literature on race is not the objective of this paper, given that this has been ably done by others (see Dalal, 2001; Davids, 2011). These investigations confirm the trend in mainstream psychoanalysis to neglect the social and to reduce it to more familiar psychological conflicts, and then to project them onto race. Classical analysis has

been critical of attempts to engage the social because interpersonal relations are not considered to fall within the realm of the psychic (Shill, 2004) – they are considered to be conscious and/or preconscious, and as such the ego is unable to create intra-psychic representations of these relationships. The external, then, is divorced from the internal and can only be worked with as symbolic of internal conflict. In his overview of psychoanalytic writing on race, Hamer (2002) notes that mainstream analysts conceptualise racially inflected thoughts and fantasies as resistance which obstructs analysis of the unconscious. Rather than staying with and analysing the myriad of potential meanings held by race, it is treated as something to transcend in order to continue with analysis proper. Hamer (2002) suggests further that it is in fact the very complexity of race which evokes an avoidance of discussion by both patient and analyst, and it is a complexity from which neither member of the dyad is unentangled.

A salient example of this entanglement is given by Davids (2011); he describes a case of a white patient who reported to his white analyst an incident which occurred on his way from his session - he cursed a motorist who had pushed in just ahead of him, calling him a “black bastard”. The analyst understood the motorist as being the recipient of the rage directed at her following an incisive interpretation from the day before. She tried to re-position the incident between them by suggesting that the motorist stood for an analyst hated for cutting into his narcissistic stream. The intervention was accurate and allowed the clinical work to progress but both the motorist’s blackness and the patient’s racism slipped out of focus. And, we would say, so too did the analyst’s collusive involvement in that racism. There was tacit agreement between two white people that the black motorist was a viable canvas onto which to project primitive hatred. Davids (2011) contends that race has historically been considered to be an obstacle to so-called ‘proper’ psychoanalysis when he notes that

...the black person is just another possible substitute onto whom Oedipal hatred might be displaced. The racist object relationship is just not the real issue” (p. 8).

Davids (2011) suggests, however, that whilst there is some compelling writing about race in the dyad, much of it fails to engage more deeply with the psychoanalytics of racism, and does not interrogate nor propose the mechanism through which the complex relationship between

race and the psyche is maintained. It is this gap in the theory that Davids (2011) attempts to fill with his conceptualisation of an internal racist structure where racialisation, as a form of difference and Othering, becomes much more universally possible.

Prior to the mid-1990s, a discrete handful of writers emerging from the classical tradition (see Schachter & Butts, 1968; Fischer, 1971; Holmes, 1992) had begun to acknowledge the critical importance of race in psychoanalytic thinking. This baton was taken up by relational psychoanalytic thinkers who continued the examination of the relevance of race. In the relational arena, the overlap between the social and the psychic had already begun to be intentionally explored, pioneered initially by gender theorists such as Benjamin (1997), and Layton, (2004a), amongst others. Relational writers argue for the interplay between external social discourses and internal psychic dynamics, and for the ways in which these reciprocally influence one another in the room. The importance of the external environment as a relevant factor in the psychoanalytic exchange was emphasised by theorists such as Altman (1995), who conceptualises a three-person model of psychoanalysis, with the external context constituting the third. Similarly, Hamer (2002), suggests that the external has the potential to function as an oedipal third - when race is avoided the oedipal ambivalence between patient and analyst cannot be dealt with. With an emphasis on the role played by the external, comes a foregrounding of the subjectivity of the therapist, and a recognition of the impact of a clinician's racial and historical identity on the intersubjectively created space. Writers such as Leary (1997), Suchet, (2004), Altman, (2000) and Hamer, (2002) have written with increasing transparency about their subjectivity in relation to the manifestation of race in the dyad, highlighting the need for clinicians to hold in mind the impact of their racialised identities and histories on the unfolding intersubjective relationship.

The above review highlights the complex understandings of race in psychoanalytic thinking – race as an external, but symbolic receptacle of unconscious material; race as a possibility of an internal psychic structure of difference and Othering; and race as direct contributor to the development of neuroses. In particular, it suggests two distinct, but related, sites of potential jeopardy when racially imbued material enters the clinical setting. The first is that some of the most revered foundational precepts of psychoanalytic theory are imperilled, thereby compromising the defensive refuge that theory can sometimes offer clinicians when they are

confronted with socially volatile material that reflects broader societal fractures and cleavages, or when they become aware of unsettling transference and countertransference reactions which are margined by race. The second is that when this site of safety is ceded, the self of the clinician is invariably made vulnerable, as it is visibilised as integral to the clinical interaction. It is these potential sites of jeopardy which, we suggest, fuel the implicit and explicit disavowal of race as integral to the psyche, and to psychoanalytic thinking and practice more broadly.

Mainstream psychoanalytic thinking in jeopardy: contested constructs

We suggest that engaging the socio-political more intentionally within psychoanalytic work prompts scrutiny of some of the most canonical elements of analytic theory – those mainstay elements that have frequently preserved the Cartesian dualism that characterises the social-psyche binary.

What is the nature of the unconscious as a unit of analysis?

Central to the question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and the social world, is the way in which the unconscious is conceptualised. The nature of the unconscious and the target of the psychoanalytic gaze is a subject of much contention. Kovel (1995) is outspoken in his criticism of classical psychoanalysis, arguing for an understanding of the psyche as a complex, multivalent and open system, constituted of an interconnection between self, selves and external world, and argues that:

...the great illusion of psychoanalysis has been to imagine itself free from society as it goes about the work of producing putatively categorical knowledge about the psyche. Psychoanalytic propositions rarely contain the proviso that the psyche is no physical body but part of a given social setting at a given time. Psychoanalysts forget...that they must themselves be educated into the ways of their world and that they everywhere exist within the prevailing framework of social relations (p. 205).

Rozmarin (2009) too argues for the deeply unconscious ways in which social and historical forces impact on the development of the self. He refers to Deleuze and Guattari's (as quoted in Rozmarin, 2009) criticism of psychoanalysis in its focus on the family as the unit of analysis, to the exclusion of the external. By conceiving of subjectivity as the outcome of the Oedipal triangle, psychoanalysis margins and restricts the arena of the unconscious, in doing so foreclosing on other aspects of human experience which shape the internal landscape.

Families are filled with gaps and transected by breaks that are not familial: religion, atheism, the Vietnam war...(*colonialism, Apartheid, racism, homophobia, patriarchy*)... (our italics) all these things form complexes of the unconscious" (p.607)

Davids (2011), in his articulation of what he terms internal racism, argues for a refreshed understanding of internal psychic structures. He proposes the existence of an internal racist structure which exists alongside other structures of the mind, suggesting that the racial Other belongs in the internal world as an object relation in its own right (alongside mother, father, etc.), as a preconception awaiting realisation in the external social world (Reyes, 2011). He locates race firmly in the realm of the psyche, contradicting the mainstream, and compelling analytic practitioners to begin to integrate the historical split between the internal and the external.

Layton (2004) engages with this tension which exists between those who espouse an internalist psychoanalytic position in which the external world is largely partitioned from the psyche, and those who consider culture and context to be inextricably intertwined with internal objects and, therefore, with the unconscious (see also, Grey, 2001). Layton (2004) identifies two alternate views of the unconscious, each of which offer a different understanding of the origins of the unconscious and a concomitant explanation for psychic pain. The first, which represents mainstream internalist psychoanalytic thinking, locates psychic pain in the universal condition of subject formation. Here, drive theorists argue that psychosocial inquiry involves conscious and pre-conscious processes, whereas authentic psychoanalytic work involves the unconscious which is formed uniquely by prohibitions on desire, and crystallised through Oedipal conflict. Matters relating to race and racism,

therefore, are considered not to fall within the purview of psychoanalysis (Davids, 2011; White, 2016), as they do not threaten the unconscious. The psychoanalytic project is to understand and reveal how these influences are disguised communications of internal conflicts seated in the familial drama. This position is based on the assumption that the psyche is a sequestered enclave, unpunctured by socio-cultural realities which exist as peripheral to real analytic work.

The second position, espoused by relational psychoanalytic thinkers, recognises the impact of the external, and understands psychic pain as arising from historically contingent traumas. Layton (2004) describes this position further, suggesting that historical contingencies such as racism, homophobia, social injustice, intergenerational trauma transmission, etc. cause psychic pain that elicits dynamic unconscious conflicts and symptoms which are as urgent and intransigent as those caused by prohibitions on desire. She suggests that such historical contingencies are the source of neurotic misery, whilst the workings of universal familial prohibitions create common unhappiness. Neurotic misery, then, is the outcome of the ways in which historically contingent events are intercepted and interpreted by individuals. The meaning which each individual makes of society-wide norms and discourses is shaped by the autonomy intrinsic to human subjectivity. Only when specifically historicised, are the universals of death, loss, separation, dependency, etc. drawn into the symptomatic sphere of neurotic misery. In Layton's (2004) words:

...the symptoms of self-sabotage that cause neurotic misery and bring most people into treatment arise from their subjective response to mistreatment from the familial and social surrounds, not from the laws that make us into subjects. All forms of familial mistreatment are tied in some complex way to social norms" (p. 40).

Layton (2004) argues that the central question is not so much whether Kleinians do, and relationalists do not, work with the unconscious, but rather whether or not dynamic conflicts emanate from different sources, and if so, how these pathways to conflict influence each other. In parallel with Davids (2011), Layton (2004) calls for a reformulation of the parameters of the unconscious. She outlines her conceptualisation of what she terms normative unconscious processes (see Fromm, 1962, for his earlier account of the "social

unconscious”); that part of the unconscious which is compelled to repeat affective, behavioural or cognitive patterns that endorse the very social norms that cause distress in the first place. Normative unconscious conflict is created when one represses or splits off feelings, behaviours and thoughts which are considered unacceptable to those on whom one depends for love – unacceptable because they conflict with particular social norms. That which drives repression is the quest for the familial love and acceptance which is crucial in the forging of a sense of self and identity (Layton, 2018). The symptoms of neurotic misery which present in analysis as repetition compulsions are the consequence of conflict between normative unconscious processes, which work towards repeating cultural inequalities of all kinds, and counterhegemonic (Layton, 2018) processes that strive to re-integrate the parts of self originally split-off in compliance with social norms.

Holmes (2016) gives a relevant clinical example of a white male patient who wrestled with the guilt and shame he felt as a result of the boyhood erotic feelings he had experienced for the African-American woman who had taken care of him. These feelings contradicted the familial prohibition on cross-racial love and desire which he had internalised. This form of relationship has relevance too in South Africa, and is described by Smith (2014) in her clinical paper which details therapy with a white adult woman. Emma had been raised by a black nanny who, at the age of three years had abandoned her. It was only later that Emma learned that her mother had dismissed her nanny very suddenly when she felt that Emma was developing too close a bond with her. Thereafter, the family employed a series of caregivers, none of whom remained for very long. Emma presented in therapy with feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-worth and fraudulence, as well as a deep-seated sense of shame. It became apparent that, in desperate pursuit of maternal love and acceptance, she had cauterised the deep feelings of love and affection she had felt towards her black carer, repressing them until she was able, through therapy, to re-engage them and mourn her loss. Swartz (2007), a South African psychoanalytic writer, offers a re-interpretation of Oedipus, in which she considers the salience of race alongside gender in the negotiation of the Oedipal struggle, further illustrating the applicability of Layton’s (2004) description of an unconscious onto which society indelibly maps itself. In her conceptualisation, Swartz (2007) emphasises the centrality of Otherness in the Oedipal tangle, reinforcing the foundational assumption that psychic confrontation with difference is core to the practice of

psychoanalysis. Understanding that the unconscious functions as a repository for that which is forbidden, Swartz (2007) suggests that the external Other becomes charged with unconscious anxiety, a worthy receptacle for the projection of repressed content, and an essential companion to the unconscious. In classical analytic terms, a sense of Otherness (not-me-ness) is awakened by a growing recognition of the physical characteristics which gender a body. Swartz (2007), however, contends that:

...at exactly this period of turmoil and entry into a gendered identity, another deep identification, equally unquestioned, equally powerful, is formed. A child is seldom just gendered: she is inserted into a world of race as well (p. 366).

During this period, anatomical differences (boy/girl; black/white) become fused with the role differentiation which is ascribed by a broader societal discourse, and, as such, anatomy, gender politics, society and culture become interwoven and remain so at a profound unconscious level (Swartz, 2007). The unconscious is essentially conscripted by the social, becoming an agent of its discourses, not simply in a momentary symbolic fashion, but as integral to its structure. In racist and racialising societies, the perception of race is not an innocent one, but one which includes implications of privilege, class, opportunity, disadvantage, desire, etc. Swartz (2007) argues that society's positioning of race will shape experience as inextricably as does gender, and it does so at a developmental stage fired by competition, fears of exclusion, primitive love and hate. And so race enters the psychic mix at a time when early identity formation peaks, reflecting the intersection between external societal narratives and particular familial environments, landscaping the unconscious and essentially writing a script for encounters with Otherness which will potentially repeat unconsciously throughout life.

The formulation of an unconscious which holds the trace of racial discourses emanating from the external social context is a compelling one, aligning with our assertion that aspects such as race, and the ways in which society constructs meaning around them, are as potent in the formation of the psyche and identity as are the events which characterise familial trauma.

Rethinking transference and countertransference

If we are to accept the proposal that race is implicated in the psyche, and if we entertain the veracity of Layton's (2004) proposition that there exists within the unconscious a range of normative unconscious processes which represent a link between the psyche and the social, then we must consider what this means in terms of unconscious communication between patient and therapist.

We suggest that if aspects of identity such as race are not considered when analysing the transference and the countertransference, any interpretation made can only ever be partial. We assert further that the normative unconscious processes at play in both patient and analyst predict that mutual repetition compulsions of historical and prevailing social discourses inevitably permeate the relationship from the outset. As Levenson (as quoted in Layton, 2008) proposes, each moment of the encounter is moulded by the engagement between two unconscious minds, creating what Joseph (as quoted in Layton, 2008) described as the total transference; the way in which the therapeutic relationship engages as a whole system with the material brought by the patient. The analyst is thus inextricably implicated as a co-initiator in the analysis.

Psychoanalytic theorists such as Sandler (1976) and Brenman-Pick (1985) have contributed to a deeper understanding of countertransference, including in its field the real experience of the analyst/therapist. Brenman-Pick (1985) notes that, "indeed, in so far as we take in the experience of the patient, we cannot do so without also having an experience" (p. 157). She cites Money-Kyrle (as quoted in Brenman-Pick, 1985) who described how closely the analyst's experience of the patient's projections may be linked with the analyst's own internal reactions to the material. Sandler (1976) too spoke against the notion that the analyst's internal responses were due solely to what the patient had imposed/projected. He described the role-relationship which the analyst is invited into by the patient and the "complicated system of unconscious cues, both given and received, which are involved" (p. 47). He was concerned with how the analyst, unless she becomes aware of it, may comply with the role demanded of her and that this could only become apparent once carried over into action. The implications of this in the context of the current discussion are significant – if the impact of

the external on the shaping of the mind of both patient and therapist is not held as crucial to the analytic endeavour, there exists the possibility of unacknowledged and therefore unmetabolised and potentially destructive enactments of socio-historically defined subject positions and their libidinal content on the part of both participants.

Stern (as quoted in Layton, 2008) describes analyst enactments as moments of dissociation which occur in response to an experience of vulnerability which can be managed, in that moment, only by dissociating. Such dissociation cannot be provoked by the patient unless there is a pre-existing receptivity in the analyst. This understanding of enactment is apposite to this paper's central thesis: transference can never be onto a neutral object; the very fact of the analyst's racial identity and historical context that she brings to the dyad, together with the racial identity of the patient, positions the encounter from the outset in relation to prevailing and historical social forces. The implication of this hypothesis is that any material brought by the patient, any emerging transference, is always nuanced in some way by these identities which create a dyad-specific context. If the analyst ignores the relevance of her own and her patient's racedness in the substance of their relative psyches, and in the development of the transference and the countertransference, it follows that a significant blindspot will remain unanalysed and unconsidered in the analysis. In addition, the analyst sits vulnerable to the dissociation described by Stern (as quoted in Layton, 2008), opening herself up to moments of mindlessness (Davids, 2011), and to the impact of the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006), all of which have the potential to arrest or sabotage the unfolding therapeutic task (Holmes, 1999; Esprey, 2017).

Holmes (1999) and Leary (1997), amongst others, call for analysts to actively and intentionally examine (through analysis and self-examination) the content of their internal race-based conflicts, and to understand the ways in which race has imprinted itself on the landscape of their internal worlds – generating what Curry (1964) conceived of as pre-transferences or societal transferences in which unconscious fantasies are ascribed to racial Others. Whilst not advocating for infinite self-disclosure in the clinical setting, if indeed we assume that racial identity constitutes an intrinsic aspect of the psyche, and if this is not considered in the analyst's work on self, there runs the risk of unrecognised countertransference infiltrating the therapeutic relationship:

...there can be no reasonable doubt about the disqualifying effect of (unrecognised countertransference) in the doctor; every unresolved repression in him constitutes what has been aptly described as a blind spot in analytic perception” (Freud, quoted in Holmes, 1999, p. 320).

As long as race is split-off from psychoanalytic engagement, the risk of racially inflected enactments, which evolve unacknowledged and unbridled, increases – thereby threatening the integrity of the encounter.

Our reflections on the paucity of psychoanalytic theorising on race, and the consequent impact on theory if race is recalibrated as part of this extant knowledge base, is directed at theoretical enrichment, but also has deep implications for clinicians. Theory can, and must, offer us the opportunity for developing and maintaining reflective function in the encounter, and also acts as a conduit to thirdness, which is crucial for therapeutic efficacy. However, theory can also offer us a site of defensive retreat when anxieties are activated in the dyad, potentially foreclosing the possibilities of attending to the complex interplay between familial and social prohibitions that result in neuroses. Engaging with race in psychoanalytic theory has the propensity to challenge the canonical nature of the discipline and practice, thereby dislodging the theoretical absolutism that allows for defensive retreat in the first place.

The therapist in jeopardy

But whilst these conceptual debates bear consideration in and of themselves, we contend that what also drives avoidance and disavowal within psychoanalytic practice significantly, is the threat to the self of the analyst which engaging with race potentially provokes. We suggest that such engagement puts the self in jeopardy, confronting the person of the analyst/therapist with their own identity and subject position, and with their complicity and implication in broader systems of inequality, alongside their patient. Race and the role it inhabits in the broader social system, contextualises and historicises analysts, positioning them in direct relation to their patients, rendering them subjects who equally inhabit a racialised world. If a process of engagement is undertaken, the possibilities for greater vulnerability and exposure increases for the therapist/analyst, especially as the very limits of therapeutic neutrality are

tested professionally, and the therapist/analyst is compelled to confront elements of racial melancholia personally.

What of analytic neutrality?

If we accept the premise of Layton's (2008) thesis, that the total transference is a system of complex unconscious communications that involve both the clinician and the patient, then we have to of course consider the extent to which therapeutic neutrality itself is indeed possible. Mainstream psychoanalytic practice has historically embraced the notion of analytic neutrality as central to an uncontaminated unfolding of the transference, as well as to the objective of non-judgementality (Wachtel, 1986). Neutrality is achieved through minimal self-disclosure with the objective of reducing as much as is possible, the influence of the analyst's subject position and personhood. Fostering silence and withholding opinion and emotion, are considered to facilitate an environment most conducive to an unfettered transference onto the analyst. Renik (1998), in contrast, has written extensively about the analyst's irreducible subjectivity, and the impossibility of keeping the analyst-as-subject, outside of the analysis. This position aligns with that espoused by the authors; we consider analytic neutrality to be a further psychoanalytic tenet and practice which is threatened if we accept the reality of the mind-society synapse (Dimen, 2011). In this, the analyst and patient's (normative) unconscious processes reciprocally engage one another, shaping the therapeutic narrative. As such, we suggest that the analyst is vulnerable from the outset to being triggered by the patient, and, as Shill (2004) asserts, the psychoanalytic situation can be dangerous for both patient and analyst. In the face of this danger there is the potential for signal anxiety to increase, provoking the dissociation described previously, creating a context ripe for enactment.

We suggest that this situation places the analyst in a precarious position. For many clinicians who hold this view, one response is to engage in heightened forms of self-disclosure to minimise the potentially pernicious effects of race in the dyad – often prompting a critique from mainstream psychoanalysis that this does not threaten the unconscious conflicts that drive neuroses, but rather restricts the interaction to the realm of the conscious and preconscious. Again, while not advocating for this form of self-disclosure, we are proposing

that race and the attendant valence of its affective loads in both the patient and the clinician, be as actively attuned to by clinicians as they would aspects of the familial drama/trauma. Under these circumstances, therapeutic neutrality is perhaps neither possible, nor its pursuit desirable. Rather than comprehending of the therapeutic relationship as one that is pristinely managed and uncontaminated by superfluous material, we hold the view that systemically traumatic social relations result in potentially fraught and ambivalent relationships between therapists/analysts and patients. These ambivalences are, however, also a recognition of the contradictions in relationships, a possible site for growth and revitalisation, and holds generative possibilities for an infinite loop of exploration in which the analysis itself is never really complete (Author's name 2018).

The spectre of racial melancholia

Of course, deep recognition of the salience of race at any given moment within the encounter also expedites a confrontation with racial melancholia – in the patient, but also importantly in the therapist/analyst. Esprey (2017) describes a therapy between herself, a white therapist, and her similarly-aged patient of Indian descent. A retrospective lens shows how the unrecognised and therefore malignant racialised dynamic between them sabotaged the therapist's capacity to think, creating an anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) and planting an obstacle to constructive therapeutic engagement.

While gender-based and racially imbued material entered into the room in multiple forms throughout the therapy, I was mostly paralysed in my inability to address and work with it directly. I recall feeling increasingly aware of my historical position of racial power and privilege relative to his. I experienced guilt at the differences in our upbringing that had been scaffolded by the segregation and discrimination of apartheid, and shame at the relief I felt at being born on the privileged side of the racial fence. My guilt and related discomfort, as well as my unconsciousness to the ways in which historical dynamics of power were being re-enacted in our relationship, sabotaged any embryonic thoughts that I had about what was happening in the room both within him and between us (p. 28).

And yet, to engage the ways in which we are raced, alongside our patients, and to consider that we may indeed be vulnerable to internalising and performing deeply held societal beliefs and discourses around race, is extremely disquieting and threatening – we have to come to terms with our own racialised privilege, abjection, self-loathing, jouissance, desire, hatred, complicity, shame, interalia. Such consideration potentially provokes the experience of affect states which are not defensively contained by theory, and which have the potential to interrupt the analytic project (Straker, 2006), invoking the spectre of racial melancholia, described by Eng and Han (2000), and Straker (2004). The Freudian notion of melancholia is apposite to our thesis. In his explication of mourning and melancholia, Freud (1917) includes in the possible causes of both mourning and melancholia, the loss of an ideal which, we suggest, includes the loss of an ideal experience of one's self when there has been a libidinal investment in seeing oneself in a particular way (as non-racist, fair or just, for example). What distinguishes melancholia from mourning is the concomitant lowering of self-regard and consequent self-reviling which accompanies the experience of loss. In mourning there is nothing unconscious about the loss, whereas in melancholia there is an enigmatic dimension; it is related to loss which has been withdrawn from consciousness and cannot be grasped or named.

In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself (Freud 1917, p. 246).

Confronting difference in a context that has been bedeviled by race, racialisation and racism may very well provoke forms of racial melancholia for the clinician (Eng & Han, 2000; Straker, 2004; Suchet, 2007). In social systems that are premised on fundamental racial double-binds, social identities may themselves be internalised as objects in ambivalent, in-between, and incoherent ways. The recognition of the loss of our racial ideal, an acknowledgement of one's status as being a beneficiary or victim of a racial dividend, and coming to terms with the complicity or victimisation of our selves, can provoke self-loathing, loss and a deep sense of interminable mourning – or what we commonly comprehend as melancholia when we infinitely pursue the preservation of the lost object in reality, through an internalisation and identification with that object. The avoidance of this racial melancholia is a further mechanism through which we minimise any jeopardy of the self.

We suggest that it is this impoverishment of the ego which lies at the centre of the jeopardy of self which engaging with race potentially provokes. Related to this is Shay's (2014) conceptualisation of moral injury which occurs when damage is done to one's moral compass or conscience, when one is forced to confront a version of themselves which is a betrayal of what is believed to be right or just. For both white and black analysts, recognising the ways in which race is reciprocally, unconsciously engaged within the dyadic dynamic, and considering the aliveness of an internal racially constructed matrix which shapes encounters with Otherness, beyond conscious intent or control, is personally threatening and potentially catastrophic. Such an encounter with one's own internalisation and consequent performance of race, necessitates a confrontation with the ways in which the self is regarded. In the example given earlier (Esprey, 2017), this reckoning resulted in retrospective recognition of the ways in which historical patterns of racial privilege were activated in the clinical dyad, evoking enactment which, unanalysed, resulted in the failure and premature termination of therapy. It involved, too, an engagement with the self which was painful and fundamentally restructuring.

An evolving psychoanalytic project

It is safe to assume that within the classical psychoanalytic environment in the main, the racial dimension of the unconscious is not foregrounded in analytic training as the influences of society and culture are not considered to fall within the orbit of psychoanalytic phenomena. Whether we subscribe to the notion of a normative unconscious (Layton, 2004), or to the concept of an internal racist organisation (Davids, 2011), or to Grey's (2001) assertion that culture is primary in psychic life because internalised object relationships and culture are fused, we argue that the presence of race as a moulding influence on the psyche should not be occluded. As such, without active and intentional analysis and interrogation of the way in which race resides unconsciously, there runs the risk of repetition and enactment of current and historical patterns of engagement with Otherness within the clinical dyad – enactments which potentially unfold and compromise the integrity of the analysis, the analyst and the patient.

Moss (2001) suggests that confronting race in the room necessitates confronting our own internal prejudiced selves and an avoidance of this accounts for the relative scarcity of writing about race in the dyad. This assertion supports the position held by this paper; we contend that engaging with race and its influence on the unfolding therapeutic endeavour necessitates an engagement with theory, but also with the self - of the therapist - which is deeply threatening. It is threatening at a conceptual level, challenging firstly the psychoanalytic understanding of what constitutes psychic life, and that it is constituted of inner and outer worlds, and not solely of epigenetic forces. Secondly, it challenges orthodox understandings of the matrix of transference/countertransference, prompting an interrogation of how the analyst/therapist's response to the patient and his material may be constituted in some ways by the workings of normative unconscious processes, increasing the possibility of racially valenced enactments. Thirdly, it questions the sacrosanct ideal of analytic neutrality, and whether it is indeed possible for a therapist "not to take sides in the persecutory systems even when these appear in the form of real shared situations" (Winnicott, 1955, p. 21). If as we assert, we are all unwittingly drawn in as players in broader social systems and discourses, then it is not possible for us to inhabit a position of neutrality; we are all engaged and positioned and have to confront the potential melancholia that accompanies our racedness. Ultimately, what is threatened is the accepted pathway to cure, and the meaning of psychoanalytic *truth*. As Guralnik (2016) describes, psychoanalysis is committed to a quest for *truth*, for an honest grasp of the analysis and a deconstruction of what unconsciously mediates our relationship to reality. How can this not include the way society becomes deposited internally. In the language of Althusser and Bourdieu (as quoted in Guralnik, 2016, p. 658), "our ideologies and habitus define our psychic reality and intersect in the deepest ways with our fantasy life, early attachment and object relations history". Therefore, psychoanalytic truth must surely include engaging with the socio-political.

