Editor’s Note
Put off reading this issue until after the swim where you spied the blue-green depths