In the face of these challenges to the orthodoxies of psychoanalytic traditions, we are advocating for a conscious and deliberative examination of a constantly evolving psychoanalytic project – one which grapples with the psychic imprint of the external world and the impact of this on our work, especially in relation to race. It is also one which recognises that resolution of psychic conflict may not be possible if we consider that conflict is dynamically responsive to forces beyond us and that our historically mediated subject

positions cannot be analysed away. What is possible is an ongoing process of engagement with what it means to be raced clinicians working with raced patients within a raced world, and a deepening understanding of the dynamic within and between ourselves. It invites also the possibility of a psychoanalytic project which is not sequestered from this historical moment in which we find ourselves globally, but rather one which becomes a relevant participant in the challenges that grip our world.

Beyond an injunction towards greater theoretical expansiveness that stretches the boundaries and renews the psychoanalytic canon, there will have to be a reckoning of sorts with the centrality of racial melancholia and its effects on patients, therapists and the encounter itself. What this raises are questions about the extent to which racial melancholia can be differently understood. (Stevens, 2012), citing Suchet (2007), note that this may not necessarily have entirely negative consequences for those experiencing it, and suggest that:

inherent ambivalence in the melancholic position opens up the possibility for redefining a new coherence that is premised precisely on fragmentation, incoherence and transformation. In other words, racial melancholia opens up possibilities for more complex identity formations, if worked through appropriately (p. 209).

Furthermore, such a project invites us to break from the binaries of racial thinking and to consider that racialised subjectivities are formed and maintained in a relationally entangled process (author's name, 2017), and may therefore require us to concede that we are unable to ever escape race as part of psychical constitution in racialised contexts. Here, racialised subjectivities of being black and white, and their constitutive psychical components, are not independently formed, but are relationally determined in forms of interdependent entanglement.

Finally, this compels us to consider whether the liberal humanist traditions that have so heavily influenced mental health conceptions provide a sufficient frame for us to conduct the analytic endeavour. By this, we are of course referring to the common-sense understandings of a completed analysis, cure, working through or resolution in the clinical setting. Far too often, this is interpreted as a definitive knowability and closure. However, if we assume the

entangled nature of subject and psychical constitution, then knowability may be infinitely elusive. (Stevens, 2018) suggests that there may well be value in this unknowability, as we are then

...engaged in an infinite iterative process that is premised on the acceptance of incomprehension, that then keeps open the possibilities for a desiring subject that averts foreclosure, and whom is always open to the possibilities of psychic reorganisation, recalibration, and change (p. 273).

Under these circumstances, the clinical endeavour is inevitably

...premised on differentiating the self from others, tolerating the stress of alterity, recognising others as distinct without the encumbrances of projections, acknowledging the contradictions in self and others, but accepting that a full and complete knowing of the self and other may not be entirely possible (p. 276).

CHAPTER 5

Paper 2: Preface

This article, written in collaboration with my colleagues from The Race in Psychotherapy Group, was submitted in October 2017 to the journal, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa* (PPSA). Provisional acceptance, subject to revisions, was received in January 2018, and it was resubmitted with revisions in March, 2018. The paper was published in Vol. 26 (1) 2018. In December 2018, I received notification from the journal that the article had won the PPSA best student article of the year award. This award is a tribute to the work of the group, and is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and colleague, Hilda Croxford, who died so suddenly, shortly before the paper was published.

The paper was initially conceptualised in early 2014 when the group was in its 4th year. The primary motivation for the paper was a question we had around the group's longevity. At the group's inception we had agreed to meet for one year, not sure where the year would take us nor whether we would want to continue. Participating in a cross-racial group which prioritised speaking about race felt unknown and daunting considering how disquieting and uncomfortable conversations about race had always felt, and how seldom these conversations occurred in our professional gatherings. It was an unexpected outcome, then, when the group renewed its commitment each year, and we were curious about what facilitated this. This question led us to ponder the process of the group and we agreed to participate in a joint paper through our own individual narratives. Whilst all group members were involved in this paper from the outset, I refer to my comments in Chapter 3 on the relevance of voice, mindful of the stridence of whiteness in my primary authorship and in the fact that I organised and interpreted the emergent themes based on my particular reading and theoretical orientation. The lens of my whiteness will have inevitably nuanced what I was able to see, and equally, what I could not see. As such, whilst this paper is a group product, it exists as a consequence of my construal.

Whilst Chapter 5 approaches the question of race from a theoretical perspective, commenting on psychoanalytic praxis more globally, this paper pulls the dissertation very strongly into the South African milieu. It is very much a South African paper, created by South African

clinicians. In it, I describe the socio-political and psychoanalytic backdrop against which the group began, emphasising the racially fractured context of the social landscape, and the race-avoidant culture within our psychoanalytic profession. In this I refer to Steyn's (2012) conceptualisation of the ignorance contract as a way of making sense of the perpetuation of an 'apartheid state of mind' into the post-Apartheid era. Through the narratives of each of the group members, the paper draws out common themes which I use to organise an understanding of the group dynamics. The paper is strongly held by a relational psychoanalytic framework, and in particular I reference Benjamin's (2004) understanding of intersubjectivity, and her description of the processes of rupture and repair, and the consequent potential for mutual recognition. Notions of thirdness (Gerson, 2004) are located as theoretical compass points to make sense of the ways in which the group was 'held', and maintained integrity in the face of difficult and violent conversations which, typically, might result in rupture without repair, and subsequent failure of recognition. The paper explores the iterative nature of rupture and repair, recognising that as much as the group culture and process has facilitated thinking about self and Other in constructive ways, allowing for experiences of mutual recognition, recognition is never fully achieved, and there is always the potential for breakdown and rupture, and for a repetitive cycle.

In many ways this paper attempts to capture and describe a process of dialogue across difference, akin, I suggest, to the process described by Cushman (2005) in his articulation of Gadamer's understanding of dialogue. Gadamer (as explicated by Cushman, 2005), suggested that when good will and intention are present in encounters across difference, there is the possibility of opening up to each other's point of view through an imagining of the kind of (internal and external) world in which the other resides. Whilst the other can never be fully known, this type of exchange has the potential to create flashes of understanding, momentary and fleeting, but nonetheless potent enough to shift, slightly, the relative points of view. This description of incremental shifts and deepening awareness, of self and other, resonates for me as I look retrospectively at the performance of the group, and its depiction in this paper. As the group progressed, over time, it became apparent that reconciliation and resolution of difference can never be an achieved outcome, it can only ever be an evolving process, characterised by moments of meeting, followed by those of misattunement; of knowing and not-knowing. This dynamic was highlighted for us in early 2014, when, as a group we

attended a talk hosted by The Ububele Education Psychotherapy Trust, featuring Peter Pogany-Wnendt, the son of Holocaust survivors, and Erda Siebert, the daughter of an SS officer. Together, they narrated their process of dialogue with one another over a period of 20 years within the context of a study group which facilitates conversations between the children of Holocaust victims and perpetrators. We were struck by the fact that their conversation continued to evolve, over such an extended period of time, that there remained so much for them to engage and grapple with, and that they were both able to speak to this iterative process of rupture and repair.

Whilst *Raids on the Inarticulate* offers the reader insight into a South African group in progress, I suggest that its most salient contribution is in its portrayal of a Gadamerian style of dialogue, through which a bridging of racial difference feels fleetingly possible, but never guaranteed, gains can be made and instantly lost. And yet, I suggest, it is also an experience where the memory of those fleeting moments of meeting - in which there has been a glimpse of knowing and being known - sits as a reminder of the potential for bridging difference, and consequently offers impetus for the group's ongoing, persistent attempts, to raid the inarticulate.

Raids on the inarticulate: A group's engagement with race

Esprey, Y. with Croxford, H; Durrant, P; Eagle, G; Kometsi, K; Kuhn, J; Langa, M; Mamabolo, I; Mashigo, T; Masson, S; Mbele, Z; Stillerman, L; Zitha, P. (2018). Raids on the inarticulate: A group's engagement with race. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*. Vol. 26 (1), p. 54-93.

Abstract

This paper describes the experience of a group of South African clinicians who have met monthly since 2011 to engage with race as it pertains to our clinical contexts, our identities as clinicians and, inevitably, our private selves. Written from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, the paper is contextualised within the prevailing socio-political climate and the local profession of psychoanalytic practice. With the aim of crafting a collaborative paper, individual group members were asked to reflect on their experience of the group in order to distill dominant themes and processes. What became evident through the collation of these reflections was a shared experience of various manifestations of a third position which, it is suggested, have facilitated reflective functioning, allowing the group to traverse multiple iterations of rupture and repair. The paper suggests that it is the repeated processes of misrecognition and rupture and subsequent repair and mutual recognition, that largely account for the group's longevity, continuity and challenging generativity. The paper highlights the potency of thirdness in facilitating *thinking* about race through dialogue. However, the limitations and fragility of the group and its process in the context of the restless and fractured socio-political landscape of contemporary South Africa are also acknowledged.

Keywords: race, group relationality, intersubjectivity, rupture, repair, thirdness, mutual recognition, dialogue

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Hilda Croxford, our dear colleague and friend, and a founding member of the group. Hilda died very suddenly just before final submission of this paper. Her vital spirit, her curiosity and playfulness, her openness to engagement and her

deep capacity for humility and compassion are woven into the essence of our group. There are no words to express how much she will be missed.

Introduction

Trying to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate ...
T.S. Eliot (1940)

This paper explores the process and experiences of a group of South African clinicians who have met monthly for the last seven years (2011-2017) as members of the *Race in Psychotherapy Reading Group*. The primary motivation for this paper is to provoke engagement within the psychoanalytic community around issues pertaining to race, and their impact on our work, both inside and outside of clinical settings. It interrogates how such active engagement has the potential to translate into alternative modes of praxis in the context of psychology's relevance debates (Sher & Long, 2012), and especially within the contemporary decolonial moment where there are clarion calls to foreground and address the sequelae of a racialised world. In addition, the paper seeks to further the applicability of relational psychoanalytic concepts in providing a theoretical lens through which to regard the impact on, and working of, difference in our clinical spaces. The paper is collaborative in that it incorporates the voices of the members through direct quotes drawn from our contemplations on the group process. That said, it is relevant to note that the paper has been primarily written by the group facilitator, a white, South African woman. The relevance of this positionality is reflected upon later in the article. The initial objective of the collaboration was to elicit members' reflections in order to interrogate the reasons for the group's longevity in a professional community which has historically struggled to directly address issues of race (Esprey, 2013). Themes emerging from these reflections suggest that the group has been

involved in an iterative process of rupture and repair (Benjamin, 2004), facilitated by experiences of thirdness which allow for the occupation of various vantage points outside of what may have provoked points of tension in engagement. The paper interrogates this process through the lens of relational psychoanalytic theory, and considers the usefulness of the group's experience in shaping how we think and speak more sensitively, authentically and robustly about race in our clinical and professional contexts within the racially charged milieu of South African society.

The group met for the first time in January 2011 with a particular objective in mind – to create a thinking and talking space amongst clinicians in order to develop heightened awareness about race both within our consulting rooms and professional community. There was a shared investment in assessing the value of a psychoanalytic framework in facilitating an engagement with race issues and, at a more personal level, in sharing our experiences as clinicians and as raced individuals working and living in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Beginnings and group composition

In November 2010, the group initiative was communicated to the broader psychoanalytically-oriented clinical community via various email lists. Clinicians were invited to form a group in which the workings of race within our clinical settings would be interrogated, whilst simultaneously exploring the deeper personal and social meanings of race for each of the members. The response was immediate, and within a few weeks a self-selected group of twelve clinicians gathered to begin the process. In retrospect, it is clear that self-selection meant that each participant brought with them a curiosity about the issue at hand. Each had already begun their own process of interrogation of themselves and of the clinical practice climate in which they had engaged in training and were practicing in Johannesburg. This laid the foundation for the openness and engagement which has characterised the group – the foundational elements for thirdness to be discussed later. At the start we all shared a curiosity, an intrigue, and an excited sense of “we actually get to speak about this” accompanied by ambivalence and trepidation as we entered previously uncharted waters of engagement. As it happened, the racial composition of the group was fairly evenly split along

racial lines, with five black and seven white participants⁶. This racial composition is something which we have often discussed in the group, acknowledging that we all – black and white – draw on the sharing of material generated by the juxtaposition of varied life experiences in order to gain greater awareness of our racialised selves and of the life histories and experiences of those who are considered racially different. These acknowledgements have also had a profound impact on how the group facilitator has reflected upon her own positionality as the group facilitator and primary author of this article – a white, South African woman who increasingly has had to move from the position of inquiring about race and peering into and onto it in an experience-distant manner, to a position that was more experience-near and immersed, recognising that we are all either perpetrators, beneficiaries, bystanders or victims whose lives are entangled within a racialised social matrix. Dialogue with the racial *Other* has confronted us with our gaps in knowledge, and has facilitated the relationality which is essential to breaching the social ignorance contract (Steyn, 2012) that engenders silences around race, even if there was some initial suspicion as to whether this was really achievable. The following excerpt aptly captures this uncertainty:

My first reaction was, is it really possible for white people to meet in a group and discuss issues of race and racism in psychotherapy? Steve Biko wrote “the black-white circles are almost always a creation of white liberals. They call a few intelligent and articulate blacks to

⁶ Whilst group members are open about their membership of the group in the wider community, the quotes used in this paper have not been directly attributed to individual members given that the community of psychoanalytic practitioners in Johannesburg is relatively small and some protection of the identity of group members seemed important in the context of producing the paper.

It is also relevant to state at the outset that whilst the paper makes use of the terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ as identifiable categories, this is done so because such categorisations have real effects and have purchase and consensual understanding amongst group members and within South African society in general. However, we do acknowledge the problems inherent in using these terms as if they refer to objectifiable categories of people.

come around for tea at home, where all present ask each other the same old hackneyed question, how can we bring about change in South Africa”. However, I found myself being curious and wanting to know about this group. In retrospect, I realised that I have always had an interest to know about the workings of race and racism in personal spaces such as clinical supervision of students and therapeutic encounters with clients.(GM4-B⁷)

At the outset we agreed that the group would commit for a year as this felt the best we could do considering the task at hand and the anxiety of not knowing where the process would take us. The group has extended beyond this contract and has, each year, re-committed to its task of exploring race within our clinical practice and community, although the route towards achieving this has shifted over time. During the seven years of our existence the group membership has shifted as some have left⁸ and others have joined, while we retain seven of our original members. Significantly the group has continued to be racially representative. At the time of writing, the group is evenly split between black and white members.

After three years of working together, we began to be curious about how and why the group continued to function way past its initial one-year goal, especially within a psychoanalytic community in which racial integration and discussion about race had been notably difficult to achieve. In pondering this question we decided to work towards writing a collaborative article in which we would document our experiences in the group and through this to try to make sense of our longevity. Group members were asked to respond to the following questions: what is your experience of race in the practice of psychotherapy and in the profession of psychology? What has been your experience of being in the group? Has being in the group impacted on your clinical practice, and on your sense of racialised self, identity and/or history? What themes or questions or thoughts have emerged for you from your experience in the group?

⁷ Throughout the paper quotes are identified by Group Member number (GM1) and by race (B) – Black, and (W) – White, as it has been consensually agreed that the race of the speaker is relevant to the paper.

⁸ The reasons for leaving have been multiple; for example, some members have left because of changed personal circumstances, whilst others have left because the group process has felt too painful or difficult.

Responses were collated, thematised and those themes that cohered around rupture, thirdness and repair are selectively represented in the article. Once the themes had been analysed, the article in progress was circulated to group members for additions, deletions and refinements, ensuring that the writing process itself showed fidelity to the group members and their process.

A confluence of contexts

A confluence of contexts created the backdrop for the group at the time: the then local socio-political landscape, the growth of a relational trend within global psychoanalytic thinking, and the context of psychoanalytic psychotherapy in South Africa.

The socio-political context and the ignorance contract

In South Africa in 2011 the macro-context was characterised by increasingly polarising media and political rhetoric concerning race, and by growing calls within political spheres for the recognition of the impact of the ongoing legacy of Apartheid and of the violence of contemporary racism manifesting in economic and social inequality and continuing forms of social prejudice. This was juxtaposed at a general social level by a tendency to avoidance/dissociation around the continued relevance of race as social and economic architect of South African society, and by an investment in the fantasy of South Africa as a rainbow nation (Stevens et al, 2013). With regard to the latter, evident at a social level was what Steyn (2012) describes as the ignorance contract – a state of social complicity where we all, black and white, actively engage in an intricate contract which allows for a society which is structured according to a racial hierarchy and in which the privilege ascribed to whiteness is to be maintained, especially through injunctions towards silence.

In her description of the ignorance contract, Steyn (2012) identifies the tendency amongst white South Africans to claim ignorance of what was happening in the country during Apartheid, despite the fact that the sustained functionality of Apartheid for almost half a century could not have been achieved without the active and passive complicity of a white numerical minority. She describes the ways in which a skewed reality constructed around

racial segregation and inequality, was imparted from parents to children, enabling the growth of subjectivity characterised by ignorance. This meant that white children were raised not to question the reality into which they were inserted; living racially engineered lives in which black lives were so obviously less valued than white lives, was normal. A recognition of this feature of social consciousness is a recognition too of the violence of an Apartheid system which invited the white population into a complicit social dance in which their role as oppressor was consistently enforced and reinforced, and their position as beneficiaries at the expense of the *Other*, was cemented. It is a recognition too of the role played by ignorance in maintaining the status quo. To *know* the reality – in Bionian language, to have K (Bion, 1962) of the reality rather than a *knowing about* it – was too costly; the cost would have been a deep understanding of one's oppressor and beneficiary status with all of the structural and psychological implications this would have entailed.

Steyn (2012) suggests further that the ignorance contract was in place too for black South Africans. As with their white peers, black children were allowed to believe that the reality – being discriminated against and socially mishandled – was normal. In this cocoon of ignorance, knowing too much about the white world and recognising the rules responsible for one's oppression, was dangerous, leading to a double consciousness of knowing and not knowing.

Whilst Steyn (2012) argues that for both oppressor and oppressed then, ignorance provided an insulating medium for the reproduction of a racial hierarchy, what history also indicates is that the ignorance contract does not explain the pervasive antagonistic politics in South Africa which have consistently disrupted ignorance and which ultimately resulted in the dismantling of Apartheid. Similarly, antagonism towards a new order is being seen in current political disruption, most notably manifest in the fallist movement which dominated student politics in 2015/16.

Indeed, it was this need to antagonise the status quo which partly led to the formation of our group.

Core to the ignorance contract is non-relationality. Through intricate webs of governance which manipulated every aspect of social life, blacks and whites were kept apart, disallowing the puncturing of ignorance which comes through relating to one another (Steyn, 2012). As such, for South Africans living during Apartheid, and indeed, for many of us living in its aftermath, our knowledge of the subjectivity of the *Other* has been fashioned by a legacy of ignorance, perpetuating and maintaining racial fissures in society.

Although perhaps not conscious of this at the time, the ignorance contract was present in our first meeting as a group. Apparent then was a predominantly shared belief that we should not over-emphasise race, and that we should rather focus on our humanity and South-Africanness. Black colleagues asserted that they had not thought that much about the impact of race on their work and professional selves. Simultaneously, white colleagues spoke of themselves optimistically as non-racist individuals. In retrospect, in evidence was the pull to ignorance which we enacted both in the ways in which we thought about our work and lives, and in the ways in which we related to one another. And yet our shared curiosity was the instrument needed to begin a process of knowledge-growth and relationship-building. In reflecting on our first meeting, and on his reasons for being in the group, one member's reflections illustrates the imprint of the ignorance contract:

I was raised being told that my colour was not relevant, that we are all equal and that I don't ever need to think about myself as black, or not-white. And yet, whenever we needed to see a doctor, or seek professional help, my parents went out of their way to find us a white person. We did not question this. But then one day I began to ask myself, what is wrong with blackness? (GM7-B)

On one hand, a social context loyal to the maintenance of the ignorance contract was present as the group began, but, on the other hand, this context also prompted a desire to breach it.

Relationality and thirdness

Considering the ways in which non-relationality sustains ignorance and perpetuates racial division, it is relevant to draw on a theory of relationality to frame this paper. Precisely

because relational theory foregrounds intersubjectivity, it stands in opposition to the positions of ignorance described by Steyn (2012). Relational theory emphasises the impact of current and historical contexts on subjectivity, and on the ways in which we relate to one another both in the clinical context and in the world at large. Layton (2006) suggests that social norms around race are intergenerationally transmitted in early relational contexts laying the foundation for the formation of identity and subjectivity. She argues that all identities are relational, and that repetitions around identity are activated in relational contexts.

Core to relational theory is the notion of intersubjectivity (Benjamin, 2004) – a relationship of mutual recognition⁹ in which each person experiences the *Other* as a like subject, another mind which can be felt with, but is recognised to possess a distinct and separate centre. Here the *different* – but actual - *Other* comes into view and the *pre-conceived* – that which had been imagined - *Other* is relinquished. It is from a place of mutual recognition that difference can be negotiated (Benjamin, 2004) and thought about. The opposing state is one of complementarity, described by Benjamin (2004) as an interpersonal space where difference cannot be metabolised and in which conflict and tension cannot be thought about, mediated or observed, resulting in the *doer-done to* binary. Neither subject is able to move beyond the self in the service of recognising the *Other* as a separate, and yet like, subject. This place of complementarity, or rupture, is repaired through an achievement of *thirdness*, a mental state in which we have embraced or surrendered to a third position. Important to note, is that complementarity, antagonistic relations and rupture may be an inevitable accompaniment to processes in which thirdness can be mobilised in the service of repair and mutual recognition under conditions of continued racialised social inequality. Benjamin (2004) defines the third as any reference point outside of the dyad which allows for the observation of two-way engagement. Thirdness is more than this point of reference; it refers to the intersubjective

⁹ It is relevant to acknowledge a debate in the literature around the concept of recognition. Benjamin (2004) conceptualises mutual recognition as a process of rupture and repair through which the other must be recognised in order for the self to experience full subjectivity. In this process, the other moves from being an object of fantasy to becoming a full and equal object. This understanding is critiqued by Orange (2010) who contends that recognition, or *recognition-as*, is founded on sustained empathic enquiry and, rather than focussing on mutuality, emphasises a deepening acknowledgement and appreciation of the other. It is beyond the purview of this paper to interrogate this debate further, but worth noting that relational concepts are not static but rather invite ongoing discussion.

mental space that facilitates or ensues from surrender to the third. It is a space between, co-created within the dyad (or in this instance within a group space).

In distilling the ways in which the third has been conceptualised in the literature, Gerson (2004) suggests that all descriptions of the third belong to one of three domains: the *cultural third* presents itself in any context apart from us which invites reflection, such as when we use theory or draw on a supervisory voice. The *relational third* emerges from engagement between two people, and the *developmental third* is an internal space which facilitates reflexivity based on the developmental negotiation of triangular relationships. The achievement of thirdness of all three kinds comes when these third-related vantage points are surrendered to (Benjamin, 2007) – when they facilitate an intersubjective engagement in which self and *Other* are *mutually* recognised, where the subjectivity of the one has been altered by the subjectivity of the *Other* (Benjamin, 2007). While aspects of cultural and developmental thirdness have some relevance in thinking about the group's functioning it is *relational thirdness* (as most resonant with Benjamin's ideas) that has primary relevance for thinking about the group process and interactions as elaborated here.

This paper aims to illustrate, through members' voices, how various third positions have been present such that they have been activated within the group, allowing for interpersonal engagement which moves beyond the simulacrum of relationality which, it is suggested, often characterises cross-racial relating in contemporary South Africa. Essential to the groups' experiences of thirdness has been the process of witnessing (Benjamin, 2011) – a reciprocal affirmation of the other and especially an acknowledgement of suffering which affords dignity to wounds which cannot be repaired. Through this emerges the possibility of a moral third (Benjamin, 2011), the ability to tolerate the tension of difference whilst remaining internally aware and attuned. It is a premise of this paper that the group's capacity to surrender to thirdness has been key to its longevity. Through the reading of member's reflections, and in identifying shared themes and experiences, it has become evident that over time the group has negotiated iterations of rupture and repair, of misrecognition and mutual recognition, of losing and finding thirdness. Indeed, the theory of relationality itself provides for the group and for this paper, a vantage point which I conceptualise as a *cultural third* – a

stable body of knowledge and corpus of others' voices which offer a position from which to perceive the group.

The South African psychoanalytic context

It has been widely acknowledged in the South African psychoanalytic community that discussions around race and racial integration within professional contexts is difficult to achieve and that attempts to understand and address this are complex. A group member wrote:

My experience of race in my profession is that it is still an issue that is not spoken about. I feel it is avoided at all costs. It becomes an elephant in the room. I am also guilty of not always taking it up. I have found it hard for me that my blackness has been associated with lack and incompetency and what this means if I am to help a white patient or white supervisees. I feel these issues are not addressed amongst us as professionals. They are difficult to address, but not impossible (GM8-B).

Swartz (2007) suggests that South African psychoanalytic thinking on race tends to resemble a form of pre-Oedipal functioning, which is about twoness, allowing for the avoidance of the third space which is heralded by Oedipus. The realisation of Oedipus brings into awareness the reality of gendered relationships and also of racial difference, but by remaining in the pre-Oedipal realm we avoid the discomfort and the implications that come with identity distinctions, relationality, intersubjectivity, thirdness and knowledge about our own complicity in the roles of *doer* and *done to* – knowledge which we must avoid in order to prevent a descent into a state of melancholia (Straker, 2013; Eng and Han, 2000). Swartz's (2007) analysis of the South African psychoanalytic tradition resonates with the notion of the ignorance contract, where gaps in knowledge protect us from negotiating the taxing or even unbearable. From the outset, as a group we have encountered the anxiety and pain which come with exploring and engaging with race as it presents itself in the intimacy of our group relationships. After our first meeting, the facilitator wrote:

Tonight, our first group meeting. There were times when I wondered how the black members were feeling and could feel an impulse to check out with them, or to over compensate. I felt overwhelmed by anxiety; did I offend in some way? Did everyone feel safe? It felt so raw to talk about race in such a mixed-race group, with blackness and whiteness so clearly juxtaposed. Have I done the right thing starting this? Will it be harmful? Can we contain it? (GM1-W)

And still, after some years in the group, this anxiety about potential harm remains a constant; this written after a meeting in early 2016:

I turn this group experience over and over in my mind, like worry beads. I fear damage done by the conversations between us, by the honesty and rawness which is expressed, and I wonder whether it isn't safer to be in ignorance.(GM1-W)

Group process and structure

From the start, each meeting was structured around the reading and discussion of a particular journal article, chapter or piece of writing. Over time we have read much of what has been published in the clinically oriented psychoanalytic literature in relation to race, particularly that which has been written by relational thinkers such as Kimberlyn Leary, Neil Altman, Melanie Suchet, Adrienne Harris, Gillian Straker, and Kathleen White, amongst others. We have read Fanon's (1967) text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, and, in addition, some of the South African journal and conference papers on race in clinical practice. While the readings have been useful in triggering thinking and discussion, what is apparent is that they have also served to provide an over-arching symbolic function as a cultural third – a referencing lens through which to regard the group and its processes. In addition, this theoretical vantage point has been enhanced from the start by a communal adherence amongst members, at least in significant measure, to psychoanalytic theory, which has offered a containing structure, way of thinking and language through which to navigate some of the raw, beta-nature (Bion, 1962), of our discussions, as described below:

There have been moments of real chargedness in the group. What comes to mind is a particular meeting when a black member called out a white member for saying something racist, in a confrontation which closed down discussion. What followed was a period of uncomfortable silence and tension which I was acutely aware of; I was also aware of just not being able to think about what had happened. The room was saturated by unprocessed affect. When we met again a month later, everyone in the group agreed that the last session had been really difficult, and they had spent time thinking about it in-between. We were able to apply an understanding of the anti-analytic third to the impasse, and what followed was a constructive discussion about what had happened, and how to make sense of it. (GM3-W)

In the early stages of the group we relied on written papers to keep us aligned to the task of interrogating race as it presents itself in the therapeutic dyad, and within professional settings. These papers also gave voice to that which we struggled to say ourselves. As one member wrote:

I found the papers we read really useful as a mouthpiece for my own experience. It was far easier, for example, to say, "I recognise myself in Altman's paper when he writes about his internal racism", than to acknowledge my own racism first hand. (GM2-W)

As facilitator I know that I counted on having a paper that I could both hold in my hands and in mind as an ally in each meeting. It steadied my nerves and helped to ground me. (GM1-W)

But what would happen quite quickly was that discussion would move beyond the paper to something that became deeply implicating of each member's subject position. We began to shed the uniformity of our shared psychoanalytic orientation and began to feel our racialised identifications thrusting difference like a gauntlet into the space between us. Accompanying this racialisation of the space was a growing anxiety and self-consciousness which permeated our meetings, and which gave rise not only to some avoidance but also to increasingly honest discussions about the impact of race in our lives. This cycle of moving from the cultural third position afforded by theory, into a space of racialised subjectivity and concomitant anxiety, is one that describes both the movement of the group over time, and also the rhythm of each meeting. As such our discussions moved from being *about* race to *being* raced.

And so the group has been performative in that “however we choose to inhabit our moment-by-moment being we have no choice but to participate in it” (Swartz, 2007, p. 183). From the moment we enter the room and begin to engage with one another we are performing the dialogic. Bakhtin (in Goncalves et al, 2006), writing from a dialogical perspective, asserts that the construction of meaning occurs in the interaction, between self and *Other*. Monological interaction – representing a kind of complementarity or twoness – is an attempt to suppress dialogism or intersubjective thirdness by denying “the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and responsibilities. The *Other* remains an object of consciousness and not another consciousness” (Bahktin, in Goncalves, 2006, p. 3).

In considering the facilitating role of theory and others’ writing, it is also relevant to acknowledge that at times the third position has not been surrendered to in a positive sense, but has perhaps rather been used defensively. As a group we have recognised the seductive pull of intellectualisation, and how we can become mired in theory, promoting an illusion of relational engagement. In these instances the use of theory does not challenge that which is unconscious by inviting it into greater awareness, as is the case when thirdness emerges – rather it facilitates pseudo-thirdness, taking us away from mutual recognition. In retrospect we have been able to observe that deployment of theory in this way tends to occur precisely when there is the threat of complementarity, when what is happening in the room between us feels too compromising or difficult. In such instances theory may represent a refuge to flee to as opposed to something that contains and opens up spaces in a more constructive way.

Group members’ reflections

What became clear in the reading of individual responses was how common themes connected the narratives, but also how, in spite of thematic commonality, the responses tended to divide us into black and white. As much as the group operates as a collective of like-minded individuals with a common task at hand, our personal reflections and experiences were a reminder of just how deeply race defines and shapes our subjectivity, and our relationality. The process of the group over time has highlighted the ways in which race separates us, and it is this divisive action that takes us to places of rupture and potential

breakdown. The themes I have chosen to highlight represent this process, and show how, aided by thirdness, we move repeatedly between rupture and repair.

Anxiety, ambivalence, anger

Over-arching and shared affective experiences amongst us have been those of anxiety, ambivalence and, more recently, anger. Whilst present from the outset, these experiences have been increasingly articulated over time as the group has been better able to absorb affective discharges, facilitated by the experience of relational thirdness.

I approached the group with a lot of suspicion initially. Thinking about it reminded me of an incident I had with my ‘black’ neighbour earlier this year. I asked him one day, quite irritated, why it is that he doesn’t want to greet me since I have tried many times. His response was, ‘why do you want to greet me?’ To relate this to myself and the group context, I asked myself as he did; why would you want to acknowledge my (white) thoughts and feelings as a black person? But there was a part of me that wanted a space to explore race as it impacts on my life and practice.(GM7-B)

While anxiety had been present from the outset, the texture of that anxiety has shifted over time. At first, it is suggested, it was about facing the unknown – how will it be to participate in a group where we are speaking about race in such an upfront way, what will it mean if I say certain things, or if I betray my racism, my insecurity, my bitterness, my anger, my prejudice? Can blacks and whites really be in a group together? Will the group be able to hold emotion if it erupts? Can things be contained? A core anxiety in the first few years was whether or not the group would survive; would members return each month; was the group doing any good; was it causing harm?

I resisted going to the group but I was curious to see what would come out of it. The first sessions were so anxiety-provoking; could I say ‘black’ without being offensive, would my racism be exposed, would my position of privilege be obvious and criticised.(GM7-B)

For a long time the group was intensely anxiety-provoking. I never knew what to expect from the evening, what would be said and how I would be called on to speak about myself. But at the end of the session I felt vitalised. I felt I was getting to know myself for the first time.(GM2-W)

Over time, an anxiety and an ambivalence developed in response to the ways in which we became able to speak to and come to know each other. It makes sense that the cultural thirds which held us – the psychoanalytic frame and the theory which was part of our experience, as well as our allegiance to professional collegiality – allowed us to explore more transparently our separateness and difference in a safer space. Possibly too, a deeper knowing of one another has punctured the ignorance contract which previously held fast, resulting in greater clarity of perception around the violence of our racialised history and its continuation into the present, including at times into the group. It has allowed us to acknowledge the violence between us and the ways in which we wound one another.

Swartz (2007) speaks to the unparalleled opportunity to decipher the contents of our unconscious when sitting in an encounter with the *Other*: “The real other is wonderfully embellished in our imagination with all that is too unbearable to be contained in our mind, and so projected outward” (Swartz, 2007, p. 181). The group has provided a context for such a process of re-owning projections and sitting with the discomfort of our own subjectivity. While this has allowed for the rapprochement that comes with mutual recognition, it has also resulted in experiences of division and fracture as we recognise our separateness. As Žižek (1991) suggests, we have realised that a complete knowing of the *Other* is impossible, but it is precisely this inability to fully know that is necessary for relationality, propelling us through desire to want to pursue the unknowable. And so we have experienced cycles of rupture and repair within the group, as we move iteratively between misrecognition and mutual recognition, and we continue to strive to know.

A growing awareness of raced subjectivity

As has already been signalled to some extent, the *cultural third* has been represented in our group by analytic theory, and by the papers which we have read which creates a scaffolding

for our meetings. This third position has offered a secure base from which to explore our raced subjectivity in a relational context, with group members very early on beginning to grapple with the meaning of their own racedness. Members' reflections indicate how an alive and relational engagement has compelled them to consider themselves as raced in ways previously unexplored. What began as a group in which members were curious about the *Other*, quickly became a context in which the interrogation turned towards the self – with hindsight, an unsurprising outcome as the self and *Other* are always defined in relation to each other. For some members this has entailed challenging their previously held beliefs, and for others it has been an awakening which has allowed for a deeper understanding of how race has shaped a sense of self.

I was really excited to be in the group, to have the chance to speak with black colleagues, to get to know their experience. And then I started to see myself through their eyes, and the privilege of my whiteness became very real, and I also got in touch with my own racism. I have my own struggle history, of which I am proud, and so having to recognise my racism has been really painful.(GM3-W)

The group has forced me to confront my own prejudice, and to look at my privilege, which I have never had to consider before. I am now comparing the course of my life with that of my black colleagues, and I feel an impotence, I feel a lack of control and a powerlessness when I think about the unfairness of it, of what we are each born into.(GM2-W)

Sometimes, as I sit in the group and listen to the ways in which my colleagues describe their experiences as they move through the world in black bodies, I am stunned by the intense pain of what I am hearing, of experiences I will never have to go through. And I feel silenced because, really, what can I say. In those moments it feels like nothing can ever make it better.(GM10-W)

For some white members of the group, being called to consider for the first time their racedness – “*reflecting on my whiteness is like a fish having to reflect on itself in water, it just is*” (GM11) – and the consequences of that in terms of their relationship to self and racial *Other*, has resulted in what could be described as a form of racial melancholia. For whites,

unresolvable grief is experienced with the realisation that the ideals associated with whiteness – equality, justice, freedom – have been betrayed, and that the privilege of whiteness has emerged as a result of aggression against and exclusion of the racial *Other*. The racial melancholia of whiteness, then, entails acknowledgement of one's privilege, of the foundations of that privilege, of the cost to the *Other*, and of the powerlessness to change that (Straker, 2004). It is evident that aspects of the quotations above reflect this awareness both of damage done to *Other* and self, or existence at the expense of another, and recognition of the impotence to change this in retrospect. In tandem, black group members of the group describe their experience of being raced and how this permeates every aspect of life, impacting indelibly on a sense of self and wellbeing – “a grid upon which every aspect of psychic development is constructed” (Thompson, cited in Suchet, 2004, p. 426). They describe a racial melancholia emerging from a recognition of how norms of whiteness have prescribed a sense of self resulting in a disavowal of and an estrangement from their own identity (Eng & Hahn, 2000), associated with a deep, unresolvable grief. For some members this recognition has grown through interactions in the group, creating intense internal conflict and, for some, going so far as to result in resignation from the group.

Being in the group has highlighted my blackness. Even if we look at writing down my thoughts for this article, I was so reluctant, afraid that my writing and language usage would lay bare my ‘blackness’. Language has become an indication of people's superiority. I sit in the group and I admire people's eloquence, and even though I am not the only black person in the group, I feel I am the blackest one present. (GM7-B)

As I write this, recalling my longing as a child to be white when I grew up, I still admit my desire to be white, but before the group this was a shameful admission to make, especially to my black friends. The shame about this desire had not been processed. Now, having been in the group, grappling with some of my issues of race, I am beginning to question the need to measure all things against whiteness, which means battling against the beliefs instilled by my parents that blackness cannot produce any good. (GM6-B)

Being in the group has confronted me with just how much I have been defined by my aspirations towards whiteness. It has been painful, too painful, and at times has made me feel ill as I sit with my self-deception and the betrayal of my blackness.(GM12-B)

Material to this discussion is the notion of double consciousness. First described by Du Bois (1968) in the American context, and then furthered by Fanon (Black, 2007) when describing the experience of colonised blacks, double consciousness describes the experience of existing always with a duality of self; one emerging from self-definition and the other from an identity imposed by a white world. This double consciousness is a burden which results in the melancholia described by Eng and Hahn (2000), but it is also an experience which frees up space and allows for transgression – an experience in which one is constructed through the eyes of the other, but where one is also acutely aware of how partial and incomplete this construction is. This reality is articulated by black members of the group who describe growing up straddling the duality. In contrast, white privilege is exemplified in an experience of normative, unidimensional consciousness, having only to regard oneself through a white lens, without reflexivity. Increasing a sense of raced subjectivity – essentially increasing reflective functioning – for white members of the group, has invited them into their own experience of a form of double consciousness, prompting them to regard themselves for the first time from a black perspective, and recognising then how their whiteness is experienced by blacks, and how they are implicated in the processes of racism. An outcome of this is the racial melancholia of whiteness (Straker, 2004) described above. Black (2007) suggests that once whites have their own experience of double consciousness, critical racial dialogue becomes possible.

A deepening internal reflexivity can be thought about as a *developmental third*, that space within the self that invites self-understanding and a deepening awareness of self in relation to other. It relates also to the concept of mentalisation - an increasingly complex understanding of one's internal world and the internal world of others, allowing for a recognition of motivations, beliefs, feeling states and desires, of self and other. In relation to race, this broadening understanding relates to a real knowing of the meaning of one's racedness, how this shapes identity, how it impacts and is impacted by the *Other*. The material presented illustrates that such awareness is not easily developed but requires considerable courage.

Concomitant with this growth of internal awareness has been a complexification of the relationships between group members. At the outset we shared a sameness emerging from our common collegial experiences, however our engagement became, and has remained more complex as our differences in relation to race became highlighted. It is in the face of this complexity that the possibility of a relational third has opened up, an intersubjectivity that constitutes a dialectic created by separate subjectivities. In this intersubjective space there exists the potential for thirdness, a space in which there is the “capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves” (Britton, in Swartz, 2007, p. 363). It is suggested that it is this thinking space between people that has allowed individual members to begin to know the racial *Other* – as best one can – in relation to the self, in a way which both renders more complex our understanding of the role of race in relationality and allows for mutual recognition (Esprey, 2017).

The existence of the relational third between group members means that an observing stance becomes possible in the group, held at different times by different people. As a consequence, for example, when discussion tends towards over-intellectualisation, or when there emerges an interaction that is painful or difficult, there is inevitably someone who is holding the third position sufficiently to be able to reflect on what is happening and to invite others into a space of thirdness. As described in the reflection below, this position has not been the purview of any one person, rather it rotates around the group, allowing individuals to take up different positions in relation to one another.

The teacher becomes the student

The student becomes the teacher.

The cycle continues.

The inflictor of pain becomes the bearer of tears, the healer of wounds.

At times not able to bear our pain we hold the pain of others.

Witnessing and being witnessed.

The journey continues.(GM9-B)

Through this spiralling sequence of rupture, relational thirdness, and repair, the group has grown intersubjective muscle and deepened its capacity as a collective to experience the point of view described by Britton (in Swartz, 2007, p. 363) – “the capacity to reflect on ourselves whilst being ourselves”. In this process we have seen how when one person loses their vantage point, so another is there to maintain it, allowing for a deepening trust that we can, in fact, survive inevitable ruptures.

Extending beyond the group: Taking thirdness into our work and community

For many group members, being in the group has been a conscientising experience through which an awareness of the reality of race in our work has been cemented and elaborated. At the outset there was a shared sentiment amongst us that while race obviously operated within our clinical work and community, it should be possible to acknowledge it but also to simultaneously look beyond this and to imagine a reality in which race was not always in the foreground of interactions.

When the group started I was convinced that not only did I not see colour, but that race had little to no impact on my work as a therapist. All these years later my opinion is vastly different. It's hard to imagine a therapeutic space not only with patients of a differing race, but even with patients of similar race, not being influenced by my personal experiences of race. For example, when in a therapeutic relationship with white patients, I find myself having to work harder to prove my worth and abilities as a therapist; a feeling that does not present when working with black patients.(GM6-B)

Members describe how this growing awareness of how race potentially shapes interaction has extended through them into their work and community. As thinking and speaking about race has felt more possible for members, so they have been able to advocate for such thinking and speaking within their own work contexts, extending the boundaries and reach of the group.

The group has allowed me to develop both more nuanced positions and thinking on race and more confidence sometimes to assert ideas or to bring them up in various contexts. Having something in a sense ‘endorsed’ by the group means that one can raise it with more authority.

I have been challenged to think and be more mindful in various interactions in both therapy and training, and in collegial situations.(GM5-W)

Monthly meetings have allowed an opportunity for us to practice being raced in an environment held by the cultural third of analytic theory and the relational third group interaction. Group conversations mirror us back to ourselves, against the margins created by the racial *Other*, and in this way a growing knowledge of self and *Other* is possible.

In the group context just the mere classifications such as ‘black’ and ‘white’ have become a lot easier for me. Before, when in a mixed group, such classifications would be mentioned with a lot of hesitancy, waiting for the onslaught of attack. Now I feel able to talk about ‘black’ and ‘white’ in my work context with more confidence.(GM7-B)

Similarly, and especially in the early years of the group, there has been a new boldness in surfacing race in our clinical work. For some people it was for the first time that they felt able to grapple aloud with the racialised dynamics in the therapeutic dyad.

It was in a session with a new, black, patient that I became aware of how strongly I held the group in mind. As he introduced material that was so clearly related to the fact of our bi-racial relationship, I felt my heartbeat quicken and my anxiety escalate. I felt too how my breathing was steadied as I called to mind my colleagues in the group, calling on the discussions we’d had about race in the dyad, and with that accompaniment I was able to make a direct interpretation about the racialised material, and how it reflected the coloured margins of our relationship.(GM1-W)

The group, then, has in many respects become a new cultural third – an internalised supervisory presence which has strengthened the capacity to confront racially-based dynamics and nuance inside and outside the group. It is not coincidence that individuals who have been or still are in the group are becoming noticeably vocal in our professional contexts around issues pertaining to race and have also been invited to give presentations in the wider community. In a sense the group has enabled us as individuals to further the cause of race-related dialogue and relationality.

From rupture to repair, and back again

Lest the portrayal of the group should appear overly positive it is important to note that despite the relationality present, there exists always the potential for complementarity or rupture when the engagement has been polarised into twoness, fractured by misattunement or misunderstanding in social contexts of ongoing racialised inequality. In these instances the relational third collapses and cannot be immediately retrieved. Typically this breakdown is racially defined, occurring between a black and white member of the group, and signals what Bakhtin (in Goncalves et al, 2006) describes as a monological interaction. Such complementarity heralds the entrance of an anti-analytic third, a “mindlessness generated by a particular set of circumstances that implicates our social histories as well as our personal ones” (Straker, 2006, p. 729). At these times, thinking is hijacked by the emergence of a shared history in which the subjects hold complementary positions.

Times I feel afraid, and I question my colleagues’ motives. I feel that my whiteness makes me vulnerable to attack, and sometimes I even feel physically vulnerable. It is only once the meeting is over, often, that I can think more clearly about what has happened, and find our common ground again.(GM2-W)

As our group has shifted, so we have begun to recognise the validity of Fanon’s (1967) hypothesis that fear is central to racialised contexts for both black and white. We have experienced too how it is this fear which precedes the experience of racially-valenced hatred within self and *Other* described by White (2002). We have concomitantly been able to bear the discomfort of ruptures as they have occurred more frequently and more loudly in the space between. Over time the intensity of our discussions has generally increased, reflective of our own process of dismantling ignorance, but also, it is suggested, in response to the increasing fractures and faultlines which are appearing within our broader social context. At times it has felt as if the group is burning, in tandem with the real fires happening through protest action in society, as was the case in early 2016 when municipal demarcation protests resulted in the torching of schools in Vuwani, Limpopo. In these moments discussion has become combative, causing feelings of stuckness and complementarity, perhaps suggesting

that the ignorance contract is not as robust and is much more fragile under conditions of continued racialised inequality.

Be sure that if this country falls apart, you have far more to lose than I do. You will lose your house, your privilege, your material wealth, and it will be a shock to you. Me, I will go back to where I came from where I had nothing, and I will be ok.(GM6-B)

It feels at times that the group can very quickly shift from a position of talking about an issue to being that issue. Like the time when we were discussing the ‘k’ word, and the word was uttered in its fullness by a white member as a way of illustrating a point of language. There was a moment’s pause, I heard the group take a collective breath as it absorbed that assault of the word, and the conversation was about to continue when a black member said, “I’m sorry, but I have a problem with you having just said that word, it doesn’t feel ok for me’. And there is a moment of awkwardness as the group re-calibrates around the rupture. There is an apology, and a silence, and then someone says, ‘can we talk about what just happened?’(GM10-W)

This silence experienced in the group at times indicates how quickly a collapse in thinking can occur and manifest in a corporeal inertia and linguistic inarticulability (Esprey, 2017), when into the discussion comes historically charged material that positions members as black and white, in a moment of complementarity that cancels dialogue. As described earlier, there is some relief in the observation that inevitably one member of the group intervenes with a third voice at these times, invoking the relational third, and encouraging thinking and dialogue around what has happened. There is something here that resonates with the relational psychotherapy idea that enactments will inevitably occur in psychotherapeutic exchange and that rather than trying to avoid these they may in fact become very productive ground for exploring what took place and deepening relational connection and self-awareness. While these moments have pushed us to strive deliberately towards interrogating and understanding the rupture (as highlighted in a previous quotation), they have also highlighted just how easily we can become polarised by race and by all the meanings it holds

for us in this country. And so we move from rupture to repair and with the survival of each fracture we experience the possibility of movement forward, and of mutual recognition¹⁰.

Group members' reflections also highlight, however, some of the despair and questioning that accompanies these ruptures, provoking questions around how possible real reconciliation is when the potential for misrecognition remains so present.

I do find myself wondering whether we can ever really know the other? Can we shift decades of mistrust? Can dialogue really help to shift impasses? If all falls apart will we all just retreat to our own 'side'? Can we unlearn or re-educate our normative unconscious?(GM5-W)

I really grapple with what is possible for me. I feel completely shackled by thoughts about who I am as a black person – is there space for me to be who I want to be or do I need to adopt all white man's attitudes to be accepted? This is a constant negotiation inside myself and comes up in the group when we start speaking honestly.(GM7-B)

Is there any way of overcoming or transcending historically loaded identities of oppressor/beneficiary and oppressed/victim and whiteness and blackness, in a way that does justice to the past but also frees people in the present to relate in more spontaneous ways? What are the things that remain unsaid or can't be said in the group?(GM5-W)

These reflections bring to mind Gadamer's (in Cushman, 2005) assertion that whilst we can strive to understand another's point of view, we can never really know the *Other*. And so the group's iterative process of rupture and repair has presented us with the potency of thirdness in its capacity to move us through and beyond rupture, but it has also highlighted its limits. We have seen how vulnerable the maintenance of thirdness is in the face of ongoing racial inequality, as was the case in early 2016 when the group dynamics mirrored the violence which was erupting in society at the time. Similarly, we have experienced the freedom and

¹⁰ In thinking further about the movement between rupture and repair. Bion's (1962) understanding of the oscillation between PS – D positions feels apposite. Each experience of rupture brings with it new anxieties and splits, which create a pathway to repair of a different kind, which then leads to further, new anxiety and consequent repair, and so on. But the capacity to repair is strengthened with each rupture, as the group experiences its capacity for survival and renewal.

joy of mutual recognition through dialogue, but have felt too its limits in traversing the distance between, created by a racially schismed history. As a consequence we sit with the pain and alienation that comes from this knowledge.

And yet perhaps, as referenced earlier, it is the essential unknowability of the *Other* which creates the continuing impetus to relationality (Zizek, 1991, and provides the fuel which continues to propel our group.

Concluding thoughts

The shifting nature of relationality suggests that the way in which this paper is being written now is different to how it would have been conceptualised had it been penned earlier on in the life of the group. Writing in the early years would have highlighted the excitement which we all felt at getting to know self and *Other* in a new way. It would have championed the strength of dialogue in the facilitation of racial healing. It would have suggested that we had found answers, or at least some of them, to the vexed issue of how to engage with race in clinical practice. The paper is being written now in a vastly different socio-political context where we are navigating a particularly charged racial period in which racially-valenced conflict has been foregrounded in ways unparalleled since the transition of 1994. In South Africa of 2018, the ignorance contract has been aggressively outed by current and vociferous protesting voices, pronouncing the importance of a decolonial consciousness.

Against this backdrop the nature of the group and our exchanges have become very different from that which characterised the initial years. While the group remains committed to its task, its more recent functioning has frequently mirrored the volatile, emotive, and at times, violent protest emerging more broadly in contemporary South Africa. It has taken commitment and openness to keep the group engaged in dialogue, and to survive the ruptures which occur. Members have commented on how hard it is to come to the group sometimes, there has been the temptation to leave, group meetings get forgotten and attendance becomes erratic. But there remains a curiosity and an engagement which, we suggest, is possible because of the history we share, and because of the dimensions of thirdness we have created within ourselves, between us, and with the help of theory and the analytic frame. As one

group member said, *“if we can’t do this here, if we can’t speak to one another in a safe space we have created, then what hope is there of achieving it outside”*.

There is little doubt that participation in the group has deepened our capacity for self-reflection, as individuals, but most relevantly as practicing clinicians who bring to our clinical work new knowledge of how our identities, and those of our patients, co-create a space which implicates the socio-historical. This knowledge affords a dimensionality in our capacity to conceptualise our work, and, it is suggested, has the potential to broaden the psychoanalytic episteme. This crucial outcome has the potential to extend into our psychoanalytic community and beyond if an active engagement around race is encouraged and facilitated within our organisational structures and social lives.

This paper has attempted to convey something of the significance of engaging with the problem of race in a racially diverse group as practicing clinicians in South Africa. It has aimed to capture something of the shifting nature of relationality within the group process and to highlight the rhythm of rupture and repair which has patterned and continues to pattern the trajectory of the group with specific reference to racialised identities and dynamics. It is evident that the group represents an example of how power relations and difference are not erased, of how power, prejudice, bias and racism are always present (Cushman, 2005), and of how our perspective on the *Other* can never be uncomplex. However, it is also hoped that what has been conveyed is that “even though we are fragmented, incoherent, or at least constituted by multiple voices and influences, we can still think, be curious, have creative moments, feel compassion for, cooperate with, and love others. We can come to common understandings, at least for a few moments, but they will always be incomplete and uncertain” (Cushman, 2005, p. 407).

The journey continues

The more we read their stories the more we find our words and share our stories,
reshaping our beings through the ambivalences of our internal and external
transformations.

We laugh through tears of joy and pain and other stuff and we sip on Fanon and other
stuff

We still sip on the cocktail of our experiences

At times the hangover lasting for days

Sometimes just feeling I can breathe, and stretch, and reach for the sky
We sip on, we walk on...delving deep into our souls holding each other as we go on
(GM9-B)

CHAPTER 6

Paper 3: Preface

The problem of thinking in black and white, was submitted in August 2014 to the journal, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and returned in April 2015 with a comprehensive explanation of the revisions required following two peer reviews. After substantial reworking of the paper, I resubmitted in December of 2015 and received final acceptance in February 2016. The paper was published in February 2017, alongside the responses written by my three discussants, Neil Altman, Gill Straker, and Melanie Suchet. I have included these responses in Appendix 3. My paper in reply to the discussants, *Penetrating Subjectivity*, appears in the following chapter of this thesis. In late 2017, I received an invitation from Adrienne Harris and Rina Lazar, Chairs and Moderators of the IARPP (International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy) online colloquium, to present this paper as the springboard for the Association's online colloquium in 2018. The colloquium ran for two weeks in May 2018, during which I had the opportunity and privilege to engage with and witness the thinking of relational practitioners from around the globe as we pursued the ideas and conversations prompted by my paper. The process of conceptualising and writing this paper, and the opportunities which its publication have afforded me in terms of engagement with thinkers and writers whose work I admire, have been deeply rewarding.

The chronological positioning of this paper, as the first one written towards my PhD, is relevant as it captures my early thinking and orientation to my subject. In reading it now, I recognise that it mirrors the self-consciousness and vulnerability which I felt in the early stages of speaking and writing about race. It mirrors too the politics of the time, in terms of the country's socio-political climate, but also in relation to the status of race in the South African mainstream psychoanalytic environment where conversations about race were still tentative and contentious, and the centrality of whiteness was only obliquely alluded to. In a sense, then, this paper stands as a snapshot of a particular moment in time, against a rapidly shifting confluence of contexts – personal, political and professional.

The paper introduces and expands on the primary thesis which undergirds this research: the presence and manifestation of race in the clinical dyad has the potential to interrupt the therapist's ordinary clinical tasks, most especially the capacity to think, to contain, to metabolise and render comprehensible the patient's offerings. I support the paper theoretically through Bion's theory of thinking, suggesting that racially imbued material which implicates the therapist as a like-subject alongside the patient, has the potential to invoke an experience of the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) which sabotages the capacity for reverie – for the vantage point of a third - and consequent containment. On reflection I recognise that what I am describing in this paper is the presence in the dyad of the therapist's multiplicity of selves (Bromberg, 1996) and the intrusion of the raced self which has been dissociated from conscious awareness. I illustrate this dissociation in the first clinical vignette with Denesh where the enactment of my raced white self thwarts any real therapeutic progress. In the second vignette, with Thabi, I am more awake to my multiple selves, and more able to 'catch' the enactment as it enters the room. In my use of case examples from my own practice, I shift the thesis to a more personal level. In the first paper (Chapter 4), the lens is focused on psychoanalytic thinking and practice more broadly, a kind of meta-analytic commentary on race within the analytic paradigm. In the second paper (Chapter 5) this lens shifts more specifically to the South African context, bringing the focus more intensely into the local psychoanalytic milieu, concentrating on the impact of race on a group of South African clinicians. In this, the third paper, I narrow the focus further by positioning myself, as therapist, quite centrally, and I do so by describing in greater depth the particular historical, social and psychoanalytic context against which my practice is performed. It is in this paper that I first practiced how it felt to speak about race, to venture my opinions, to scrutinise my own clinical work, and to 'come out' as a white South African clinician.

Throughout this thesis I comment on the lack globally, but most saliently within the South African psychoanalytic context, of experience-near clinical writing which reveals the innards of racially imbued therapeutic moments. In this paper I attempt to 'model' the self-scrutiny which Moss (2001) suggests is crucial if we wish to *think* psychoanalytically about race and racism in our work, taking ourselves as objects of scrutiny and developing an intimate familiarity with our own prejudice and racism. In so doing, we inevitably take ownership of therapeutic enactments, and of the ways in which the ghosts of our racialised past (Holmes,

2020) take hold in the present, potentially haunting the dyadic endeavour. Whilst Bion's theory of thinking and his conceptualisation of container-contained sit as theoretical reference points throughout the thesis, this acknowledgement of the therapist's vulnerability to a collapse in thinking, and to subjectively-driven therapeutic enactments, invites scrutiny of the mainstream notion of a neutral, or 'empty' (Ivey, 2017) container, immune to any influencing content. It is this balance of drawing on established and deeply relevant theory, whilst also playing with a more relational interpretation thereof, that I try to achieve in this paper. I suggest that *The problem of thinking in black and white* illustrates the possibility of writing from within the experience, from a place of vulnerability and honesty, without collapsing into indulgent self-disclosure, or relinquishing theoretical rigour. It is my attempt at writing an authentically relational psychoanalytic paper.

The Problem of thinking in black and white: Race in the South African clinical dyad

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Abstract

Race, as it presents itself within the clinical dyad as an aspect of the relationship between therapist and patient, has scarcely been written about from an experience-near perspective within the South African context. This paper focuses on the difficulty of speaking and writing about race. It contends that race as a construct and as an aspect of subjectivity has the potential to interrupt the therapist's capacity to *think*, in Bionian terms, and to prevent entry into the reverie which is crucial to the creation of an analytic third. Written through a relational psychoanalytic lens and drawing on the concepts of the normative unconscious and the anti-analytic third, the paper refers to clinical vignettes to illustrate the collapse in thinking, and the progression to beginning to think, anew, about the race-nuanced, intersubjective space between patient and therapist.

Keywords: South Africa, race, normative unconscious, anti-analytic third

This paper explores how, as clinicians, our capacity to *think* and to be a container for our own and our patients' thoughts, is potentially compromised when race is implicated – often unconsciously as part of the dynamic process between therapist and patient. The processes of thinking and of emotional containment are the crucial clinical tasks in which we engage (Bion, 1962). Auestad (2010) describes psychoanalysis as a creative effort to think about the unthinkable; the opposite, the inability to think or the collapse of thinking, constitutes a separation of thought from feeling, and represents an attack on meaning. I suggest that the emergence of race in the dyad potentially provokes the therapist into a thinking-thwarting enactment which is shaped by her own racial subjectivity as it becomes intertwined with that of the patient, and thus has the potential to interrupt and mire the analytic endeavour and to compromise the creative, thinking task of our craft.

The paper is located within a South African context and speaks to the relative silence which encapsulates race within the clinical arena, contending that speaking and writing about race from the experience-near position is complicated by the implication of our own racial identities and histories, and by the consequent subjective experience which this implication provokes. It is theoretically grounded in a relational psychoanalytic paradigm, and draws on Bion's (1962) theory of thinking. In substantiating the thesis that race-in-the-dyad has the capacity to threaten thinking, the paper refers also to the concepts of the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) and the normative unconscious (Layton, 2006), drawing on clinical vignettes¹¹ to illustrate the moments of mindlessness and non-thinking which can occur when race manifests itself within the therapeutic relationship.

Racialised identities cannot be written or thought about without taking context into consideration, given that they are constituted by, manifested in relation to, and inextricably linked to the material, political, social and cultural milieus (Mama, as cited in Lobban, 2013). The relevance of considering race within the South African context is informed both by the political history from which a democratic South Africa has emerged, and by the way in which race continues to feature as a significant part of contemporary life. Indeed, South Africa is currently engaged in a powerful racialised moment where polarisation along the lines of race

¹¹ Case material referred to in this paper comprises of composite and heavily disguised client details, which are therefore unidentifiable (Gabbard, 2000).

is increasingly evident (Mbembe, 2015). It might be said that national investment in the peaceful processes of transformation in the first 20 years post-1994 forbade real engagement with, and recognition of the violence of racism, and of the chronic experience of trauma through which the country had come. We see now the *return of the repressed* (Freud, 1940) in a powerful and destabilising way.

The legislation of Apartheid – a system which created legitimised segregation and discrimination between racialised groups, and the subsequent oppression and disenfranchising of the numerical majority for over four decades - is unique to South Africa (Kovel, 1995). With the Nationalist Party's election victory in 1948, institutionalised segregation rendered South African society one that was permeated by, and organised around, racism (Kovel, 1995). And yet the legitimisation of racial segregation and discrimination through Apartheid was but the culmination of a centuries-long history of racial othering in South Africa. As Gevisser (2014) articulates in his autobiography, the alienation of self from other runs as deep in South African history as do the spider-web seams of gold which criss-cross the country's sub-terrain:

My world, atomised by apartheid, was defined by what it had been walled against, dammed against....Ever since Jan van Riebeeck planted his famous almond-and-thornbush barrier in the mid-seventeenth century against the savage 'Hottentots' beyond, being South African has meant the negotiation of such frontiers. It has meant the marking of territories, the separating out of us from them, of the known from the unknown, of the safe from the fearful....This strand of self-consciousness about borders and boundaries – a negotiation of frontiers and a fear of what lies beyond – is particularly (even if not uniquely) South African (p. 36).

The consequences of this, twenty years into democracy, remain indelible at economic, political, social, interpersonal and intra-personal levels. So much so that in spite of a shrinking white population relative to the growth of a black numerical majority, the potency of white supremacy remains evident both in economic racial disparity and in the social currency which whiteness continues to command (Steyn, 2012). The reasons for and manifestations of this are multiple, and beyond the purview of this article. Suffice to say, integral to an understanding of the salience of race in South Africa are notions of class,

power, privilege, guilt, shame, accountability, retribution and reconciliation, as well as a deeply embedded intergenerational transmission of trauma. Moreover, the current wave of racialised service delivery protests, calls for wealth redistribution, and demands for the decolonisation of education all reflect the unfinished business of social transformation (Mbembe, 2015). All of these continue to impact on the national psyche, on ways in which South Africans relate to themselves and to one another, and similarly, these issues enter into the relational space of the consulting room.

Relationality is Core

Against this backdrop, the emphasis placed on subjectivity, intersubjectivity and context leads organically to the adoption of a relational paradigm as a frame for this article, especially given the emphasis that relational thinking places on the importance of the social and the historical (Harris, 2011). Applying relational theory to the practice of psychotherapy foregrounds the influence of current and historical contexts on the intersubjectivity and transference-countertransference dynamic of the clinical dyad. Normative unconscious processes (Layton, 2006) form part of the relational weave between patient and therapist, as they are aspects of the unconscious which are compelled to repeat the behaviours and affect which reinforce distressing social norms, specifically around aspects of identity. Layton (2006) suggests that social norms around race are intergenerationally transmitted in early relational contexts – within the “familial and cultural enclaves of love and hate” (p. 264) - laying the foundation for the formation of identity and subjectivity. She argues for the assumption that all identities are relational, and that repetitions around identity are activated in relational contexts, such as in the clinical setting between therapist and patient. As a consequence, therapist and patient will inevitably enact normative unconscious processes, evidencing the link between the psychical and the social. It is these normative unconscious influences which, it will be argued, are complicit in ambushing the clinician’s capacity to engage in the reverie which is necessary for the creation of the analytic third (Ogden, 1999) in which the clinician is able to think about and contain her own and the patient’s renderings.

Avoiding Race in The South African Clinical Sphere

Whilst race is an inextricable aspect of identity and subjectivity in South Africa, it remains challenging to speak about from an experience-near perspective. Within the South African clinical and professional milieu, whilst race is written *about* as a subject of clinical relevance particularly when considering cross-cultural work, there is a reticence to speak and write from within the clinical encounter, and a tendency to avoid thinking about race in its transference-countertransference manifestations (Esprey, 2013). With some notable local exceptions (see Swartz, 2007; 2011), much of the writing about race-in-the-encounter originates from British and North American writers (e.g. Altman, 2000; Dalal, 2001). I suggest that it is of relevance too that there are a number of South African ex-patriates who are writing more subjectively about race (see Ipp, 2011; Straker, 2004; Suchet, 2004). Whilst many of these writers have lived abroad for decades and have adjusted to and taken on their adopted contexts (Suchet, 2007), the ways in which they write clinically about their subjective and racialised selves is through the lens of being a South African who continues to carry the legacy of a particular history. This speaks to the enduring impact of the social and historical in the shaping of the self and of the normative unconscious (Layton, 2006), and to the assumption of a “mind-society synapse” (Dimen, 2011) that constitutes the core of relational thinking. Theirs is perhaps an “exilic consciousness” (Said, as cited in Burkhalter, 2015) where they are “neither completely one with the new setting, nor fully disencumbered of the old” (p. 6), thereby allowing for writing from the perspective of historical immersion in race, but with sufficient contemporary distance to facilitate different modes of reflexivity.

In considering the appearance of ex-patriate voices writing subjectively about race, juxtaposed with the relative dearth of writing locally, I have been aware of how challenging it is to write from within my own subjectivity about race. Here, both the difficulty in metabolising and *thinking* about a topic which is so intimate and personal, and my self-consciousness around what and how I write, and for whom, have emerged. In my writing, I am aware of the relevance of positioning myself in relation to the material, as a white woman, born into a position of power and inevitable privilege in 1970s South Africa. In this, I am cognisant of the multiplicity of selves – some more and others less accessible to my consciousness (Bromberg, 1996) – all collaborators in creating this text. I am aware that

penning an article for an international journal feels different for me, and allows for freer access to my own thoughts than if my intention had been to submit to a local journal. In spite of this sense of relative freedom from the social gaze however, I am aware too of the obligations towards greater reflexivity that have arisen in the process of writing this paper. Indeed it has been through the process of writing that I have drawn increasingly closer to my own sense of “unsettled whiteness” (Straker, 2011), away from the splitting and dissociation which characterised my earlier cross-racial clinical work.

The avoidance of race within my broader professional context manifests in a number of ways; the racialised subjectivity of the therapist is hardly interrogated; race as a clinical phenomenon is understood predominantly through an intra-psychic lens; therapists, both black and white, claim colour blindness; there is also a tendency to invoke the analytic ideal of neutrality in relation to race; and there is equally an imperative to disavow racism. Morgan (2014) posits one possible reason for this when she suggests that acknowledging the relevance of race and racial difference is politically incorrect. In post-1994 South Africa, the injunction to denounce the racism of the past and the contemporary salience of race in the service of minimising conflict, as well as the shame associated with contradicting this imperative, has the potential to foreclose honest discussion and the ownership of any feelings which may be seen as prejudiced or othering.

There is also a pull to disavow racism, especially amongst white therapists. Hook (2005) warns about the dangers of such disavowal when he comments on the paradox of expressing racial tolerance and non-racism that is then coupled with behaviour which is undeniably racist. By denying holding racist feelings, racially motivated behaviour is tolerated or excused, or rendered invisible (Smith, 2006). In this way racism cannot be challenged. A possible concomitant of disavowal is what Essed (2013) refers to as “entitlement racism”, where for example, words, ways of speaking or images which are intrinsically racist become part of the freedom of expression or amnesty granted through the repudiation of racism. Similarly, Straker (2011) describes a tendency to the expression of “promiscuous shame” by whites in post-Apartheid South Africa - a way of expressing shame about the racism of the past (accompanied by a disavowal of racism in the present) without acknowledging personal complicity. “By owning a global sense of shame we perhaps avoid the actual experience of

shame that would accrue if we owned guilt *not for the general actions of our race but for our own more personal racism*” [emphasis added] (Straker, 2011, p. 94).

I suggest that the denial, disavowal and avoidance of race, as well as the assertion of colour blindness, are also defensive manoeuvres which allow, in part, for the evasion of the onset of racial melancholia which threatens both blacks and whites. Eng and Han (2000) describe this process of disavowing cultural identity amongst Asian-Americans when trying to assimilate into the normativity of whiteness in the United States. What results is a deep sense of estrangement from self, and a consequent sense of eternal loss and unresolvable grief. I suggest that this phenomenon is relevant too within the South African context of blackness, captured painfully in the statement made by a black patient of mine; “if any person of colour in this country says that they did not grow up wanting to be white, they are lying”.

Similarly, Straker (2004) writes about the racial melancholia associated with the beneficiary status of being white. For the white person, such grief-without-end results when it is realised that the positive attributions associated with whiteness have been betrayed, and that the privilege of whiteness has emerged as a result of aggression against and exclusion of the racial other. The racial melancholia of whiteness then, is the acknowledgment of one’s privilege, of the foundations of that privilege, of the cost to the other, and of the powerlessness to change that (Straker, 2004).

In spite of the avoidance of addressing the workings and presence of raced subjectivity, race invites itself into the therapeutic space (Morgan, 2007; Swartz, 2007). As we enter for the first time into a therapeutic encounter, race becomes an immediate signifier of sameness or difference which circumscribes ways of being and relating. I suggest that in dissociating from the racial, and from the “inevitable structuring role (played by race) in all of our subjectivities” (Suchet, 2007, p. 875), we weaken our capacity to re-establish a thinking container when the insertion of race in the dyad disrupts our reverie. Ultimately, the cost is to the clinical process, to the patient, and to the therapist.

Thinking and Not Thinking

Bion's concept of container-contained ushered in a new way of thinking in the trajectory of psychoanalytic theory. He is considered to be one of the earliest intersubjectivists (Grotstein, 2007), concerned with how the encounter between subjectivities is able to transform psychic experience (Cartwright, 2010). Bion considered the capacity to know about the mind of self and other as being a function of containment – the ability to intuit and track emotional and mental states which lie behind the behaviour or conscious thought of the other, and of the self. This capacity allows us to hold multiple perspectives on self and object, and when it is compromised we move towards symbolic equation. This is a state of being where the internal and the external equate to one another, and the experience of raw beta elements cannot be transformed through the process of thinking into metabolised and symbolic alpha elements. Thinking is thus the pivotal link between feelings as unknowable sensations, and the creation of symbolic meaning (Lagos, 2007).

Bion suggested that the capacity to contain our patients is the essence of the therapeutic task. This thinking function – to consider the subjectivity of both patient and therapist, and to employ this in the service of meaning creation – creates what is described by Ogden (1999) as the analytic third. Through reverie, it emerges from the therapist's capacity to understand and verbally symbolise her own subjectivity, the patient's subjectivity, and the inter-subjectively generated experience; to render subjectivity and inter-subjectivity *thinkable*. Relevant to this paper is Bion's assertion that within the process that occurs between container-contained, external reality is always mediated through the mind of the other. The quality and intactness of the clinician's mind is crucial, as is that mind's ability to process counter-transference states in order to contain the potential for enactment. This paper suggests that the integrity of the therapist's mind and her capacity to filter and manage her own subjectivity becomes potentially impeded when race enters the dyadic engagement. The capacity for reverie, the concomitant realisation of an analytic third, and thinking in the service of beta to alpha transformation, is immobilised.

A number of clinicians writing in the arena of race in the consulting room describe moments of mindlessness and an inability to think when race-imbued material presents itself (see

Altman, 2000; Leary, 2000). Suchet (2010), describes this experience in relation to her work with an Arabic woman:

I couldn't understand what she was saying... I tried to slow down my thinking... Something was happening to me. It was a strange and disorienting experience... She was talking to me, I was looking at her... But I could not hear anything. ...nothing was working. Even after the session ended I could not make sense of what she had said... The links had bypassed secondary process (p. 160).

Writing about social violence and psychoanalysis in Argentina, Puget (1988) describes a related phenomenon when social reality punctures the analytic space and interrupts the analyst's capacity to metabolise the patient's material. She notes that "the presence of material from a shared and traumatic reality distorts both the analyst's manner of listening to his patients, and his analytical function" (p. 85). Similarly, when race enters into the clinical sphere against the contextual backdrop of South Africa, it brings with it a history and related social discourses which implicate both therapist and patient. This insertion of race catapults us, as therapists, into the position of subject alongside our patient, and we are called then to respond from our position of raced subjects in a way which potentially dismantles our thinking apparatus as we stumble psychically through the affective dysregulation which envelopes the dyad. Race has the potential to activate pre-existing internalised relational matrices which are informed by a normative unconscious, and which provoke overwhelming affects such as shame, guilt, melancholia, rage, etc. – all of which may evoke a thinking paralysis if unanticipated and unmetabolised.

Ogden (1999) reminds us that it is only in the space of thirdness in which a container functions, and that such overwhelming internal experiences can be mediated and transformed. In moments of mindlessness, the therapist's capacity to access her own internal container is lost, as is the containing function in relation to the patient. There is an absence of thirdness, and an evocation of what Straker (2006) describes as the anti-analytic third: "a mindlessness generated by a particular set of circumstances that implicates our social histories as well as our personal ones" (p. 729). Straker (2006) suggests that in the normal, day-to-day moments of mindlessness which occur within the clinical encounter, as therapists we draw on theory as

a conduit to the restoration of the containing function – to re-orientate ourselves to an internal container and concomitant thinking. In contrast, the mindlessness evoked by the surfacing of a shared traumatic history in which therapist and patient have held complementary positions has the capacity to obliterate thinking, and it is only in retrospect that the enactment can be captured and understood. As long we do not actively engage with our raced selves, our ability to recognise and learn from the enactment and experience will remain compromised, as will the integrity of the container.

The Collapse of Thinking: Then

I am aware that my reflections on the clinical material to follow are modulated by the kind of racial melancholia experienced by whites (Straker, 2004), which has increasingly become part of my subjectivity as I have crafted this paper. The very act of writing about race and attempting to think about it has the potential to challenge the dissociation (Bromberg, 1996) which colludes in keeping our racialised selves from conscious awareness. As a consequence I have drawn closer to sitting with my beneficiary status and culpability as a white person both historically and currently, and to recognising how this has impacted and continues to do so on my work as a clinician. I am also increasingly awake to my powerlessness in changing the meaning carried by my racedness, and to the grief which accompanies that awakening. I am simultaneously aware of the fear associated with the gradual loss of the protection of white status within the rapidly shifting racial landscape within my country, and of the dilemma of conscience this fear sets up in me.

In the vignettes below I provide clinical examples of when thinking and the capacity to effect emotional containment have collapsed in the face of the anti-analytic third, drawn from the work of a colleague and from my own work as a beginner clinician. I follow with an example in counterpoint, drawn from a current clinical encounter in which I have been more conscious to the dynamics of race, and more able to think.

In the first example I draw on a case described by Richards (2010), a South African therapist who identifies as ‘Coloured¹²’:

...the issues that are ...occupying me and evoking such strong countertransference could be preventing me from focusing on the therapeutic issues that are pertinent to the case rather than (on) the noise of my own personal responses... I need to *reclaim the capacity to think* about this young man in a way that would begin to facilitate the internal work rather than hamper it (Richards, 2010, p. 14, my emphasis)

Richards (2010) reflects here on the impasse which emerged in her therapy with a young, white student who had sought therapy with her after she offered reduced rates for students in need. In making such an offer, Richards had assumed that she would receive requests from previously disadvantaged students of colour, and had been taken aback when approached by a white student, alleging financial need. In her honest and moving narrative of the encounter¹³, Richards (2010) describes an experience of the anti-analytic third as it enters her therapy room. During the course of their therapy, her patient describes his lifestyle and depicts himself as a struggling student – he barely manages to get by on his monthly stipend – a sum which Richards is aware exceeds the monthly pension on which her parents must survive. Whilst sitting with her patient she becomes overwhelmed by intense feelings as she experiences thoughts of her and her family’s history of forced removal, deprivation and disadvantage as a consequence of Apartheid laws. Her family had been forcibly removed in the 1960s under Apartheid policies, was not ever able to recover financially, and the emotional scars remain to this day. Richards was unable to receive a bursary to enable her to study psychology. This was reserved for white students and it ultimately took her 15 years of part-time study to qualify as a psychologist, after having financially supported her siblings through their university studies. This powerful and traumatic history, unfolding as a direct consequence of Richards’ race, announced itself in the present as the therapy with this young white man unfolded. In the session she describes, Richards finds herself being punitive in

¹² During Apartheid, individuals were classified according to one of the dominant racial categories – ‘White’, ‘Indian’, ‘Coloured’, ‘Black’. In the post-Apartheid era these classifications are often still used by individuals in their self-identification.

¹³ I am grateful to Carol Richards for having discussed this case with me, and for the permission she granted to present her unpublished work in this paper.

response to her patient's lateness, having made an assumption in her mind that he would not have been late had she been a white therapist. Similarly she finds herself confronting him about his request for a discount in a way which she retrospectively feels is a counter-transferential enactment emerging from her resentment. She describes an arrest of thinking and of her capacity to be a container for a young man who, despite his race-based privilege, presented with entrenched and obsessional anxiety, and needed therapy.

Richards' reflections on her therapeutic encounter initiated reflexive engagement on my part, and I began to consider situations in my own work in which I had engaged in racially-based enactment. In particular I was reminded of a therapy between myself as a newly qualified therapist and a patient of my own age, racially classified and self-identified as 'Indian'. I write about this encounter almost 10 years after its conclusion, and in doing so I am aware of the different selves I engage. Both the young therapist, not yet thinking about issues of race and context and consequently being immobilised by the enactments of her dissociated raced self, and the writer looking retrospectively at clinical material through the lens and experience of melancholia which dissociation had previously kept at bay, are present.

I am also aware of how my relationship to the material is influenced by the temporal context. In 2005 it might be said that South Africa as a 'rainbow nation' was still fairly complicit as a collective in avoiding the continued role played by race. My context did not challenge me to interrogate the co-constructed space further. In contrast, in the South Africa of 2015, the precarious state of racial politics positions my reflections on the clinical material within an entirely different context.

This clinical example is thus being described by a more mature clinician, and in a new experiential context. I am struck by how different the therapy would have been had this patient entered my consulting room in the present day, by how relationality shifts relative to changing internal and external states.

Denesh initially sought psychotherapy in recognition of persistent self-esteem issues which had dogged him throughout his life. Although a highly successful financial analyst, he was plagued by insecurities. He had ambitious plans for himself and hoped to achieve the same

measure of financial success as a white friend. Denesh described an impoverished childhood growing up with his parents and brothers. He remembered a pivotal moment which he experienced as a young boy when the reality of Apartheid hit him, and he realised that his skin colour separated him from white boys of his age who had access to opportunities which he could only dream of. He recalled feeling intense envy and anger at his racially-based disadvantage; a moment of awakening which propelled him to work hard at school. He succeeded in winning a scholarship to a prestigious, historically white university. Denesh described the disillusionment he felt when, having gained entrance to the university, he felt no less different about himself. Dating a white girl became his obsession, and whilst he did well in his studies, he also worked to increase his self-confidence until he finally succeeded in dating a white student. Throughout our therapy, Denesh repeatedly returned to the same dynamic. As an 'Indian' man he felt inferior, and although married, he continued to pursue risky extra-marital relationships with white women, experiencing intense, but short-lived bursts of self-esteem when he succeeded.

Denesh and I were of similar ages and had grown up in the same regional area. He had lived in the segregated, 'Indian'-specific area, and I in the white suburbs. I recall the discomfort I experienced whilst listening to Denesh recount his life story as his unfolding narrative shed an entirely new light on my own, rattling the conscience of my adolescent self, growing up in 1980s South Africa. The parallels between our lives were striking; we were of the same age, growing up just kilometers from one another, and we had attended the same university over the same period of time, during the early 1990s. As Denesh spoke I experienced moment-after-moment of reconfiguration of memory as he applied his subjective lens to the context of the time and I was called to remember and interrogate my own, white-washed lens. I recognise too how mired I became in my inability to apply my ordinary analytic skills (Swartz, 2007) – to listen, analyse and interpret as my mind became saturated with subjective musings and a swirl of affect.

In considering the dynamic which existed between us and the roles we inhabited, it seems apparent to me now that both Denesh and I were tethered to our racialised roles, complicit in maintaining the ignorance contract which Steyn (2012) describes as being the post-Apartheid status quo where both black and white tacitly agreed to perpetuate pre-existing hegemonic

structures, against transformation and societal re-calibration. Whilst Denesh represented all that was now possible for people of colour in South Africa as he had access to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) opportunities, and had the potential to ascend the hierarchy of class and to increase his material wealth, I was not aware of any sense of envy at his position of power relative to mine. The unwitting repetition of a historical dynamic within the therapeutic relationship translated into an inability to fully understand and work with Denesh's crisis of self. Through my retrospective lens, Denesh's race-based self-denigration brings to mind Fanon's description of the man of colour who pursues the love of a white woman:

Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly *white*... who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realisation. . . (Fanon, 1967, p. 45).

Just as Denesh wished to be white, so too did he wish to inhabit a sense of phallic prowess. He was preoccupied with wanting to be sexually potent and described at length his sexual exploits and excursions, both outside of and within his marriage. I have tried to consider in retrospect whether there was an erotic transference or counter-transference in the space between us. I was not conscious of it at the time, but I recognise that just as Denesh attempted to identify with and resemble whiteness, so too was he attempting to claim a mature sexual identity.

Whilst gender-based and racially-imbued material entered into the room in multiple forms throughout the therapy, I was mostly paralysed in my inability to address and work with it directly. I recall feeling increasingly aware of my historical position of racial power and privilege relative to his. I experienced guilt at the differences in our upbringing which had been scaffolded by the segregation and discrimination of apartheid, and shame at the relief I felt at being born on the privileged side of the racial fence. My guilt and related discomfort, as well as my unconsciousness to the ways in which historical dynamics of power were being re-enacted in our relationship, sabotaged any embryonic thoughts that I had about what was happening in the room both within him and between us. I was unable to link his racially-

based material to our relationship in the room, or to his attempts to feel powerful through his triumphing over and devaluing of the women in his life. I was equally caught up in trying to manage my own guilt and culpability as a white person, and in questioning the racially based thoughts I had about him.

As I engage in internal dialogue with my younger therapist self, questioning who Denesh represented for me then, Straker's (2004) application of the body fetish feels apposite. She describes the strategies employed by whites to restore a sense of "phallic fullness" in the face of experiencing the de-idealisation and castration of whiteness which comes with a recognition that I did benefit from the policies of a regime which I denounced. Through the body fetish, the minority-group-other is used as a project of sorts through which to 'do good', and to unconsciously restore a sense of power in reaction to the powerlessness of racial melancholia. The expectation in return is to be affirmed, and to be seen by the other as a different kind of white. It is apparent to me now that Denesh may have represented for me the 'project-other', that in engaging in what was then an unusual cross-racial therapy I was attempting to mitigate the powerlessness of my own racial position. I recall one moment in the encounter when Denesh described his envy of white boys of his age. In a limp attempt to pursue the invitation to respond to the race in the room, I commented that I, too, am white. Very quickly Denesh reacted saying that he did not think of me as white, and moved on without further reflection. In that moment I felt both affirmed as a different kind of white, and simultaneously expunged of whiteness, ridding me of the necessity to interrogate the racial mix of our relationship. In retrospect Denesh may well have been asking me too to see him differently, not to see him as a man of colour, and also to perhaps join him in his disavowal of his blackness.

I was unable to think clearly enough to engage Denesh about his need to keep me separate, or of our collusion in disavowing blackness. In moments such as these I recognise that our process became arrested in its progression towards mutual recognition (Benjamin, 1998) which potentially emerges following a therapeutic rupture. I wonder, as I consider this case, about my lack of attunement and how it constituted an enactment in which, by attempting to restore my sense of "phallic fullness" (Straker, 2004) as a white person, I was simultaneously re-inscribing his impotence, and frustrating his attempts at inhabiting an experience of phallic

prowess. In retrospect I am able to see that the layer of communication in which Denesh and I engaged was superficial and inauthentic in that it failed to acknowledge and dismantle the underlying and pervasive affect between us, and the historical, racialised social discourse which had re-asserted itself in the room. In this therapy our respective normative unconscious narratives collided, resulting in the derailing of our therapeutic endeavour as we enacted, time and again, the anti-analytic third.

Denesh left therapy prematurely after less than a year, saying that he felt stuck and tortured, and could not see his way through the impasse. I see this now as a co-created impasse. It is with a sense of helplessness that I reflect on this case, unable to re-work as I would wish to do, the process of our therapy.

It has been through the reading of clinical accounts by people such as Leary (2000) and Altman (2000) that I have been able to reconstruct my therapy with Denesh in such a way as to make meaning of the affect and unmetabolised psychic and physiological sensations which were omnipresent in the room with us. On reflection it makes sense to think about our therapeutic stuckness as emerging from the kind of impasse which is created when “thought in both parties is suspended as they mutually enact a historically generated destructive pattern that cannot be remembered, thus co-creating an impasse” (Straker, 2006, p. 741). In our impasse both Denesh and I remained mired in the socially constructed meanings of the identities historically assigned to us – he as a self-loathing black man who pursued an idealised whiteness whilst enviously spoiling it simultaneously; and I as a white woman, possessive of my supremacy or privilege but also distracted by concomitant shame. Neither of us was able to configure self or other anew.

I recognise in hindsight that much of my therapy with Denesh illustrates the existence of an anti-analytic third, the enactment of which, in the absence of a vantage point outside of the dyad, could not be recognised, and working through to a position of mutual recognition could not be achieved.

In Counterpoint: Now

In contrast, in my therapy with Thabi, a young black man, the presence of the anti-analytic third asserted itself early in one of our first sessions. In enquiring where he was born, he answered saying, “I was born in Meadowlands¹⁴....in 1986”. In that moment, as he said “1986”, I felt the intrusion of a memory of my own which I consciously pushed aside, and I continued asking whether he had any particular early childhood memories. Thabi replied, without affect, “other than having my mother cover my face to protect me from daily teargas explosions, no”. As he said this, the memory re-asserted itself and I was instantly thrust back to one historically significant evening in 1986, ensconced in the living room of my adolescent home, watching television and hearing the announcement of a State of Emergency in response to the mounting anti-Apartheid violence in the country. In that instant I recalled with vivid clarity the fear and anxiety I had felt then as images of townships burning filled the screen. The juxtaposition of my and Thabi’s experiences of 1986 in South Africa, left me grasping internally for the hold of a text-book formula, saying unimaginatively that it sounded like he’d grown up in a traumatic and frightening environment. Thabi looked at me pointedly and said, “it was no more traumatic or frightening than for any other black person, growing up, at that time”. I felt the assault of his challenge and anger, and simultaneously felt myself shying away from all that was not being acknowledged between us; the chasm of differences in our upbringing and life experiences due to our racial difference, and the impact of that on the co-constructed space.

In the past, the invitation to dissociate from my racialised self, and Thabi’s too, would have been very compelling, and the therapeutic relationship could well have followed a path similar to that taken with Denesh. The difference is that therapy with Thabi is current. It unfolds almost ten years after the ending of my relationship with Denesh and within a very different context, both in terms of my own subjectivity, and the external political and social climate. Through my own process I have begun to stand in the spaces (Bromberg, 1996) and to engage my racialised self. Following the “1986” session with Thabi, I was able to think about what had transpired within me and between us, and to consider the potency of the anti-

¹⁴ Meadowlands is a suburban area outside of Johannesburg, created for ‘Blacks’ in the Apartheid era during forced removals.

analytic third as it lay in wait in the space between. I was able to draw on the work I had done internally in surfacing and engaging my racialised self, and I drew on the wisdom of my colleagues in the race study group which I facilitate. It was with these tools that I entered the room when Thabi returned for his session the following week.

Thabi began by describing a work team-building weekend from which he had just returned. During one of the exercises he had been tasked with facilitating a discussion amongst his peers where the objective was to talk about a seminal moment of awakening they had experienced growing up. Thabi described the sudden coldness which swept over him as he realised that in this group he was the only black person, and that what was emerging from each person's narrative was their subjective experience of awakening and realisation in relation to the Apartheid system in which they had grown up and benefitted from. As he listened he felt a sense of panic and illegitimacy as he wondered whether he had the right to witness the exposing accounts of his white colleagues. At the conclusion of the session, when Thabi was asked to summarise, he felt overwhelmed by self-consciousness and unable to give coherent feedback. He worried that he was being judged, that he was not qualified to manage the task. He had been preoccupied by this exercise, feeling shamed and uncomfortable, and questioning whether his performance then had tarnished his work performance.

As Thabi was speaking I wondered about his sense of illegitimacy within our cross-racial relationship, whether he questioned my judgement of him, and also about the potential for him to feel misunderstood by me, as a white person, recalling the brief spurt of anger I had felt from him during our previous session. These thoughts cohered alongside the temptation to avoid the transference elements of what he was saying and to stick to the safety of a less relational and co-constructed position. In spite of this I began to formulate a response linking his material to the fact of our bi-racial relationship. In the moments before I responded, I became aware of my heart-beat, and that I had broken out into a sweat. In those moments I thought about the anti-analytic third; I called on the newly acquired theoretical knowledge around the workings of the normative unconscious (Layton, 2006), and on the multiplicity of my own selves which I was trying to hold. Accompanied by theory-as-conduit-to-thirdness and having taken a moment to pause in recognition of the overwhelming affect in the room, I acknowledged that what Thabi had done was to bring race into the room, and into our relationship in a way which we couldn't ignore, but that in doing so he had taken the risk of

exposing himself to me. He had allowed me to glimpse his own internal conflict, between the 'black' and 'white' parts of himself which seemed not to be able to settle into a relationship of equality, but rather preoccupied him and made him feel shameful. I wondered too about how this conflict might appear between us, as we engaged with our difference, with the blackness and whiteness which constituted the margins of our relationship.

Naming the reality of our racial difference shifted the therapeutic process into a more intimate sphere. It is not my intention to imply that by surfacing race between us we are on a comfortable and harmonious therapeutic path. On the contrary, it has forced us to confront parts of self which are painful and shameful. Thabi has become able to speak to the deep ambivalence he feels about being black, and over time we have been able to think too about his envy of my whiteness, of what he projects into that, and of his anger at feeling trapped by his 'race'. There are times when Thabi acts out his anger and envy in ways which threaten the therapy, such as when he does not arrive for a session because he feels silenced by, or afraid of his feelings. I, in turn, am vulnerable to enacting my shame and impotence by over-compensating, as I did when I chose not to charge Thabi for such a missed session. In tandem there are times when I feel possessive of the whiteness which he so values and which I inhabit, in touch with an uncomfortable triumph at the 'systemic luck' from which I benefit, having been cast as white in life's 'unnatural lottery' (Vice, 2017).

But our process feels honest, in stark contrast to my therapy with Denesh. We have begun the process of thinking together about notions of blackness and whiteness, both in literal, body-encoded terms, and in terms of what they mean for Thabi, at an internal level, and how he uses them to communicate his core negative beliefs around self. Benjamin's (1998) notion of mutual recognition feels relevant to our process as we navigate our intersubjectivity and the inevitable ruptures and enactments which emerge within that. I believe strongly that, for me, this is made possible by the thirdness facilitated by theory, and by the voices of colleagues which are in the room with me, creating a container for the container, allowing me to get on with the clinical task at hand; to think.

Discussion

In moments of mindlessness and dysregulated affect, the clinician seeks the safety of a container in order to render meaningful the affective storm raging internally. Garland (2002) describes theory as that container which focuses and holds the clinician in the face of overwhelming and traumatic material. This article, too, hopes to contribute to that theory, to increase the scope and span of the theoretical container such that as clinicians we can trust in its capacity to hold us as we navigate the vicissitudes of race as they potentially assail the clinical space. The capacity to think, to be a container of thoughts, is the primary task to which we commit as clinicians. In this paper I have posited that unless we consciously turn our minds to the role of racial identity and subjectivity of both patient and therapist we risk endangering the integrity of the clinical process. In deliberately interrogating the racialised aspects of self and other that are brought into the room, we dilute the potential for dissociation (Bromberg, 1996) and self-deception, and increase the possibility of engaging with the multiplicity of selves which engage one another in the therapeutic dyad.

Like Miehl (2001), Layton (2006) and Straker (2006) who all argue for the importance of conscious reflections on our own racial identities and the importance of theory to anchor us and restore thinking, I too suggest that if we engage with and write about race and its dynamic impact on the intersubjective space, we increase the theoretical library available to us to draw on as clinicians when we are faced with moments of blindness in the face of race.

Speaking from a relational psychoanalytic framework, this paper suggests that it is not only analytic skills which risk being harmed or compromised should we avoid the workings of race clinically, but also our capacity to practice psychotherapy ethically. It asserts further that to actively interrogate and consider the impact of race on the therapeutic relationship is an ethical imperative, and pertinently so for those practicing within a context of historical racial conflict and trauma, such as post-Apartheid South Africa. This position emerges from the arena of relational ethics which rests on recognition, acknowledgement and responsibility (Frosh, 2011). Writing in reference to the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Frosh (2011) suggests that it is through recognition of the other, of historical wounds and vulnerability, that the other becomes constituted as an individual subject. An ethical stance

however also includes acknowledgement of complicity and taking responsibility for our own capacity for destructiveness and aggression.

In the context of clinical practice in post-Apartheid South Africa, adopting an ethical stance and working within a relational ethical framework means acknowledging our involvement in the violence of racism which shaped legislation and social practice and which continues to insert itself, through tripwires created by trauma, into our current practice. In acknowledging that race is present in every clinical encounter - be it within a cross- or same-race dyad, and whether the other is physically or symbolically in the room - there emerges the possibility of a moral third (Benjamin, 2009), “the courage for the non-judgmental awareness that honestly recognises moments of dissociation, misattunement, defensiveness” (p. 441). Avoidance and disavowal work against ethical practice, and against the development of such a third.

Conclusion

Writing about race is hard. I am acutely aware of this as I have written this paper, cognisant of the fact that as I interrogate my racialised self and how that impacts on my capacity as a clinician, I am surfacing the contents of my normative unconscious and the potential for enactment which I take into the clinical space. As a consequence, I have been sensitive to the fact that once in the public domain, just as Richards’ paper did for her, this writing renders me vulnerable to the scrutiny of my community in a very intimate way. But it is through the symbolic process of writing and speaking that we have the greatest chance of converting previously unknowable parts of self into the known, in the service of integration, and, consequently, of increased integrity in the practice of our craft.

CHAPTER 7

Paper 4: Preface

Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives, was launched in 1991 by Stephen Mitchell, the founding voice in the relational psychoanalytic tradition. Mitchell believed fundamentally in the power of conversation to shift theory and practice, advocating for a psychoanalytic framework which encouraged and facilitated conversations amongst colleagues who were committed to a relational way of thinking and working (Harris, 2011). The journal continues to provide such a platform, as it did for the conversations which evolved around my paper, *The problem of thinking in black and white*. In this chapter I present the paper written in response to the comments made by Gill Straker, Neil Altman and Melanie Suchet (see Appendix 3) in which they challenge me to think further about my myself as a white clinician and about the clinical work itself. This paper continues the increasingly personal trajectory of the thesis as a whole as I deepen reflexivity in considering what it means to inhabit a colonised mind, and what possibilities there are for a decolonial shift, both for myself personally and also for psychoanalytic practice in South Africa.

It is in this paper that I first engage with intention the concept of decoloniality, acknowledging its increasing relevance in 2010's South Africa and the necessity to consider its influence on South African psychoanalytic thinking. I continue this strand of enquiry in the Discussion chapter which follows, drawing in particular on the theorising offered by Swartz (2018) as she reckons with the decolonial turn. In this paper I refine too my adherence to a relational perspective, engaging deeper with an understanding of thirdness, drawing in particular on Gerson's (2004) distillation of three portals to thirdness – the developmental, cultural and relational - to structure my response. Again, the timing of this paper is relevant. Whilst I have chosen to locate it at the end of the thesis as a way of signalling the deepening and ongoing reflexivity of this project, having written it in the early stage of my research, along with *The problem of thinking*, meant that a personal enquiry had been opened, an engagement with my own self-jeopardy, equipping me to participate much more personally in the thesis as it then unfolded.

Of the core papers in this thesis, *Penetrating subjectivity* aligns most closely with the thesis' autoethnographic stance through which my subjectivity is directly engaged, visibilising the reflexivity which has deepened as the project has progressed. In this paper, too, I claim a voice of advocacy in my suggestion that a decolonial narrative is essential to the continued relevance of psychoanalytic practice in South Africa. I suggest further, that this paper most accurately illustrates the core elements of the relational sensibility which I outlined in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), capturing in essence the key principles which underpin relational thinking, viz. social constructionism, thirdness and intersubjectivity, multiplicity of self, and relationality as political resistance.

The writing of the paper itself is an exercise in relationality, an alive exchange with three other writers. This type of collegial endeavour sits at the centre of the relational turn, and fits with Mitchell's conceptualisation of an analytic sensibility which would foster dialogue and conversation. In the writing of it, I was acutely aware of the multiplicity of selves being brought to the task as I could hear the voices of myself as a middle-aged, white South African woman, who is also a psychoanalytically inclined clinician and researcher, and a known colleague to the respondents. Similarly, I could hear the multiplicity of selves present for each of the respondents; Melanie Suchet as a white, Jewish, ex-pat South African woman and relational psychoanalyst; Gill Straker as friend and colleague, ex-pat, white South African woman and psychotherapist; and Neil Altman as white, Jewish American, relational psychoanalyst. For each of us, our various aspects of self, socio-culturally moulded and contextualised, are interwoven in the exchange, and reflected in my response. The writing of this paper has also been an exercise in risk, in challenging denial, and exposing vulnerability, all of which are necessary in order to further the broader aim of thinking about race in a racialised world. In many ways I consider this paper to be incomplete, or, in the language I have been using throughout the thesis, it is an example of irresolution as it surfaces the many conversations which I have started to have through this research endeavour, but which have not been, cannot be, completed. I consider this chapter to be a springboard for further self-reflection, for further conversations, to be carried forward beyond this thesis.

Penetrating subjectivity: Response to commentaries

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Abstract

In response to the commentaries by Altman, Straker and Suchet, the author considers the ways in which thirdness – in various manifestations - has aided in the continuing process of thinking about race. She responds to Straker's invitation to interrogate further what it means to write from within and without a context, considering some of the defensive strategies which manifest when writing about race from a position of whiteness. Following Suchet's lead, the paper looks too at the notion of the decolonisation of the mind and how this is a project which unfolds in parallel with the decolonial moment being witnessed in broader socio-economic contexts. In response to Altman's commentary on the clinical aspects of the paper, the author engages with what it means to enter more fully into a process of mutual recognition when working in cross-racial dyads, and considers, finally, the question of far she is able, as a white clinician and writer, to jeopardise the self in the process of unsettling whiteness.

Keywords: thirdness, decolonisation, dissociation, whiteness

An experience in relationality

In her response to my paper, Suchet remarks that, “if we cannot allow the other to penetrate us, to cross borders, to psychically be known and recognised, there is no possibility of subjectivity”. This comment aptly encapsulates the experience I have had through the process of crafting my paper, *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White*. Initially an academic exercise, fuelled by a curiosity I had about the mechanics of race within the clinical setting, writing the paper has become a personal journey of introspection and, indeed, of working towards the reclamation of a colonised mind. In submitting a paper to Psychoanalytic Dialogues, I submitted also to the peer review process which invited me to interrogate, ever more deeply, the workings of my own mind in response to the cross-racial work I was presenting. The dialogue with other minds which began through the review process, and which continues in this discussion has felt to me to be a puncturing of the solipsistic enquiry in which I was initially engaged, and has given me an experience of true relational engagement and inter-penetration – within myself, with my paper and its subjects, with my reviewers and discussants; an experience challenging and growthful, and deeply rewarding. All three authors of the commentaries have been participants in some way in the development of the paper, and their appearance in reality as my discussants feels like the materialisation of unspoken conversations I have been having with them, all along. Neil Altman’s writings in the arena of race are seminal, and particularly his *Black and white thinking: a psychoanalyst reconsiders race* (2000), laid the foundation for honest self-scrutiny and informed my early thinking and exploration. Similarly, Melanie Suchet’s wide library of writing has challenged me to think further and deeper, to unravel my own whiteness (Suchet, 2007), and has afforded me the opportunity to experience vicariously what it means to be an *ex-pat*, how it might feel to be of South African mind, living in another context, thinking about one’s racial identity and place. Closest to home is the response of Gill Straker, my friend and highly respected colleague whose writing has invited me most urgently to explore what it means to write from within and from without of the South African context, and to interrogate feelings I have towards those close to me who have chosen, for many complex and varied reasons, to leave “the trenches”. As Suchet (2004) commented, Straker’s “incisive gaze” does not allow much to go unnoticed, and in her response to my paper, and in our personal conversations, she confronts me painfully with my own ambivalence in my positioning of her as an outsider.

Whilst Altman has engaged relationally with my paper as a psychoanalyst deeply involved with the dynamics of race and marginality, able to resonate with and comment on my process, so Suchet and especially Straker, respond not only to the paper but also to themselves as whites – both implicated in the process of Apartheid - and to myself as a known person. This degree of relational engagement is what makes the invitation to respond so meaningful, but also challenging, and I have had to mull for many hours on the meaning of their words and on what they evoke in me. I am deeply appreciative of the thought and reflectiveness offered by all three, and of the invitation to engage further and deeper in this process of decolonising a mind, and testing the limits of my own capacity for self-reflection in the service of expanding my potential as a thinking clinician.

Thinking through thirdness

In the paper under discussion, I describe what I consider to be the problem of thinking which presents itself when encountering race. Through the writing of the paper and the processing of these commentaries, it has been evident to me that the essential aid to thinking is provided by various experiences of thirdness, or by access to a third position (Britton, cited in Swartz, 2007). Gerson (2004) distills the concept of thirdness into three broad types: the cultural third refers to a context apart from the dyad which envelopes and shapes an interaction, such as theory, or a supervisory context; the relational third emerges from the interaction between subjects, most capably described by Ogden (1994) as the analytic third; the developmental third refers to the achievement of an internal reflexivity, which could also be called reflective function, or mentalisation. All aspects of thirdness describe a quality of mental space in which thinking – in Bion’s terms – can occur. I have found it useful to refer to different types of thirdness in my response to my discussants.

In her commentary, Straker highlights my use of and reliance on the cultural third of theory to provide a secure base from which to examine and make sense of clinical material. In her response she supports the use of theory as “anchor points” in deciphering clinical material and gives further elucidation of two of the core concepts I draw on, namely the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) and the normative unconscious (Layton, 2006), comparing these with Pizer’s (2003) notion of the K(not). In doing so Straker strengthens the case for theory as aid

to thinking. Whilst she acknowledges the theoretical strength of my paper, and further validates the use of theory in saying that “the integration of theory into our self-states also helps us to prevent sliding into irresolvable enactments and impasses”, Straker also suggests that I use theory defensively, as a refuge from the more visceral experiences that race evokes, and as a way of distancing myself from the very engagement which is intrinsic to relational psychotherapy. This is an observation which I take to heart, recognising how tempting it is for me to resort to theory as a shield against the visceral nature of subjective engagement, obscuring my own positionality in relation to the issue at hand. Whilst I own this, I would like to suggest that finding a careful balance is essential: theory can always be used defensively, to conceal personal investment, and it is also a conduit to the thirdness which is essential to our work. But writing from a theoretical standpoint when addressing issues of identity such as race is also always a critically important task in attempting to symbolise the enigmatic, to address the unknown or unknowable. I have attempted to straddle this balance in my paper, remaining faithful to the theoretical lens which is an indispensable aid to thinking.

Examining further my use of theory, Straker posits that my conscientious explication of the relevant theory may also act in regulating the anxiety which accompanies writing about race in the public domain. I would agree with her on this point. Whilst I am not sure that I was initially quite so conscious to it, I am aware that my emphasis on the theoretical infrastructure of the paper made me feel safer in exposing my clinical work to the gaze of the international academic world, but, more importantly, I trusted that the rigor of my theory would provide me with supporting pillars when facing the scrutiny of my local professional community. In interrogating my statement that writing for an international audience is easier than for a local one, Straker unpacks some of her experience of writing and speaking about race, in both South Africa and Australia. She suggests that one factor may be the fear of offending or hurting those to whom we are attached within our home context, or, indeed of opening ourselves up to being seen as racist. She highlights the very real potential for misrecognition. On this I concur. I would say further that my reticence to expose myself to my peers is related also, and most crucially to the prevailing climate in South Africa where we face a highly charged racial moment in which the polarisation of society along racial lines is more pronounced than ever before; this is not dissimilar to what we are seeing elsewhere in the

world, including in the United States. In this, I am aware of how easy it is to slide into a paranoid-schizoid state of mind where thirdness is lost, and there emerges an inability to think clearly beyond the need to self-protect within identity-defined cocoons, to return to the safety of the enclaves of love and hate which inform our normative unconscious (Layton, 2006). In my experience, clinically and within my professional community, there is a very real tension between engaging openly and honestly with issues of racial identity and dynamics, and retreating into the haven provided by analytic neutrality, and there is the risk of alienating and being alienated by peers for whom remaining colour-blind, or colour-avoidant is the safest course of action. I have learnt within my context when it is safe to speak, and when it is safer to remain silent and certainly when I first penned the article under discussion I felt very anxious about the exposure which much of what I was writing would bring. That said, however, part of what has emerged in this process of writing and review has been a deepening of my self-knowledge, a growing awareness of my own dissociation in relation to race and identity, and as a consequence I have found a stronger and braver voice within my own community. I am now, far more than at the beginning of my process of writing, able to take a stand and feel confident in addressing the issues which I strongly believe need to be addressed within my professional community. As I write this I am aware that I am describing the expansion of my own mental awareness, of the developmental third: a third position in which “we can also imagine being observed. This provides us with a capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves” (Britton, cited in Swartz, 2007, p. 363).

I would like to speak further to the differences which I assume between writing from within and without, responding to Straker’s invitation to do so. It is my assumption that there is an experience of thirdness – a vantage point external to the engagement – which is gained when writing about subjective engagement with a context from outside of it, as both Straker (2004) and Suchet (2007) have done. I have been struck in the past by the fact that Alan Paton first conceptualised his iconic book, *Cry the Beloved Country*, whilst travelling in Norway, and he wrote much of it whilst abroad. I have wondered whether the distance, which existed between him and the fraught context of the book, enabled his thinking and creativity. Similarly I have wondered about the enabling experience of living abroad in being able to think about the

context of race and related dynamics at play within South Africa, whether historically or currently, as well as one's subjectivity in relation to it. In her response, Straker questions whether, as an ex-pat, she is able to engage in the transgressive analysis which Burkhalter (2015) describes as being possible when holding an exilic position. I would venture to say that when writing about race from abroad, Straker is free from the burden of context and as such is not as vulnerable to the very real consequences of speaking out and of having a voice in a situation where who has the right to a voice is such contested domain. As such she is able to express her own subjectivity and position in a much less self-conscious way, and in an arena which is less scrutinising, lending her a degree of potency which I struggle to own on home soil. Speaking again to Straker's comment about attachment, I would suggest that the attachment at risk is not only to the people with whom we live, but also to the place in which we live. Writing about race and racism from the country in which I live, and on which I am entirely dependent, renders me especially vulnerable to the consequences of what I write, impacting on the level of risk I take in speaking and writing. Holding a duality of place, as Straker does, I would suggest increases her transgressive possibilities, giving her license to expression unavailable to me. Holding such duality also means, however, that she must also surely have to grapple with and juggle the peculiarities of two places; a challenge unfamiliar to me. I want to say further, that this transgressive position must also be one of precarity and vulnerability, particularly for someone like Straker who, unlike many other South African emigrants, chooses to return to her home country on a regular basis. In doing so she is continuously transversing the membrane, re-entering the fray, and because of a rapidly shifting and increasingly fractured socio-political context, the South Africa she returns to is never the one she left. Each time she returns there is a relearning and a catching-up with context, and a reminder of the exilic nature of consciousness, "beset with half involvements and detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or secret outcast on another" (Said, 1993 in Burkhalter, 2015, p. 291). In my subjective engagement with Straker's response, it is distressing for me to read that she experienced my positioning of her as an ex-pat as deeply painful, and I am aware perhaps of how able I was, through my writing, to engage her in a conversation which I would not easily have had otherwise. I am appreciative of the opportunity we had, post her reading of my paper, to talk over coffee about our positioning in relation to one other, as insider and outsider, and to work through that painful rupture, allowing for repair.

In reading Suchet's response to my paper I am taken directly into the heart of another encounter with thirdness as her voice, speaking from a third position, narrates the process of what she describes as the "reclamation of (my) formerly colonised mind". In her response she activates both the cultural third as she speaks with a supervisory voice, and the relational third, in meeting me as a fellow traveller. I found her analysis to be incisive and very moving, and I appreciate the words she found to describe the "complex racialised web" in which I find myself as a white person who has come to realise, quite resoundingly, that whiteness is not invisible. On the contrary, as Suchet describes, the movement from dissociation to association calls on me 'to investigate how the white self is constructed through the black other' and the results of this investigation call me to face myself, and the associated shame. Such an experience of shame was initiated, as Suchet accurately comments, by my reflection on my colleague, Carol Richards' (2010) work with a white patient of hers. Suchet suggests that in Richards' perception of her patient, whiteness was reflected back to me and rendered visible. If I return to the moment of reading Richards' paper, and feeling perturbed by it, it was not my identification with her patient that faced me with my own racedness, but rather it was the fact that I was called to reconfigure my relationship with Richards herself, and to colour it in black and white. She and I had previously worked together for some time at a psychiatric hospital, and in retrospect it was clear to me that whilst I had been conscious to her racial identity, I had not considered mine in relation to hers. Neither had I given any thought to what her history in our shared country might have been like. I realised, quite indisputably, that I had been existing in a dissociated state. In reading her paper in which she details painfully the Apartheid-thwarted path she had travelled to qualify as a clinician, quite instantly, I became raced. I saw my whiteness in relation to her, through her eyes, and felt shamed when thinking about the unconscious way in which I had worked alongside her. I also became initiated into the experience of racial melancholia, described by Straker (2004) both as a loss of the ideal of whiteness, and the recognition of one's indisputable beneficiary status, as a white person. It is difficult to step back from such self-knowledge and to retrieve, as Suchet describes, "the safety that dissociation provides". The movement from dissociation to association, however, is never an achieved position, just as movement from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position is never a job done. Again, as Suchet comments, colonial relations are not static and I am all too aware of the ever-present invitation to retreat into not

thinking, into the habit-ridden paths created by the normative unconscious – to return to a state of being, defined by coloniality.

I would like to pause here to consider the complexity of the constructs, colonisation and decolonisation, or decoloniality, and to acknowledge the broad body of writing which is dedicated to unpacking the meaning of these concepts as they are understood in contemporary thinking. I draw specifically on the work of Maldonado-Torres (2007) who asserts that coloniality is a process within society which outlasts colonialism. It is seen in long standing patterns of power that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, and which becomes internalised as a way of being in the world, impacting on, *inter alia*, self-image and aspirations of the self. This understanding of coloniality resonates with me, personally, and speaks also to the heart of the project at work in South Africa at present as we grapple with what it means to emerge from a colonial state of being. Decolonisation, then, is a confrontation with the racial, gender and sexual hierarchies that strengthen colonisation, standing in opposition to the coloniality of power, knowledge and being. The decolonial turn is about making visible the invisible, and analysing the mechanisms that produce invisibility or distorted visibility. It is this process of personal decolonisation with which I engage in my paper, and which has unfolded as part of this process of writing, thinking and discussing. As Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) reminds us; “we breathe coloniality all the time, everyday”, and so this project is one which calls for constant vigilance and self-appraisal, and for a recognition of the potency of the colonial as it reasserts itself in the every day.

In reading and assimilating Suchet’s commentary I felt recognised by one who knows, first-hand, that of which she writes; by one who is deeply familiar with the processes I describe above. It was this sense of being known in an experience which is shared which allowed me to receive, undefensively, her analysis not only of my work, but also of my personal process. In her response, Suchet is inviting me to surrender more deeply to race, to the infinite project of decolonisation, and to the intersubjective penetration of the raced other. In her words:

I know I can no longer be in a place where there is no white or black. There is no possibility of transcending race. No space in which we can be beyond race. The work lies in a deep

acceptance of all the parts of the self and the conflicts that accompany me. I am the coloniser and the colonised, the oppressor and the oppressed, the racist and the antiracist. In accepting this I can occupy a different space with a different awareness and openness to how race is lived and experienced, intrapsychically and interpersonally (Suchet, 2007, p. 883).

Suchet commented on the case study of Denesh, saying that what was unable to happen in that “failed” therapy was the penetration necessary for intersubjectivity to occur, and for work to be done. Her suggestion that Denesh may have experienced in me a lack of receptivity to his attempts at penetration, and to his need to be potent, feels apposite. In contrast, in the case study of Thabi there was an experience of permeability which came with an acknowledgement between us of the racialised roles which Thabi and I were playing in relation to one another. Suchet’s suggestion that part of Thabi’s dilemma is the position he is placed in by his white colleagues in being asked to bear witness to their shame and guilt as a way of assuaging this, feels accurate. Her discussion then of racism as an attempt to abject the disavowed parts of self in order to locate them within the raced other, feels correct. I also read this as a reminder of how easy it is, as Hook (2005) has written elsewhere, to claim non-racism as a defence against deeply held racist thoughts and feelings. Of this I am acutely aware as I ponder whether, in my therapy with Thabi and others, I seek still to be that “different kind of white”, slightly darkened to move me closer to the black subject, but without losing whiteness completely. It is this tension named too by Straker in her paper in which she acknowledges her desire to hold on to the privilege of whiteness, whilst also “begging to be black”.

The “entangled identities”, as Suchet describes them, of black and white, are the subject too of Altman’s commentary. In his reflection on the paper in which he focuses on the clinical vignettes, he deepens the analysis of what may be happening between myself and Thabi, bringing into focus Thabi’s witnessing of my process as a white therapist, specifically my engagement in a ‘shame-drenched process of awakening to the reality of apartheid in his life’. I found Altman’s thoughts, delivered from a safe harbour and therefore firmly located within cultural thirdness, to be particularly startling, perturbing and useful. His commentary illuminates the essence of relational psychoanalytic thinking. I was struck by his capacity to be separate enough from my subjectivity as white therapist to incisively intuit Thabi’s

internal process, and to map this onto my own. His suggestion that Thabi is strongly attuned to me and is aware of how self-conscious I am of my racial identity and history in relation to his, feels like an unthought known (Bollas, 1987); knowledge I had not allowed into conscious awareness as it is, indeed, deeply perturbing. Altman acknowledges just how challenging it is for us, as therapists, to explicitly acknowledge to our patients our own process of dawning awareness and our experience of feeling overwhelmed or incompetent. Indeed there is a powerful injunction to, as he says, be ahead of our patients in processing anxiety-laden material. In thinking through Altman's analysis, my inability to tune into Thabi's empathic position speaks again to the invisibility of whiteness, but I wonder too whether it is related to a difficulty I might have in acknowledging my vulnerability as a white person, which would mean re-owning a previously split-off, or abjected part of myself, more easily identified in my black patient. Altman's invitation to me to see myself through Thabi's eyes, aligns with Suchet's comment about dissociated shame, and how this can only be faced when seen through the eyes of the raced other. And, indeed, it begs the question, "who am I to myself when in my white self state?" (Young, cited in Suchet, 2017). And, further, can I tolerate the space of that which I see when, standing in a third position, I "imagine myself being observed". As Suchet accurately articulates, the position of "unsettled whiteness" which results from moving away from the alienation of self which so often characterises South African identity, is one beset by anxieties.

Jeopardising the self

A consistent question, which runs through all three commentaries, relates to the degree to which I, as a white therapist, am willing or able to jeopardise myself. Had I been more consciously attuned to Thabi's empathic engagement with me, would I have interpreted this to him, inviting the intimacy which emerges from a state of mutual recognition where the identity-defined obstacles to knowing one another fall away, and we recognise one another as separate, but like subjects (Benjamin, 2004). If I consider White's (cited in Suchet, 2017) analysis of hatred and its centrality in racism, am I able to find within myself the "most odious hate and the most humiliating self-abasement", and can I tempt engaging the racist and hateful parts of myself without disengaging and returning to dissociation? Straker crystallises these questions in her comment that I refer a great deal to dissociation and that

“both in her paper and in her consulting room, Esprey speaks less to more conscious processes such as self-censorship when race is in mind”. Straker refers to Leary’s (1997) paper in which Leary describes the “forbidden talk” of self-disclosure in a cross-racial analysis, and how “the resultant open discussion about race and racial difference permitted the patient to gain access to the reality of me as a racially distinct subject with vulnerabilities of my own” (Leary, 1997, p. 186). Straker asserts that this tendency to rely heavily on dissociation versus conscious self-censorship is a characteristic of relational writing in the field of race, and she wonders whether our self-censorship is in the interests of the patient or whether it represents a “coasting in the countertransference” (Hoffman, cited in Straker, 2016). In thinking about this, I wonder further whether an analysis of the literature would show that such self-censorship is characteristic of white writers in the field, considering that Leary is a black psychoanalyst. Speaking from my own position as a white clinician, I concede that Straker’s comment finds resonance in me when I consider how, at times both in practice and when thinking about patients, I shy away from racially valenced thoughts or feelings which are uncomfortable to articulate, even to myself. Certainly in my response to the commentaries I have endeavoured, as did Straker, not to coast in the counter transference, and I take Straker’s implicit challenge into my ongoing process of self awareness.

Concluding thoughts

Above all, the discussions emerging from my paper highlight for me the decolonial project which remains a work in progress, one which is not limited to the consulting room. In true relational style it is one which extends beyond the confines of clinical practice into my daily life in a country struggling at its core with the historical and current dynamics which revolve around race. These discussions also highlight for me the limits of knowledge; as a clinician they serve to remind me of the invaluable benefit of exposing my work and thinking to the minds of others.

In saying this I am also acutely aware of the fact that the discussion at hand is one which is being engaged in by four white therapists essentially talking about whiteness; I cannot help but wonder how this discussion would have been shaped differently – as it would have been – had the discussants been black. I am also curious about how the discussion will be read by

black therapists, and about the blind spots which are inevitable when whiteness is at the centre. My concluding comment is a reflexive one, about how easy, as a white person, it is to re-centre whiteness. I have been reminded time and again in my multi-racial race study group of how, as Gadamer suggests, whilst I can understand the other's point, I can never understand their point of view. And, as Krog (2009) concedes, no matter how many stories I hear, or conversations I have, I can never know what it is to be black. And so, in order for this project to continue I must remain open to multiple perspectives and voices, and I should expect to have my whiteness unsettled further.

Post-script

Having noted the dominance of whiteness in this discussion, I would like to acknowledge the presence of a very strong black voice, that of my research supervisor, Prof Garth Stevens. The cross-racial nature of our supervisory relationship is relevant: Prof Stevens has consistently held up a mirror, margined by his blackness, reflecting back my whiteness and conscientising me to the way in which it pervasively shapes my subjectivity, and how, in turn, it colours my thinking and writing. In my relationship with him I have seen the growth of a relational third where, between us, a space of engagement has opened up, allowing for his voice to become integrally woven into my process of thinking and writing. His thoughtfully and consistently held position of thirdness throughout this project is something for which I am deeply grateful.

CHAPTER 8

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The primary impetus for this research emerged, ten years ago, from a curiosity about the apparent absence of race as a subject of consideration in mainstream psychoanalytic thinking and writing. Alongside this curiosity sat a suspicion that the psychoanalytic scotomisation of race is a consequence not simply of an internalist theoretical purity which guides praxis, but that there is something essentially dangerous about race which prompts an avoidance of thinking about and working with it. Based on an informing assumption that there cannot be a therapeutic relationship free of race, that this indelible aspect of identity sits as an alive presence within every encounter, the over-arching objective of this thesis has been to provoke thinking about race as it pertains to ourselves, as clinicians, and as members of a psychoanalytic community. It has sought to cast light on the dynamic of race as it plays out relationally in psychoanalytic thinking, practice and within the profession more broadly. In particular, the enquiry has focused on the person of the therapist and on how her racialised identity and history inevitably meets that of her patient, creating a performance of race which, if unconsidered, has the capacity to hijack thinking, jeopardising the therapeutic task.

The thesis has emphasised from the outset the relevance of context when considering race, contending that race cannot be written about or considered without holding in mind the particular socio-historical milieu from which it emerges. To write about race in The United States, for example, is vastly different to the way in which it is written about in Brazil, or The United Kingdom or, indeed South Africa. Each of these contexts carries its own history and currency, and the ways in which race-politics shape society, and therefore the therapeutic endeavour, is context-specific. As such, whilst the scope of the enquiry has extended beyond the specific context in which I live and work, looking too at the global psychoanalytic arena, the focal point to which the thesis consistently returns is the South African context. The way in which the idiosyncratic and ever-shifting racial dynamic in our country insinuates itself into every aspect of our social and professional lives has been alive throughout. Inhabiting the position of a social third (Altman, 2009), it has nuanced too the ways in which I have

engaged with the research, and it has shaped the progression and outcomes of this decade of enquiry.

Intrinsic to the research has been an intentional reflexive engagement; a constant imperative to consider – as much as is consciously possible - the inflected lens created by my own positionality as a white South African woman, born into Apartheid's zenith, and the ways in which this has biased and influenced my listening, reading and writing, creating inevitable defensive blind spots, and consequent limitations to my research efficacy. Positioning the researcher in this way has allowed me to recognise the shifts in my own subjectivity which have unfolded over time. This research began as a curiosity *about* race, as if it was something which existed outside of me; I stood as a separate observer, elevated by the invisibility of my whiteness, seeking to make sense of race and, in particular, of the racial other. It was from this lofty height too that I initiated the Race in Psychotherapy group which is the focus of Chapter 5. As described in this paper, the group quickly shifted from being *about* race to *being raced* as race was performed between and within us.

This movement from observer to participant describes too my involvement in this thesis as I have become racialised to myself, increasingly self-conscious as I grapple with the recognition of my own colour-edness and the beneficiary and perpetrator status which accompanies this. This process has been part of the narrative which links the different papers; it is woven into the group process described in Chapter 5; it is described in the clinical vignettes presented in Chapter 6, when considering my therapeutic relationships with Denesh and Thabi, and it is present in the self-scrutiny which is at the centre of Chapter 7 in which I engage the possibility of decolonising a previously colonised mind. This shift from objectivity to subjectivity is mirrored too in the movement from Chapter 4 through to Chapter 7; the process of the thesis itself is circular, beginning with the suggestion that to engage race in the therapeutic exchange risks the self of the therapist as she is compelled then to confront her own racially contoured self. The circle is completed in the final paper which reflexively engages the researcher in her own process of self-jeopardy. As much as I endeavoured to predict the trajectory of the project when I presented my initial proposal, the shifting of the researcher's objectivity to subjectivity, and the concomitant deepening awareness of my own raced self, was something I did not foresee; it has been an organic process, unfolding and

evolving in concert with the maturation of the thesis. As a consequence, the process, content and outcome of this research cannot be separated from the researcher herself. Ours is a relationship of reciprocal influence.

This shifting relationality is again mirrored in the changeable South African socio-political landscape as racial politics have become increasingly polarised and performed in the social milieu and there is no longer any hint of the rainbow nation which came together for the 2010 soccer World Cup. This coming-of-age of a nation has prompted too the conscientisation of the South African psychoanalytic professional environment as issues of race have punctured the analytic bubble, forcing the profession into a reckoning around race and transformation. Rather than being static, this research has ridden and responded to the tides of the social third which surrounds it.

In this chapter, I select for discussion some of the dominant themes which have emerged through the reading and writing of the research. I would like to interrogate, in particular, three themes which have emerged consistently through the core papers of this thesis. The first describes a dynamic tension between facing into and engaging with race and its impact on the self, on practice and on theory, and a subsequent turning away from this engagement. I understand this as a tension between a willingness and desire to know, and the counter-tension to not know, or the pull to ignorance or dissociation when knowledge becomes too threatening or, indeed, wearying. In the section below I trace this dynamic tension as it emerges in the core papers. The second theme, which expands on the first, describes the cost of engaging with race, the potential implications for the self of knowing and thinking about race, and in particular, of facing into the alienation-of-self which race can potentially provoke. I focus specifically on the trauma and racial melancholia which are potentially activated when the self is confronted with the implications of her racedness. I suggest that it is this threat to the self which fuels the retreat from curiosity and knowledge, into a place of not-knowing. The third theme identifies the disruption of the canon as central to the objectives of this doctoral study, proposing a refreshed (and ultimately optimistic) outlook for the contemporary psychoanalytic project.

A triad of themes

An irresolvable tension: Looking towards, and away from, race

An insistent theme which has emerged throughout this study has been a dynamic which seems to exist between the impulse to engage around race and its impact on the self, on theory and on practice, and the counter-impulse to retreat from knowledge, to deny the relevance of race, to shut down on thinking.

In Chapter 4, this dynamic is described in the intermittent surfacing and disappearance of race as a subject of mainstream analytic enquiry, without a consistent focus being sustained. This is reminiscent of the “episodic amnesia” described by Judith Herman (1992) in reference to the study of trauma which had a history of appearance and disappearance throughout the 20th century, because “to study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability... and with the capacity for evil in human nature (1992, p. 7). Similarly, I suggest that engaging with race risks a reckoning with self and society as implicated in the layers of trauma which are concomitant with race and its intersectional impact, resulting in the inconsistent and defensive attention given race over the last century.

Chapter 5 describes the iterative cycle between rupture and repair which characterises the group’s vicissitudes; as recognition of one another becomes possible, so fresh anxieties surface and push the group anew into rupture and complementarity, needing to rediscover mutuality. And so the group moves rhythmically from a position of curiosity which creates openness to new knowledge, and concomitant anxiety, consequently prompting a return to ignorance couched in a denial of relationality (Steyn 2012), until a thinking space can be retrieved and the cycle perpetuated.

The clinical vignette which describes the relationship with Denesh in Chapter 6, shows the ways in which the presence of a shared toxic social discourse can interrupt the capacity to think, derailing the therapeutic task and pulling the encounter into a space of complementarity where difference cannot be metabolised and conflict cannot be mediated or observed (Benjamin, 2004). In this particular vignette, however, the dynamic is static and thinking cannot be achieved, resulting in the truncation of the relationship. In the example of

Thabi, the pull to a non-thinking space remains a constant possibility when the anxiety associated with thinking about one another as like subjects becomes overwhelming; the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) lies in wait, ever ready to be used in the service and comfort of ignorance. In contrast to Denesh, however, in this vignette the retrieval of a thinking space is possible when the therapist draws capacity from experiences of thirdness which aid reflection and thinking. This makes it possible for the relationship to develop rather than stagnate.

This dynamic is one I recognise too in the ebb and flow of my own relationship to an engagement with race, as this research has progressed and as my own grappling with race in relation to myself, my work and profession has deepened. At times I feel capable of confidently holding steady and moving forward as I face into my racedness, the implications for my self, my work, my life, and I am able to deepen my thinking and understanding. At other times I find myself unable to engage, I feel saturated, weary, insecure, and alienated from my capacity to think, alienated from myself.

In considering ways to understand and conceptualise this recursive dynamic, I turn to Bion, whose theorising has informed my reading of the research and the conclusions I draw about the effect that race has on our capacity to think and to provide the therapeutic containment which is intrinsic to our craft. As described in Chapter 6, the ability to think about and contain our patients are crucial clinical tasks which underscore therapeutic work and it is these capacities which, I argue, are threatened when race enters the room, bringing with it moments of mindlessness and non-thinking. At these times, the clinician's access to an experience of reverie – essential to understanding and verbalising her and her patient's subjectivity – is compromised, reducing the therapeutic moment to a swirl of unmetabolised affect. In these moments, access to the analytic third (Ogden, 1999) – a space in which a container functions – is not possible. In each of the core papers I suggest that in deliberately engaging our raced selves and deepening a sense of self-consciousness around the ways in which we inhabit and enact race, we reduce the potency of the anti-analytic third and expand our capacity for thinking. I assert too, however, that we can never be fully conscientised away from, or immune to the grip of the repetitions of our normative unconscious. As a consequence, therefore, just as we gain ground in our thinking about ourselves and the other,

so too do we activate new anxieties which propel a return to a state of non-thinking; a paranoid-schizoid state of mind.

This cycle of the finding and losing of our capacity to think, this curiosity-fuelled push for knowledge and the counter-retreat to the harbour of ignorance, is a theme which runs through the research and which, I suggest, aligns with Bion's elucidation of the interplay between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. It is in the depressive position that whole knowledge of self and other is possible, where the capacity to think is optimal. It is not however, a position of permanence; it is this deepening knowledge that has the potential to provoke fresh anxieties, prompting regression to a primitive state of mind typical of the paranoid-schizoid position, where knowledge cannot be borne. It is this oscillating tension between states of mind, between thinking and not-thinking, between rupture and repair, between facing into, and away from, which presents as a consistent seam throughout this thesis. It is a tension which describes the way in which race is treated, considered and performed in psychoanalytic thinking and practice, both globally and locally. It is a tension which, I suggest, will present as an inevitable and therefore adhesive accompaniment to any enquiry into race because of the way in which race implicates the self and society, in what Holmes (2016) describes as cultural trauma.

It is evident in the reading of the core chapters, that rather than being a stuck and stagnant relationship between turning towards, and then away from - which would be the case if new found knowledge, bringing with it anxiety and conflict, resulted in a reversal and return to a previous point of not knowing (as was the case with Denesh) - there is the *potential* for movement forward with every iteration of the underlying dynamic. This thesis, then, takes an optimistic view in relation to psychoanalysis and race. This optimism is drawn from the particular way in which Bion conceptualises the relationship between the paranoid schizoid and the depressive positions (Steiner, 1992) which he described as "cooperative binary opposition" (Grotstein, 2007). Rather than seeing this relationship as conflictual, linear and hierarchical and therefore uni-dimensional, Bion considered these positions to be allied, allowing for an upward trajectory as the anxieties which fuel the oscillation become more complex and sophisticated. The idea that an iterative oscillation between states of mind is not only inevitable but also possibly ideal, is seconded by Ogden (1989) in his renewal of Klein's

(paranoid-schizoid and depressive position) developmental theory. Ogden (1989) argues that Klein's conceptualisation is too linear and sequential. Like Bion, he suggests that all components of mental experience play an enduringly vital role, and that it is the fundamental dialectic between them which is crucial to growth:

The paranoid-schizoid mode and the depressive mode serve as essential negating and preserving contexts for one another. The depressive mode is one of integration, resolution, and containment, and if unopposed, leads to certainty, stagnation, closure, arrogance, and deadness. The paranoid-schizoid mode provides the necessary splitting of linkages and opening up of the closures of the depressive position thus re-establishing the possibility of fresh linkages and fresh thoughts. The integrative thrust of the depressive mode in turn provides the necessary antithesis for the paranoid-schizoid mode in limiting the chaos generated by the fragmentation of thought, the discontinuity of experience, and the splitting of self and object (Ogden, 1989, p. 29).

Integral to this evolving, yet oscillating dynamic is an experience of thirdness; a mental state in which a third position has been surrendered to. It is a state of mind in which thinking is possible. The concept of thirdness, of a containing space which facilitates the "capacity for seeing ourselves in interaction with others and for entertaining another point of view whilst retaining our own, for reflecting on ourselves whilst being ourselves" (Britton, in Swartz, 2007, p. 363), is integral to this project, sitting as a constant theme in all of the papers. This experience of containment, of thinking in the face of racially-induced anxiety - whether in the room with a patient, or engaging colleagues in a racially fraught space, or trying to conceptualise race through writing, or considering the racialised configurations of one's own mind – is a defining feature of this study. It is a space which is achieved and lost, iteratively, as race is negotiated within and between.

In considering the persistence of the dynamic described, what seems quite clearly apparent is that engaging subjectively with race can never be a benign or unimpactful experience. Engaging with race can deepen a sense of meaning, can be rewarding in its confrontation of internal tension and conflict, and can facilitate a more integrated way of being in the world, but intrinsic to race too is its potential to perturb, to challenge, to alienate, to prompt an

ongoing and uncomfortable, and at times even dangerous, experience of self-in-the-world. It is this recognition of the irresolvability - the dilemma - of race which prompted us, in Chapter 4, to advocate for an acceptance of incomprehension, to comment on the infinite elusiveness of knowability, an acceptance “that a full and complete knowing of self and other may not be entirely possible (Stevens, 2018, p. 276)”. An acceptance of the inevitable, iterative tension between knowing and not-knowing, in the face of race.

The self in jeopardy: The undertow of trauma and racial melancholia

What I have described above is the potential for the self to be placed in jeopardy when the subjectivity of race is encountered. The danger of thinking and knowing about race – of the depressive position – is the pain of insight and the potential to experience a level of trauma which threatens to dismantle the self. This notion of a self in jeopardy describes a core hypothesis which underlies this thesis, and which is outlined in Chapter 4; facing into one’s raced self brings self-recognition that is fundamentally dismantling, forcing a reckoning with the indelible ways in which race has defined and influenced the contours of the internal landscape and ways of being in the world. (It is precisely this traumatic experience of self which I suggest has the potential to provoke such anxiety that the foothold of the depressive position is lost, and there is a defensive grasping for the safety of a more primitive paranoid-schizoid state, a non-thinking space).

Such an experience of self-reckoning is described by Swartz (2018) in a cross-racial therapy which unfolds against the backdrop of broader, racialised, societal unrest in which she is directly involved – and implicated – as a white person. She describes the trauma of “living into an internal world fundamentally rearranged”. She says:

My living through this, being “recognised” as a coloniser, for example, threw me into a tumult of emotion, including shame, anxiety, defensive anger, and fear of impending loss (p. 522).

In describing the trauma of seeing oneself through the eyes of the other, and recognising how discrepant this image is from one’s self-representation, Swartz (2018) finds resonance in

Fanon's reference to a colonised world "blown to smithereens"; an explosion which is both welcomed and dreaded. She is describing too the experience of racial melancholia – an unresolvable grief - defined by Straker (2004), and Eng and Han (2000) as occurring when there comes an acknowledgement of one's status as beneficiary or victim of a racial dividend.

For white South Africans, in particular those who would position themselves as liberal, anti-racists who stood against the racial prescriptions of Apartheid, the cost comes with recognising that in spite of espousing democratic and humanitarian ideals we were, nonetheless, direct beneficiaries of Apartheid, enjoying the spoils which allowed us elevation in status and power at multiple levels. And there is no pathway to ridding oneself of this unearned privilege. It is a recognition of the ways in which the state hailed whites as superior and the impossibility of exempting oneself from this interpellation. The racial melancholia of the (white) beneficiary (Straker, 2004) brings with it an encounter with the self that is potentially jeopardising, bringing with it a complicated process of grief. In Chapter 5, the experiences described by black members of the group suggest that for them too there is an experience of the racial melancholia described by Eng and Han (2000). It is mourning over the unattainability of the ideal of whiteness that signifies privilege and, more importantly, power. It is simultaneously a recognition of the ways in which one's own inherent racial identity and history is betrayed through the pursuit of whiteness, bringing with it a fracturing of the self. It is a living with the double-consciousness articulated by Du Bois (1968) when describing the experience of colonised blacks: that experience of existing always with a duality of self; one emerging from self-definition and the other from an identity imposed by a white world. For both blacks and whites then, a naked reckoning with one's raced self brings with it the possibility of deep and complex grief.

An awakening to the defining influence of race brings too an acknowledgement of how the prescriptions of Apartheid compelled South Africans – black and white – to subscribe to the ignorance contract described by Steyn (2012). Learning what not to know, what not to notice, was essential to what she describes as the *ignoritisation* which sustained and perpetuated racist law and practice. Through the intimate familial "enclaves of love and hate" (Layton, 2006), the policies of the state were interpreted and enforced, maintaining the social order and resulting in an interpellation – the mechanism through which ideology takes hold of the

individual (Guralnik and Simeon, 2010) – of blacks and whites, creating servants to the prevailing social order. I suggest that grappling with (*thinking* about) the ways in which the self has been hailed and defined by the political context of Apartheid (and, indeed, other racist political and social structures worldwide), potentially confronts the self with a deeply melancholic experience as has been articulated in various ways in the core papers of this thesis. It brings with it the potential for monumental personal disruption, as described by Swartz (2018) and others who have documented their confrontation with self. I suggest in parallel, that such an experience of self-recognition, if a thinking space can be achieved, brings with it too the possibility of choice; the choice to continue to acquiesce to race-based interpellation, or to rebuke it.

Crucial to this thesis is the understanding that the social contract prescribed by racist structures is not airtight; indeed the antagonistic politics which have consistently and effectively challenged ignorance - both historically and currently - evidence that a new social order is possible, that the processes of interpellation can be disrupted. I suggest too, in parallel, that the ‘ignorance contract’ which has shadowed the relationship between mainstream psychoanalysis and race can potentially be disrupted. This idea of an evolving psychoanalytic project is the focus of the third theme which has emerged throughout this project.

Disrupting the analytic status quo

Embedded in the objectives of this research is an intention to expand the conversations about race which are being had within the mainstream psychoanalytic milieu and to potentially contribute to a growing disruption of the status quo, provoking continued engagement with a refreshed way of thinking about the role and function of race in our profession and practice.

This objective is introduced in Chapter 4 where the central theoretical tenets which ground mainstream psychoanalysis, and which also sequester it from engaging with broader social factors, are interrogated. In this paper we propose a reciprocal relationship between external social discourses and the development of the psyche, aligning with Layton’s (2004) concept of normative unconscious processes which are compelled to repeat affective, behavioural or

cognitive patterns that validate noxious social norms. Such a proposal challenges the traditional two-person/dyadic model, inviting the inclusion of what Altman (2009) and Cushman (2015) propose as a three-person model which encompasses the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the therapeutic encounter. These factors, then, are not extraneous to the relationship, but rather constitute a present and intersectional dynamic which impacts the intersubjective space.

Such a broadening of the “cultural horizon” (Cushman, 2015) shifts the psychoanalytic project away from the traditional model which positions the therapist as neutral and the patient as subject, including both as subjects engaging in a shared cultural context. This reimagining of psychoanalysis corresponds with what Paulo Freire (in Gaztambido, 2016) describes as a *psychoanalysis for liberation*, a new project which recognises the interweave between theory, clinical praxis, and social justice. Gaztambido (2016) suggests that Freire’s work in education offers insight into the power dynamics which typically describe the psychoanalytic relationship. He implies that the mainstream psychoanalytic framework, which elevates internalist thinking and does not recognise the validity of seeing the patient in context, creates an imbalance of power which has the effect of dehumanising the patient. Without context, who is this subject? To be truly seen as oneself, to be humanised, requires a shift in perspective which includes in its sphere the entirety of the patient, his history and context.

Piercing the analytic bubble propels the psychoanalytic project into the realm of the political. Gaztambido (2016) posits that engaging with the broader context inevitably surfaces social justice issues, locating psychoanalysis within this discourse, and shifting it starkly away from the “apolitical naivety” and the “what has this to do with us?” attitude (Frosh, 2013), which has historically characterised analytic theory and practice. Such a perspective aligns with the position taken in this thesis; I suggest throughout that engagement with the socio-political is urgently appropriate in a contemporary world where the impact of the social and political – represented in movements such as, for example, Fees Must Fall, and Black Lives Matter – is inescapable and that these discourses must be included in the scope of analytic attention. Guralnik (2014), too, is among the voices calling for psychoanalysis to play a role in social activism and change:

In the psychoanalytic encounter we can, perhaps must address the ways history shapes our unconscious and organises our relationship to reality. To engage these collective and historical narratives not only expands our capacity for conscious living, truth, liberation, but places the psychoanalytic project amidst the forces that mend the world an alter rythmns of life (p. 129)

Whilst advocacy and activism have been tacit themes throughout, the current decolonial turn was not yet clearly articulated in the social sphere at the outset of this research, nor was it anticipated as a consideration in the thesis. Ten years later, with decoloniality firmly taking hold in social and academic spaces, I suggest that the proposal of a renewed psychoanalytic project must, by necessity, include a consideration of the decolonial critiques of psychoanalysis, including the assertion that psychoanalysis is predicated on a fundamental coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) and that colonialism is engrained in much psychoanalytic thinking and theory (Frosh, 2013).

Decoloniality is about an untangling of the production of knowledge from a primary Eurocentric epicenter. It is also about the redistribution of power and privilege. But this is far from the sum of it. According to Fanon (in Maldonado-Torres, 2017) the decolonial turn is not singularly about a change in the centre of truth, or in method, rather it constitutes a radical shift in *attitudes*. It is a replacing of one form of consciousness with another (Swartz, 2018). This decolonial attitude embodies Fanon's impassioned call to reject the coloniser's appraisal - "to hell with him, his look can no longer strike fear in me" (in Swartz, 2018). There is the potential to exist beyond double-consciousness and to achieve disalienation *only* if the terms of recognition are set out by the self and are not dependent on the other's parameters or rules of engagement. This thread prompts us to contemplate the centrality of the concept of recognition in relational psychoanalytic thinking and to consider the role recognition plays in a decolonised analytic endeavour.

In his 1952 *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) describes the essential relationality and contingency of recognition as espoused by Hegel:

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognised by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed (p. 168).

And, similarly, the other is awaiting recognition:

Action from one side only would be useless, because what is to happen can only be brought about by means of both. . . . they recognise themselves as mutually recognising each other. (p. 169).

It is this understanding of *mutual recognition* which Benjamin (2004) asserts is at the core of the therapeutic endeavour; an exchange in which subjectivity can only be fully comprehended through a reciprocal process of seeing. Orange (2010), in contest, criticises the emphasis which mutual recognition places on the subjectivity of the therapist, suggesting that such emphasis risks alienating the patient. She proposes the concept of *recognition-as* where a focus on empathic exchange is privileged over mutuality. In both of these understandings of recognition, an experience of self is dependent on the gaze of the other, on being taken in and defined through another's margins. In contrast, Swartz (2018) suggests that *counter-recognition* lies at the core of a decolonial therapeutic enterprise; a suggestion which feels relevant to the conclusion being reached in this thesis.

It is clear from a reading of contemporary relational literature that the debate about what recognition involves is fresh and alive, and certainly unresolved. In considering the relationship, for example, between repair and recognition, particularly in clinical contexts where therapist and patient are separated by racial difference, it would be relevant to consider the workings of empathy, when intersected by privilege. Furthermore, the model of recognition suggested by Benjamin (2004) does tend to prioritise connection rather than separation, and in fact works its way around the usefulness of being able to sustain being a bad object without prematurely reaching for repair. It would be useful to consider, perhaps, that being in a shared paranoid-schizoid position is not always anti-analytic.

In his 1961 *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon elaborates his position in relation to the politics of recognition. He is critical of the idea that freedom for the colonised will be realised when there is recognition from the coloniser, asserting that if recognition is only possible within the framework of the dominant discourse, such an outcome cannot be seen as an achievement of liberation. Rather, echoing Sartre, Fanon sees this as entry into another form of subordination (in Chari, 2004). This position resonates for Swartz (2018) in her pursuit of a decolonised therapeutic endeavour, one in which the need to be recognised by the other is rejected. What remains, then, is for each subject to turn to the humanity within themselves (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) rather than focusing on the humanity of others. This statement seems to align with the ideals espoused in the principles underlying Steve Biko's conceptualisation of black consciousness; a state of mind and a set of ideals which are separate from, which eschew, the sanction of the white gaze.

This decolonial understanding of recognition is an essential consideration when proposing a new analytic project. Gaztambido (2016) suggests that traditional psychoanalytic thinking compels the subject to be for another, to mould himself to the perspectives of the other in order to be validated. In its most traditional and mainstream manifestation, psychoanalysis dictates the terms which define the subject, conferring recognition within a structured framework of pre-ordained assumptions which do not acknowledge the breadth of influences which shape subjectivity. And yet, this is not a proposal for a rejection of psychoanalytic thinking in its entirety; Swartz (2018) suggests that “we cannot live by Fanon alone” (p. 527), that the decolonial turn can be engaged with within the frameworks of existing psychoanalytic theory. Frosh (2013), concurs with this position, suggesting that psychoanalysis – in its focus on subjectivity and on unconscious life - has the potential to be progressive and critical, that it has a vocabulary and a store of conceptual tools which are well placed to articulate the interplay between socio-cultural processes and psychic configurations.

A new psychoanalytic project is one which recognises the individual in context, and engages intentionally with this reality, rather than skirting it in pursuit of an exclusive internalist focus. It is one which accepts that whilst recognition of the other remains an objective in

analytic work, the notion of counter-recognition, that the individual holds sovereignty over definitions of self, is one which needs to be grappled with within the encounter. It is also one, then, which understands that the other can never be truly known - that whilst we can strive to understand another's point of view, we can never really know the *Other* (Gadamer, in Cushman, 2005). It is one which locates psychoanalysis, not in a sequestered, apolitical enclave, but at the frontline of engagement with the discourses and narratives which pummel and shape our contemporary world.

It is the optimistic viewpoint of this thesis that with the dismantling of sacrosanct analytic traditions, comes the possibility of an expansive and fresh horizon, one which challenges and frustrates, but one which also brings with it the potential for a deepening of psychoanalytic truth, where “*all that shapes our imaginary relationships to our material conditions....become the object of psychoanalysis*” Guralnik, (2016). I suggest that what is most crucially needed is a politicisation of psychoanalysis as we face into a world-in-crisis, necessitating a questioning of the universality of the psychoanalytic canon – indeed an eschewing of the canonical - and an invitation to embrace the ephemeral, constantly shifting, nature of knowledge.

Reflections on the research process

In this short section I would like to consider the research process and outcomes, and to suggest ways to continue the conversations captured in this thesis.

Firstly, I would like to comment on the particular parameters which govern and limit the format of a final PhD thesis which includes publication. The four core papers which sit as the central pillar of the thesis were each written at a particular point in time, in relation to external prevailing circumstances, and also in relation to the progress of the research project and, indeed, in relation to my own evolution as researcher and clinician. What this means is that each paper represents a snapshot which cannot be deviated from, changed or refined. *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White* (Chapter 6), and its response paper, *Penetrating Subjectivity* (Chapter 7), for example, were completed and submitted for final publication in mid-2016, a full five years ago. Since then there has been a deepening of my thinking around

race, and there have been significant shifts in the ways in which race is being thought about and addressed, globally, but especially within the local South African psychoanalytic context. This, against a rapidly shifting backdrop of racial upheaval and conversation at a societal level, both locally and more broadly. And yet the format of the PhD prescribes that these papers cannot be edited or amended in response to shifting circumstance or knowledge. This has the potential to result in what may be experienced as a dissonance, as moments of fracture or absence, between the most recently written supporting chapters of the thesis, and the chapters which hold the published papers. It is a comment I make in recognition of one of the limitations which stands as intrinsic to this particular Phd format, and which does, I suggest, impact the final flow of the document. And yet, I also think that there is value in having a series of 'archived 'still life' papers sitting at the centre of the endeavour, effectively documenting the passage and movement of time, reflexivity, and knowledge production.

I want to comment also on the elusive nature of 'truth' and meaning, particularly truth in psychoanalytic thinking, and on contestations around what that means when considering the relationship between race and psychoanalysis. Whilst I am clearly writing *within* a psychoanalytic framework, I am also writing *against* the mainstream, and as such it is inevitable that a reader who holds a different paradigmatic centre will think and interpret differently to me, will hold a different truth to my own. I expect, for example, that I may be criticised for espousing the opinion that Freud and his successors have been insufficiently concerned with the impact on the psyche by the social and, therefore, by race. A reading of Freud's enquiry into and curiosity about culture, society and anthropology will yield different meaning depending on the paradigmatic lens brought to the reading. I am aware that in positioning myself within a relational tradition, where the understanding around the nature of the unconscious, of what constitutes a mental event, differs from that proposed by more internalist writers, I inevitably position myself and my work as a target for contestation and criticism by those who read Freud et al differently. Frosh and Saville-Young (2017, p. 127) are useful here in their suggestion that absolute knowledge is impossible because of the reflexive nature of knowledge production. "Research, therefore, is not a process of uncovering (even relative) 'truths' ...but rather exposes the ways in which people are positioned by the theoretical structures used by them"

Questions of ‘truth’ can similarly be applied to the clinical vignettes of Chapter 6 and the case study presented in Chapter 5. Widlocher (1994), asks whether clinical cases are not simply the repeated expression of the analyst’s own thoughts about the patient, rather than being any expression of a clinical fact or psychoanalytic truth, in fact yielding more about the analyst’s mind than about the patient themselves. Widlocher (1994) and Tuckett (1998) both comment on the potentially seductive quality of case studies, on how easily the reader may be distracted by the analyst’s presentation, effectively losing sight of what is being illustrated through the case. Whilst I am aware that the case study and clinical material I have used in my papers may indeed position me as “thought reader” (Widlocher, 1994), as presenting and interpreting material in fulfillment of my own hypothesis, I also take to heart Tuckett’s (1998) encouragement to each author to articulate and illustrate their viewpoint in the clearest and most rigorous way possible, such that the meaning of what is being advocated will become clear. Widlocher (1994, p. 1242) too, suggests that “the fact is not what is really in the mind of the patient, but what is built up in the interaction between both minds”. Whilst my intention through the use of case study material has been to explore this relational exchange – between group members, and between myself and my patients – and to illustrate the various theoretical proposals made in each paper, the intention has also been to contribute to the library of writing which invites the reader into the experience-near of South African psychoanalytic praxis.

In considering the content which I have covered in this thesis, I am aware that I have been selective in the texts and literature which I have read and integrated into the research. I have sought to explore race and its relationship to psychoanalysis at this particular moment in time, through my chosen lens, without comprehensively covering all angles of psychoanalytic enquiry into race, culture and society. Had I attempted to cover all bases, and to access all of the information which is now so expansively available in this technological age, I would have had to have multiple conversations, exceeding the scope and capacity of my project. What this means, of course, is that the conversations initiated here have the potential to be continued beyond this thesis, into future research endeavours and writing. I suggest that there is a need to deepen discussions within the South African psychoanalytic milieu about what it means to decolonise psychoanalysis; theoretically, collegially, and in practice. I suggest too that clinicians should be encouraged to write more from the experience-near, and to risk

revealing the intricacies of the clinical exchange which occur when race enters the room, particularly in relation to the subjectivity of the therapist. Furthermore, I suggest a deepening of conversations between and amongst colleagues, engaging with what it means to be raced clinicians working in a racially saturated and historically traumatised country, how this impacts the subjectivity we take into the room, into our engagements with one another. In summary, perhaps, what I am advocating for is a relational psychoanalytic turn in South Africa; one which would offer a paradigmatic scaffolding for the conversations and writing which I consider to be essential if we wish to find relevance for psychoanalytic practice in our contemporary world.

In conclusion

Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it.
T.S Eliot (1940)

In drawing this thesis to a close, I am struck by how unfinished it feels, how tempted I am to read just a few more texts, to raid just one more line of enquiry, to interrogate further, perhaps, my role and voice in this project. It is with reluctance that I pen the last few sentences, aware that the irresolution I have named as characteristic of engagements with race, is relevant here too, that, as Eliot suggests, a sense of final mastery over my subject remains elusive. Perhaps what is most salient for me, as I consider the trajectory over time of this research, is the recognition of how rapidly conversations about race have shifted, expanded and transformed over the last decade, in society at large, and concomitantly within our analytic enclaves. The race conversation landscape is constantly shifting; the words and ideas relevant today, may not be so tomorrow, replaced by new words, concepts, ideologies, shaped, inevitably, by explosively shifting socio-political contexts, both locally and globally. What this means for us as South African psychoanalytic thinkers and practitioners is that we can only ever *practice* having conversations about race, we can never master them, nor can we ever be finished with them. Race is now well and truly in our midst, the local canon has

been perturbed, and transformation of our paradigm is no longer just advisable, it is inevitable. It is our task to continue to engage - even when our capacity to think is compromised, even when the alienation which comes with confronting our raced selves wearies and disillusions us – in pursuit of a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, in Cushman, 2005); in pursuit of those moments in which we sit alongside one another, knowing, and being known.

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Appendix 1: Ethics clearance certificate



Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Esprey

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER H13/10/10

PROJECT TITLE

The problem of thinking in black and white: Race in the South African clinical dyad

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Ms Y Esprey

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Human & Community Development/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

18/10/2013

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved Unconditionally

EXPIRY DATE

28/11/2015

DATE 29/11/2013

CHAIRPERSON


(Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Prof G Stevens

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10003, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix 2: Front page of published articles

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The Problem of Thinking in Black and White: Race in the South African Clinical Dyad

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Race, as it presents itself within the clinical dyad as an aspect of the relationship between therapist and patient, has scarcely been written about from an experience-near perspective within the South African context. This paper focuses on the difficulty of speaking and writing about race. It contends that race as a construct and as an aspect of subjectivity has the potential to interrupt the therapist's capacity to *think*, in Bionian terms, and to prevent entry into the reverie that is crucial to the creation of an analytic third. Written through a relational psychoanalytic lens and drawing on the concepts of the normative unconscious and the anti-analytic third, the paper refers to clinical vignettes to illustrate the collapse in thinking and the progression to beginning to think, anew, about the race-nuanced, intersubjective space between patient and therapist.

This paper explores how, as clinicians, our capacity to *think* and to be a container for our own and our patients' thoughts is potentially compromised when race is implicated—often unconsciously—as part of the dynamic process between therapist and patient. The processes of thinking and of emotional containment are the crucial clinical tasks in which we engage (Bion, 1962). Auestad (2010) described psychoanalysis as a creative effort to think about the unthinkable; the opposite, the inability to think or the collapse of thinking, constitutes a separation of thought from feeling and represents an attack on meaning. I suggest that the emergence of race in the dyad potentially provokes the therapist into a thinking–thwarting enactment that is shaped by her own racial subjectivity as it becomes intertwined with that of the patient, and thus has the potential to interrupt and mire the analytic endeavor and to compromise the creative, thinking task of our craft.

The paper is located within a South African context and speaks to the relative silence that encapsulates race within the clinical arena, contending that speaking and writing about race from the experience-near position is complicated by the implication of our own racial identities and histories and by the consequent subjective experience that this implication provokes. It is theoretically grounded in a relational psychoanalytic paradigm and draws on Bion's (1962) theory of thinking. In substantiating the thesis that race-in-the-dyad has the capacity to threaten thinking, the paper refers also to the concepts of the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) and the

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Penetrating Subjectivity: Response to Commentaries

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In response to the commentaries by Altman, Straker, and Suchet, the author considers the ways in which thirdness—in various manifestations—has aided in the continuing process of thinking about race. She responds to Straker's invitation to interrogate further what it means to write from within and without a context, considering some of the defensive strategies that manifest when writing about race from a position of whiteness. Following Suchet's lead, the paper looks too at the notion of the decolonization of the mind and how this is a project that unfolds in parallel with the decolonial moment being witnessed in broader socioeconomic contexts. In response to Altman's commentary on the clinical aspects of the paper, the author engages with what it means to enter more fully into a process of mutual recognition when working in cross-racial dyads and considers, finally, the question of far she is able, as a white clinician and writer, to jeopardize the self in the process of unsettling whiteness.

AN EXPERIENCE IN RELATIONALITY

In her response to my paper, Suchet remarks that, “if we cannot allow the other to penetrate us, to cross the borders, to psychically be known and recognized, there is no possibility of subjectivity” (p. 49). This comment aptly encapsulates the experience I have had through the process of crafting my paper, “The Problem of Thinking in Black and White” (this issue). Initially an academic exercise, fueled by a curiosity I had about the mechanics of race within the clinical setting, writing the paper has become a personal journey of introspection and, indeed, of working towards the reclamation of a colonized mind. In submitting a paper to *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, I submitted also to the peer review process, which invited me to interrogate, ever more deeply, the workings of my own mind in response to the cross-racial work I was presenting. The dialogue with other minds, which began through the review process and which continues in this discussion, has felt to me to be a puncturing of the solipsistic inquiry in which I was initially engaged and has given me an experience of true relational engagement and interpenetration—within myself, with my paper and its subjects, with my reviewers and discussants; an experience challenging and growthful, and deeply rewarding. All three authors of the commentaries have been participants in some way in the development of the paper, and their appearance in reality as my discussants feels like the materialization of unspoken conversations I have been having with them, all along. Neil Altman's writings in the arena of race are seminal,

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Raids on the inarticulate: A group's engagement with race

Yvette Esprey

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With Hilda Croxford, Pam Durrant, Gillian Eagle, Kgumadi Kometsi, Julia Kuhn, Malose Langa, Itumeleng Mamabolo, Thembi Mashigo, Saudah Masson, Zamo Mbele, Leanne Stillerman, Phethile Zitha

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Hilda Croxford, our dear colleague and friend, and a founding member of the group. Hilda died very suddenly just before final submission of this paper. Her vital spirit, her curiosity and playfulness, her openness to engagement and her deep capacity for humility and compassion are woven into the essence of our group. There are no words to express how much she will be missed.

Abstract

This paper describes the experience of a group of South African clinicians who have met monthly since 2011 to engage with race as it pertains to our clinical contexts, our identities as clinicians and,

Appendix 3: Published commentaries on *The Problem of Thinking in Black and White*

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Thoughts from a Safe Harbor: Commentary on *The Problem of Thinking* by Yvette Esprey

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Yvette Esprey's claim that race has the capacity to disrupt thinking in the analytic situation accords with my own experience. In this discussion I take up the question as to why ruptures that occur around race may have a special capacity to disrupt and disable analytic thinking. I look in detail at Esprey's instructive clinical experience as it gives us a template, something to fall back on, in those moments when anxiety overwhelms us around a racial disruption. Such a template can settle us until we can restore a sense of self that is both *raced* and analytically focused on the rupture at hand with all its personal and social/historical resonances.

Yvette Esprey's narrative of her losing her capacity for analytic thinking in her analytic work with Denesh brought powerfully to mind my own work with Mr. A. (Altman, 2010). In that case, the rupture occurred around money and payment. Mr. A.'s check has bounced. When I raised with him the fact that his check had been returned (a fact that he surely already knew), he said "Citibank! Capitalist pigs." I was rendered speechless, thought disabled, as I found myself thrust into the unwelcome role of capitalist pig. I did not have access to the state of mind in which I could have asked him, or even thought about, what that had to do with the fact that his check had bounced. This particular moment draws on socioeconomic and politically based, as well as racial, stereotypes, but the experience of being unable to think is similar. I welcome both Esprey's acknowledgment of an "anti-analytic" (Straker, 2006) moment and her follow-up with a vignette in which one can see the evolution of her capacity to think through racially charged moments of disruption. Esprey's account does not skip over the experience of momentarily disabled analytic function. I daresay such moments, saturated in shame, are rarely described in the analytic literature. We are thus left alone, on our own, in coping with racially based disruptions in our work. But Esprey does not stop there; she shows us how she did reparative work in the best Kleinian sense. This account of her personal evolution can support the evolution of the field, of the rest of us, in our capacity to keep our heads at times of racially based disruption.

Let us look more closely now at the clinical interaction in which this evolution took place. Esprey (this issue) describes her attitude toward the therapy with Denesh in the following terms:

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The minority-group-other is used as a project of sorts through which to “do good,” and to unconsciously restore a sense of power in reaction to the powerlessness of racial melancholia. The expectation in return is to be affirmed, and to be seen by the other as a different kind of white. It is apparent to me now that Denesh may have represented for me the “project-other,” that in engaging in what was then an unusual cross-racial therapy I was attempting to mitigate the powerlessness of my own racial position. (p. 29)

Esprey emphasizes a sense of powerlessness in relation to the dawning realization that she cannot maintain her idealization of whiteness, or at least her own whiteness. I would add that this idealization of whiteness also seems to counter a sense of badness associated with her racial position.¹ Esprey may have a sense of badness, that is, destructiveness, like many of us white folk who work in a force field marked by historical and contemporary injury inflicted by our racial group on the racial group of our patients. As a white therapist sees himself or herself through the eyes of a black patient, a personally based unconscious sense of badness may become activated, making it tempting to hide behind an image of doing good. How to distinguish between this defensive denial of badness/destructiveness and truly reparative work that acknowledges damage done?

Esprey (this issue) goes on:

I recall one moment in the encounter when Denesh described his envy of white boys of his age. In a limp attempt to pursue the invitation to respond to the race in the room, I commented that I, too, am white. Very quickly Denesh reacted saying that he did not think of me as white, and moved on without further reflection. In that moment I felt both affirmed as a different kind of white, and simultaneously expunged of whiteness, ridding me of the necessity to interrogate the racial mix of our relationship. In retrospect Denesh may well have been asking me too to see him differently, not to see him as a man of color, and also to perhaps join him in his disavowal of his blackness. (p. 29)

Much could be imagined or speculated about the dynamics of this moment, but the crucial fact is that the clinical process, the unconscious flow between analyst and analysand, reached a dead end. This is the interruption of thinking, of reverie, in the face of a racial or racialized enactment that is the focus of this paper. In contrast, with Thabi, 10 years later, a flow of reverie characterizes the interaction from the beginning of the vignette. Thabi’s statement that he was born in Meadowlands in 1986 converges with Esprey’s memory of hearing about the protests and violence in the townships of South Africa in 1986. This memory is at first pushed aside; Esprey’s unconscious is responsive, but her conscious mind is not as yet ready to listen. But she pushes on, asking for further memories, and Thabi, as if trying to reach Esprey’s unconscious responsiveness to his experience, tells of his mother covering his face to protect him from tear gas. Esprey remains on the sidelines of the flow of reverie, resorting to a standard psychoanalytic formulation about the frighteningly traumatic nature of Thabi’s childhood. Thabi, having none of it, acidly remarks that it was no more frightening or traumatic than any other black person’s experience at the time. He simultaneously calls Esprey’s attention to the gulf between the experiences of blacks and whites in 1986 while moving the discourse away from the usual

¹ This is an interesting example of how a Lacanian perspective, with its notion of “phallic fullness,” can be different from, and complementary with, a Kleinian perspective, with its emphasis on goodness, badness, destructiveness, and reparation.

psychoanalytic focus on the individual to the social level that so radically and profoundly influenced personal experience in the South African context.

What comes next suggests to me that Thabi was aware that Esprey was engaged in a shame-drenched process of awakening to the reality of apartheid in his life and that he was anxious about his role in triggering the exposure of her defensive distancing from the horror of his early life. He tells his analyst about a team-building exercise he had led at work in which his coworkers were to discuss a seminal “experience of awakening” in their growing-up years (p. 31). As his colleagues start to reveal their awakening to the reality of the apartheid system, he realizes he is the only black person in the group. He feels “panic” and a sense of “illegitimacy” in witnessing the accounts of his white colleagues (p. 31). He feels “shamed” and “unqualified” to manage the task, fearing that his incompetence as group leader would “tarnish his work performance” (p. 31).

Esprey interprets this set of associations as referring to the analytic situation, referring to his sense of illegitimacy within their relationship and vulnerability to being judged and misunderstood by his analyst. She also notes her disinclination to focus on the transferential situation, her wish to take a less “relational” approach to the work at this point. With her heart beating rapidly, Esprey (this issue) nonetheless plunges ahead:

I acknowledged that what Thabi had done was to bring race into the room, and into our relationship in a way which we couldn't ignore, but that in doing so he had taken the risk of exposing himself to me. (p. 31)

In my reading, what Thabi said to his analyst suggests that he was witnessing her dawning awareness of the reality of apartheid, his experience in particular, and that he felt incompetent and ashamed, perhaps in identification with her. She might then well have said that he was taking the risk of not only exposing himself to her but also of witnessing her exposure to him. Perhaps this is the “relational” element that was making her so anxious. Of course, Esprey has already exposed to us, her readers, her evolving awareness of the horrors of apartheid in this work with Thabi, and it is not surprising that he would be aware of the consciousness raising process she was going through as a result of her work with him. Thabi's way of being with Esprey suggests to me that he is strongly attuned to her (and she to him), both on an unconscious level as suggested earlier and in his identification with her shame and sense of incompetence. Nonetheless, we analysts can easily understand the sense of shame that Esprey might feel explicitly acknowledging this process to her patient. We analysts tend to feel that we should be ahead of our patients in the processing of anxiety-laden material; in the process, as in this case, we may distance ourselves from the caring attunement of our patients to us and to our struggles.

In conclusion, as Esprey points out, the emotional force field of guilt, shame, and anxiety around race creates an especially formidable emotional challenge for analyst and patient alike. Yvette Esprey has done us the invaluable service of providing us with an account of her own struggles with race in psychotherapy in the supercharged environment of Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa. We readers, situated relatively comfortably outside the immediate force field of the clinical situation have an opportunity to think about the interaction between Esprey and Denesh and Thabi from a safe harbor. What we can learn from her experience is not so much that she might have focused more on how Thabi was attuned to her struggle, rather that Esprey's ability to cultivate an unconscious exchange between her and Thabi allowed for this sort of

attunement to emerge at all. This, of course, is precisely her point. The clinical challenge for all of us is to keep this sort of unconscious shared reverie alive in the face of a history that tends to overwhelm our ability to think. Yvette Esprey has added to our shared clinical experience in a way that will help all of us to keep thinking in the midst of emotional storms around race.

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Wishing to Be White: Begging to Be Black

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With race in mind, in this response the author draws on her own experiences of exilic consciousness, racial melancholia, whiteness, dissociation, and self-censorship to dialogue with Yvette Esprey. The author explores the issue of voice and how this is affected by context. The notions of the normative unconscious, K (notes), and the anti-analytic third are differentiated from one another. The relative weight given in the literature to unconscious processes such as dissociation as opposed to more conscious self-censorship is explored in theory and with reference to Esprey's case studies.

It is a pleasure to respond to Yvette Esprey's well-crafted and meaningful paper, not least because Yve and I are friends of many years. We are connected by years of shared experiences, both personal and political. We still meet every year to work and play together and to continue the never-ending dialogues that pertain to race. Within this we grapple with different lived responses to our history. I have chosen to live in Australia, and while I return to South Africa annually to work as a visiting professor at my old university I am not in the trenches in the same way as Yve and other friends and colleagues.

There are complex feelings reciprocally evoked in those who left South Africa by those who stayed. Esprey does not speak to these issues, but she does speak to her perception of the greater freedom of ex-pats to speak about South African racism. I can attest to the truth of this for myself. When I am in South Africa I experience less freedom to speak about race in the South African context than when I am in Australia. But I also experience less freedom in Australia to speak of race, or more accurately racism in the Australian context, than when I am in South Africa. I am curious and puzzled by these different freedoms. I raise this issue in the hope that Esprey will enter into further dialogue about why she too found it more difficult to have a voice when her audience was a national one. Having said this, there is of course no obligation on Esprey to realize this hope. But I wish to interrogate myself in this regard.

My first thought as to why it feels easier to speak about race and racism outside of one's home context pertains to attachment. The people we live among are usually those to whom we are most attached. In the fraught area of racism, risking giving offense to those we live among has potentially greater consequences than giving offence abroad. These consequences pertain both to the degree of offense and hurt we might inadvertently inflict as well as to the negative consequences we might incur. Inadvertent racism also has a price (Altman, 2000). Similarly, it is painful to be perceived as racist even in instances when others in the oppressed group would

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disagree with the perception of racism. Both parties feel misrecognized (Benjamin, 1990). Furthermore, it is not only persons of a socially constructed race other than one's own whom it is possible to offend. It is as possible, if not more possible, to offend persons of one's own race. If one "speaks as a white" (Straker, 2011), it is certainly possible, indeed likely, that one will offend whites who disidentify with one's position—and at home one lives among them.

The second thought I have pertains to authority. Sticking with the analogy of home, in my experience nobody is more likely to question your authority than those at home, that is, members of your own community. This might extend not only to questioning the content of what is said but also to the right to speak at all, at least about particular topics. What one takes as one's own wisdom is more likely to be seen as nonsense at home than abroad. Individuals abroad do not have a lived experiential base from which to challenge what is said about one's own context.

Abroad, one's authority will still be questioned, but on other grounds. In the context of publishing, one criterion of authority may be one's command of the literature and the theory surrounding one's topic. Or at least that is my fantasy, and I wonder if it might be Esprey's too, given that Esprey devotes a great deal of her paper to theory, and indeed it is a tour de force in this regard.

Esprey has clearly researched the literature, and the sweep of her paper is noteworthy. Not only does she speak to multiple paradigms within the psychoanalytic field, but she references key figures in postcolonialism and cultural studies. She covers studies on whiteness, on racism, and speaks to the notion of the exilic consciousness, thereby inviting the reader into a wealth of possibilities for thought and exploration. I appreciated Esprey's generous acknowledgment of all her ancestors and comrades in the field. I wish to thank Esprey for her validation of many aspects of my own work and for providing an opportunity for me to elaborate on the anti-analytic third later in this response.

However, I did wonder if the degree to which Esprey engaged theory in this vexed area of racism provided a way not only to think about race but also to take refuge from some of the more visceral experiences that race evokes. I also wondered if it was a way to shield herself, at least a little, from the imagined gaze of the national audience that she indicated can generate anxiety. They too read *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. If this is the case, and only she can know, then I would venture to say that her paper embodies what it speaks.

In her paper (this issue) Esprey speaks to the importance of theory as an aid to regulating emotion in the room and allowing one to take up one's position as a therapist, a position that is often lost while negotiating race in the room. Theory both aids and signals a return to the analytic position. Once one has mental access to theory, this is a signal that one is now, once again, able to regulate one's interventions beyond enactments. But the integration of theory into our clinician's self states also helps us to prevent sliding into irresolvable enactments and impasses in the first place, although at times these slides are inevitable. Similarly, embedding more visceral issues about race in theory as we write papers might likewise regulate affect evoked by writing about race in a public domain. Theory and theoretical concepts therefore can facilitate the kind of thinking and linking that Bion (1962) validated. Indeed, Esprey's case studies evoked numerous affects in me that I share after taking an affect-regulating detour into theory myself.

This detour takes me to two theoretical concepts that Esprey draws on throughout her paper: the normative unconscious (Layton, 2006) and the anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006). Esprey refers to these concepts as anchor points that helped make sense of her clinical work

in biracial couples. I too have found these concepts helpful. In addition to these two concepts I find the notion of K (nots) (Pizer, 2003) very helpful and became aware when reading Esprey's paper that it might be useful to tease out some of the similarities and differences in the concepts. As I understand it, Layton's (2006) notion of the normative unconscious is an unconscious forged through our insertion into all the social norms that envelop us. These social norms will shape each of us and influence what experiences can be formulated and what cannot, and will have both positive and negative effects. The anti-analytic third (Straker, 2006) refers specifically to the space between two people and to what each person may elicit in the other as a result of each person's historical and/or current exposure to toxic ideologies such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, among many others. It is a more particular concept than the normative unconscious and, of necessity, has a traumatic imprint that is not necessarily the case with all aspects of the normative unconscious. It is this imbrication with trauma that the anti-analytic third shares with Pizer's (2003) notion of K (nots). However, again it is a more specific notion than K (nots). K (nots) or impasses may be generated by a trauma imprint arising from wounds inflicted by factors other than poisonous ideologies, for example, family trauma such as sexual abuse or bullying at school. The anti-analytic third refers specifically to impasses generated by the wounds inflicted by the exposure of both parties to the same poisonous ideologies. It is a narrower and more specific concept than either the normative unconscious or K (nots).

I introduced this term into the literature as it is my belief that poisonous ideologies inflict damage on those inserted into them. This is so whether individuals occupy the more or less powerful positions these ideologies are designed to reinforce. The wounds such ideologies inflict play themselves out ubiquitously and the consulting room is no exception. Naming the specific impasses induced by toxic ideologies serves to highlight the pernicious effects of these ideologies which are part of, but not the whole of, the broader normative unconscious. This having been said, I return now to Esprey's case discussion, cognizant that I am not fully aware of how these toxic ideologies will affect how I relate to these case discussions and the lenses through which I interpret them.

Esprey discusses three clinical vignettes. The first is that of a mixed-race "colored" woman working with a white man. The second describes her work with Danesh, an Indian man whom Esprey, a white woman, engaged in therapy in the more immediate aftermath of liberation. At this time the social focus was on the preservation of racial harmony and the denial of difference. The last vignette involves Esprey working with a black man in contemporary times, when racial disharmony is more easily acknowledged.

In providing this background context, Esprey puts flesh on the bones of her theoretical focus on the importance of social contexts past and present. These contexts shape racial subjectivities, not only historically but also currently. They shape what is possible to be formulated intrapsychically and, beyond this, what is possible to be spoken of in the intersubjective space.

Esprey's paper, in line with much relational writing in the field, including my own, speaks a great deal to dissociation. The normative unconscious, K (nots) and the anti-analytic third all implicate dissociation, and it is to her dissociation as it manifests in the consulting room that Esprey mainly speaks. Both in her paper and in her consulting room, Esprey speaks less to more conscious processes such as self-censorship when race is in mind, and again she is not alone. Yet these conscious processes also cast their shadows over the intersubjective space as attested to by Leary (1997) in her paper titled "Race, Self-Disclosure and Forbidden Talk." Leary's focus on

these conscious processes is noteworthy, as I have often wondered about the meaning of the fact that papers on race have such a strong focus on dissociation to the relative neglect of forbidden talk, as Leary named it.

Could it be that this focus on unconscious processes even as we write papers points to difficulties owning more starkly our personal responsibility for what is evoked in ourselves and in the other in the intersubjective space? After all, we are less personally responsible for what we cannot formulate and/or think about than we are responsible for what we can formulate and think about but cannot say. That is, we might subjectively experience less responsibility for what we were unable to formulate than we might feel in relation to formulated experience that we would be ashamed to articulate.

In this regard, the work of Ehrenberg (1995) and others who have made a study of self-disclosure and its vicissitudes in all clinical work is to the point. As Ehrenberg noted, it is a hallmark of relational psychoanalysis that we interrogate ourselves in regard to our self-censorship and evaluate mindfully when holding back whether this is in the interests of the patient or whether it represents “coasting in the counter-transference” (Hoffman, 2008). Curbing my own tendency to coast in the countertransference, I attempt to move to self-disclosure of thoughts and feelings I had in relation both to Esprey’s case studies and to her positioning of me in this paper.

It was the story of therapy with Danesh that moved me most, not least of all because Esprey presented a “failed” therapy, in her terms. I think that it is much more difficult to present a failed therapy than a successful one, and we often learn more from our failures than our successes. It was through this vignette that I felt most able to elaborate on the theoretical concepts that Esprey explores. All three vignettes, however, evoked affective responses in me which took time to process.

At first, like Esprey, I found it hard to know what I was feeling and, beyond this, to put my feelings into thoughts. I am not sure how much in Bion’s (1962) terms I was engaged in an active, albeit unconscious, attack on linking, or how much I was simply unable to formulate experiences I could intuit at the periphery of my being (Stern, 2013). However, once I was able to grasp and register a few thoughts, I found myself more than usual caught in a struggle with the words to say it (Cardinal, 1963). Beyond attacks on linking and dissociation, I was aware of issues of self-censorship and a resistance to certain self-disclosures. Thus I found myself restrained not only by unconscious processes that blocked the formulation of experience but also by more conscious processes that inhibited the expression of articulated thoughts.

One emotion that I felt in relation to Thabi that was difficult to own, and even more difficult to speak, was envy. I envied Thabi his freedom from the guilt of the bystander and the perpetrator, a guilt he points to in his discussion with Esprey of life in the township. I envied what I experienced as the moral authority associated with being the victim rather than the perpetrator. In these feelings I identified with Krog (2009), a well-respected, white South African author and activist who wrote a book entitled *Begging to Be Black*. I also envied the fact that in my fantasy at least I saw a world of opportunities that both Danesh and Thabi were positioned to grasp in the new South Africa.

My envy was both age and racially inflected. In terms of age, far fewer opportunities lie ahead of me than behind me. In terms of race, if I were younger I might well have many opportunities as a white in the new South Africa, but I would not be in the position of Thabi or Danesh. I am not a middle-class black person in the new South Africa. The position of

middle-class black people in the New South Africa has been articulated by Haffajee (2015), a black woman. Haffajee wrote of how, for her, the arrival of freedom and policies to justifiably make right the wrongs of Apartheid came at the right moment. She openly acknowledges that she feels it is her good fortune that she was born in the current time. This parallels my good fortune at the level of white privilege at the time of my birth. Haffajee, however, has the added advantage that her good fortune is not freighted with the illegitimacy of Apartheid.

In describing her situation Haffajee (2015) went on to say that power in South Africa has changed hands, including the power associated with fiscal and sociological influence. "At national, local, and provincial level, the images of governing authority are black" (p. 4). She added that "culturally too I live in a Black country. ...The dominant culture has altered" (p. 4). She then challenged the importation into South Africa of "African American narratives of an oppressed minority in the claws of a powerful majority" (p. 5).

Within this, Haffajee (2015) did not deny that whites still enjoy considerable privilege in South Africa and that vast numbers of black people remain poor and unemployed. The *Cape Times* (Mde, 2016) indicated that 70% of top management positions in South Africa are occupied by whites, while there is a 40% unemployment rate among blacks. Thus Haffajee (2015) did not deny that for some, like the anonymous black patient whom Esprey mentions, envy of whiteness and the wish to be white remains even as she bemoans and challenges this envy at least among the black middle class. It is in this context of the envy of whiteness that I can identify with Esprey's possessiveness of her white privilege even as she indicates it creates shame. This shame mirrors my own awareness that my attachment to privilege creates inner tension.

I am also aware that this tension might be alleviated if I were to divest myself of some of my privilege, an action that I do not take. How, then, can I lay claim to kinship with the notion of *Begging to Be Black* when I would resist earning this blackness through sharing more deeply in at least one experience that has historically shaped Blackness, that is, poverty. Poverty remains massively raced despite the fact that there are rich and even über-rich black people in the world today, and South Africa is no exception.

Yet even if I were prepared to have less, own less, I could still never appropriate a Black Identity, even if I could magically change my skin color today. These identities are forged in persecutions that extend back across histories of colonization, genocide, slavery, Apartheid, and much else. Whatever my desire to identify with aspects of blackness that I perhaps idealize, as Danesh idealized aspects of whiteness, I am forever barred from these identities. My history is not one of victim but bystander/beneficiary/perpetrator.

Sedgwick (2003), in relation to queer identities, put forward similar arguments. She made it clear that queer identities cannot simply be assumed; they encompass more than that which can be shaped through performativity. They are forged in deep experiences of shame, alienation, and prejudice, and it is these experiences that shape identities in ways that extend beyond mimicry and performativity. Those who inhabit these identities shaped by these experiences rightfully resist their appropriation. While one may be accepted by those with black or queer identities as a good white or a friendly heterosexual, one remains white and/or heterosexual and part of the out-group, at least in regard to blackness and queerness. In reading Esprey's paper I became aware of feelings of alienation and isolation that being part of the out-group generate. These feelings, produced by being defined as other, amplify the already present sadness of racial melancholia to which Esprey and Eng and Han (2000) referred.

Racial melancholia has to do with experiences of lack in regard to one's own group. For me this melancholia was amplified by the realization of the impossibility of using the out-group to cover over lack. The recognition of this impossibility flows from the realization that one unconsciously is using the other as fetish to cover over one's lack and from recognizing the ethical problems in this (Straker, 2004). Such recognition can also be the outcome of being blocked by the other from claiming membership of their group, perhaps because the other recognizes that the claim is a bid to cover over lack in oneself and one's group. This is a more coerced recognition of the use of the other, but a crucial one. It is a recognition that flows from one's claims to sameness being refused. It is produced by an underlining of one's otherness in a moment that one may be seeking to obscure difference and avoid the experience of difference.

Perhaps it was an avoidance of this particular experience of otherness that Danesh was seeking in his affairs with white women. Esprey understands his affairs in terms of an attempt to assimilate whiteness. She speaks to his idealization and denigration of whiteness and sees its transference implications in terms of her being the white woman who must be triumphed over, as well as her being the original object of attack. To this I would add the possibility that Danesh is seeking not only to assimilate to whiteness as a signifier of privilege but also to avoid feelings of difference and not belonging to a group with whom he has an affinity based on many complex factors. In South Africa blacks and whites have always lived cheek by jowl, albeit in unequal power relations. Thus we are of necessity intimate strangers with multiple strands of connection and alienation. Nowhere is this more complexly present than in the institution of the domestic child care worker (Straker, 2012; Suchet, 2010). Given this, it is not surprising that there are times when we push for merger with each other, wishing at an unconscious level to be accepted as honorary whites or blacks and resisting our differences.

Reading about Danesh put me in mind that both for him and for me the issue of assimilation is a vexed one. The desire to be assimilated gestures not only to the melancholia pertaining to the lack one may experience in one's own group but also to a somewhat voracious desire to incorporate the other and/or to be incorporated by them. In much of the writing on otherness the focus is on the importance of recognizing the other as other. There is less emphasis on accepting oneself as other when this is defined, not by the self but by the other. The difficulties of accepting myself as other were implicated not only in my resonating with Krog (2009) and the notion of begging to be black but also in my response to other aspects of Esprey's paper.

While reading Esprey's paper I felt many sorrows, including racial melancholia pertaining to the lack in whiteness. However, I also found myself confronted by Esprey positioning me as an ex-pat, which of course I am. But as I read this it produced in me painful feelings of being seen as other in ways that I do not embrace, despite their truth. As I read it, I experienced myself as exiled from my many South African friends. However, being named thus brought about an owning of my exilic consciousness. Esprey, citing Said as quoted in Burkhalter (2015), describes exilic consciousness as one in which one is "neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half involvements and detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another" (p. 23). She goes on to say that Burkhalter noted that this exilic position yields the possibility for a transgressive analysis.

I am not sure that I would know clearly what a transgressive analysis would look like in the context of my response. I am also not sure if I share either the positive spin on transgression of many cultural theorists or the negative view of transgression of traditional psychoanalysis.

However, I will leave it to Esprey and others to expand the thoughts that I have outlined in this response should they wish to enter into a dialogue, a wish that I own to be my desire. I end by thanking Esprey for providing such a thought-provoking and challenging paper and for inviting me into an interrogation of self, difficult as it was.

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Reclaiming a Mind: Commentary on Paper by Yvette Esprey

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In exploring the problem of thinking in black and white we encounter the difficulty of maintaining our subjectivity as good racialized whites. This commentary follows the journey that Yvette Esprey takes us on to reclaim her thinking mind and reconstruct an authentic racialized self. In addition, this work expands on the concept of racism as a form of abjection in which the hated parts of self that are extruded paradoxically come to construct the self.

We know that we are defined by the history and social circumstances that we inherit. Yet, we are also able to contest that socio-political interpellation, reclaiming the right to define our subjectivity. Esprey's paper (this issue) exemplifies the process of reclamation of a formerly colonized mind.

Esprey courageously takes us on a journey across time and different racial dyads to explore the legacy of Apartheid as it lives on in the minds, the bodies, and the relational encounters of those it has marked. Integrating relational, Bionian and postmodern theories Esprey deftly weaves theory with practice, freeing herself to confront her own complicity in the system that came to define her. Allowing herself to engage an unsettled whiteness (Straker, 2011) she interrogates the dissociations, the shame and guilt that had rendered her stuck and immobilized. She explores the ways in which she was able to challenge the societal injunction to disavow race by liberating herself to think, to write, and to confront race as it presented itself in the clinical encounter, knowing that her own racialized subjectivity would be part of the work. I have written elsewhere (Suchet, 2007) that it is only in coming to a place of accepting the self, especially the parts of self that feel abhorrent, that we can find our way to a more settled whiteness. This is not a whitewashed space, not a conflict-free space, but a complex racialized web. Ehrensaft (2014) conceptualized gender as a web "with the child weaving together body, brain, mind, psyche, socialization and culture in an effort to compose an authentic gender self" (p. 575). So too can we conceive of a racialized subjectivity as one that is creatively constructed and reconstructed over time, integrating what is within and without to find a way to a more authentic racialized self.

Esprey is clearly embarking on redefining her own subjectivity, moving away from the alienation of self that defines South African identity and into a more integrated, albeit anxious space of white identity. In Bromberg's (2011) conceptualization, she has surrendered the safety that dissociation provides to develop an increased capacity to bear and process conflict (p. 69). Bromberg shed light on the nature of repeated enactments and the pervasive, insidious nature of

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shame. Dissociated shame is often at the center of unbearable impasses, when the couple is caught in the grip of overwhelming affect that Esprey depicts as the mindlessness that racial enactments trigger.

In the movement from dissociation to association, we need to face ourselves, especially our most shameful self states, just as Esprey did. To do so in a racial context asks of us to investigate how the white self is constructed through the black other. Fanon (1961/1990) brilliantly intertwined the identity of colonizer and colonized as mutually constituted. The mindless state that Esprey articulates might carry an unthinkable thought: "Who am I to myself when in my white self state?" As Young (1990) articulated, "the colonizer sees a grotesquely displaced image of himself" (p. 147). This particular grotesque white oppressor self state initiates dissociation as a way to obviate the humiliation and guilt that accompanies facing the self. The grotesque finds its way into the image of the black other. It is interesting to me that Esprey's initiation into a more reflexive mode of thinking around race began when she reflected on the work of a Colored South African therapist, Richards. It may be that in Richards's perception of her white patient, whiteness was reflected back to Esprey through Richards's eyes. The construction of whiteness, through the experience of a Colored woman, may have opened a space for Esprey to re-find sequestered parts of self.

Morrison (1992), in her incisive indictment of the literary imagination of white Americans, reveals how American fiction created a black shadow for whites to contemplate their fears and desires without needing to acknowledge these feelings as their own. However, in constructing blackness through the racial object, what is revealed is the nature of the racial subject. The quest into the psyche of the racial subject is a treacherous path. What will we come to discover about ourselves?

Delving more deeply into the Richards clinical encounter, as described by Esprey, what is revealed is a therapist who finds herself becoming punitive towards a white man asking her for a "discount" (p. 27). In placing himself as a disadvantaged student he "discounted" his therapist's history and experiences growing up under Apartheid. His inability to recognize her, as well as his racial privilege in relation to her, foreclosed the possibility of mutual recognition. He could not own his complicity in a system that traumatized his therapist. Similarly his therapist could not recognize his subjective experience of deprivation. The possibility of mutually dissociated shame may have furthered the impasse until Richards could bravely reclaim her therapeutic capacity to reflect, think, and empathize.

Next on this journey of racial awakening, we are introduced to Denesh, an Indian man, financially successful yet "plagued by insecurities" and a sense of inferiority (p. 27). Denesh is described as being obsessed with dating white women, and later with having risky extramarital affairs, which give him bursts of self-esteem. In the Fanon quote that Esprey cites, the black man wants a white woman both for purposes of identification and desire. If a black man can *have* a white woman, he can *be* whitened. Esprey tells us that Denesh describes in detail his sexual exploits and excursions. Yet Denesh's desire for Esprey is not evident. Esprey interrogates, with candor, the failed treatment, focusing on how they were unable to overcome their respective racialized roles and how she felt "paralyzed" in her ability to work with the evocative gender and racially based material (p. 28). I want to briefly explore the absence of erotic material between them. First I am not certain that a sexualized transference and mutual sexual countertransference could have been possible at that point in the early days of South Africa's transition. Second, perhaps behind Denesh's sexual wish was a more relational one: to be taken in, received,

welcomed, and allowed to enter his white therapist. If we cannot allow the other to penetrate us, to cross the borders, to psychically be known and recognized, there is no possibility for intersubjectivity. Esprey states, although in a different context, that she was able to avoid the “necessity [of] interrogat[ing] the racial mix of [their] relationship” (p. 29). Perhaps it also refers to the literal mixing of racial subjectivities, the touching and interpenetration of psyches. It may be that Danesh needed to know that he could be desired by a white woman in a position of power, by the person he was bearing his soul to, not only so that he could have a white woman to become whitened but also so that blackness could be experienced and understood as desired and desirable. He may have needed his white therapist to help him reclaim his potency both as a man and as black. Blackness needed to be disavowed only if blackness was still that which was deemed inferior and undesirable. Just as Esprey wished to be “affirmed...as a different kind of white,” so too did Denesh wish to be recognized for a blackness that was worthy (p. 29). However, as Esprey notes, her shame and need to maintain her position of privilege interfered with the ability to overcome the impasse. Esprey’s honest and brave self-interrogation allows us to explore, with her, the impact of living in a racist society.

The South African postcolonial theorist Hook (2012) integrates Butler (1993) and Kristeva (1988) to conceptualize racism as a form of abjection. To abject is to cast off or to repulse that which is viewed as contaminating, repugnant, and unwanted. Moreover, “abjection, more than anything else, or so it would seem, is the threat to the integrity of the ego’s borders; it is the prospect of their violation, the disturbing awareness that these borders are ultimately neither sacrosanct nor impermeable” (p. 69). The fear is that which we have deemed repugnant will enter our inviolable space. However, “the abject is always ‘of me’” (Hook, 2012, p. 69). Thus racism, in attempting to purge the self of that which is unsettling and unthinkable, turns back on the self in the form of substantiating and consolidating that abhorrent identity. It is only, paradoxically, in facing and owning the racist and repugnant aspects of self that a more compassionate, integrated identity emerges. We watch this unfold as Esprey continues her journey.

She takes us with her to 2015, a very different time politically and personally, and 10 years after her work with Denesh. We meet Thabi, a young black man with whom she is initially thrust into the collapsed space of the anti-analytic third. Unlike her earlier work, Esprey finds a way to engage Thabi’s anger, taking it directly into the transference. Despite her state of physiological arousal and the overwhelming affect that enters the room, she acknowledges that he is bringing race into the room and into their relationship. The treatment shifts. By facing her complicity in the therapeutic community’s disavowal of race, and by using theory and her race study group as a third in the room, she bravely opens the space to address the unthinkable. Through owning her vulnerable and shameful parts, she moves from the mindless to the mindful. Fortunately colonial relations are not static. We can contest and protest the ways we are constituted.

In pondering the work with Thabi, I have wondered if there is another possible reading of the situation presented. Thabi recounts to Esprey his experience of coldness when discovering at a work retreat that he is the only black person listening to white people coming to terms with their whiteness. He feels panic and a sense of illegitimacy. We know that in one of their earlier sessions, Esprey is assaulted by his “challenge and anger” in relating to his traumatic childhood growing up under Apartheid (p. 30). Thabi may have felt panic during his work retreat for the pressure to contain his anger toward his white colleagues who may have been lamenting their own histories while not acknowledging his.¹ Holding on to your subjectivity, which contains the abuse of your perpetrator, while the perpetrator is crying in front of you is an daunting feat.

Thabi was robbed of his subjectivity in the moment of being asked to validate their subjectivity. This may be part of the illegitimacy he experienced. Rather than recognizing him, they may have placed him in the position of absolving them, of only understanding and recognizing their pain. Thabi was in an untenable situation. It is also an illustration of how the black other is used by the white oppressor to help constitute a subjectivity they can live with, without awareness that they were annihilating Thabi's subjectivity. Perhaps Thabi needed space to express his anger and space to hate the white oppressor. To have been the target and container of so much hatred and violence necessitates living with hate. White (2002) a black New York City psychoanalyst, writes of the three ways that hatred is derived from racism: being hated, hating the self, and hating the other. I believe that all three always go together. If you are the object of hatred you cannot but hate parts of the self stained by that venom, and then hate the one who violates your integrity. Similarly the hater feels the force of the victim's hatred and finds within themselves a self-loathing to relieve some of the hate cycle. Fanon (1952/1986) eloquently remarked on the bizarre unconscious logic by which whites hate their victims with an intensity that is proportionate to the experience of guilt and shame they feel for the acts of violence perpetrated on those victims. Similarly the intensity of self-hatred is connected to the extent one feels the guilt and shame of colluding and participating in those acts of violence, degradation, and indifference. White (2002) wrote of analyst's needing to find, within themselves "even the most odious hate and the most humiliating self-abasement" (p. 420) so that they can access those parts in their patients. Analysts need to survive hate and being hated, she claimed. Yet if the intensity of self-hatred is too unbearable, and if facing the self means losing one's protected position of white status, then dissociation and disavowal may ensue.

This brings me back to the concept of racism as an attempt to consolidate identity by abjecting and extruding that which is disavowed in the self. However, the hated other, carrying the disavowed, is never separate from the self. They are entangled identities (Hook, 2012). Thus the self is haunted by that which crosses boundaries, permeable borders from which the hated aspects of self seep in, paradoxically constructing the self in exactly the way that was untenable.

If in Fanon's (1952/1986) paradigm what a black man wants is to be white, perhaps what a white woman wants is to remain whitened, although perhaps a darker shade of white. To be a "different kind of white" is to be expunged of some of the guilt and shame of whiteness, to be darkened just enough to not lose white completely. I am conceiving whiteness as a psychic space where we can feel good enough (not too hateful and not too destructive) and still hold on to our position of power and privilege.

In conclusion, what is unthinkable and unspeakable may initially appear to be that which resides in the other. However, it is rather the haunted parts of the self that keep returning, despite our attempts to wash them over with reparation, or sequester them far away, that result in the anti-analytic third. It is the predicament of one's own subjectivity that collapses the analytic space.

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¹ This also links with Richards's experience of having her traumatic life experiences unacknowledged and the impact of such misrecognition.

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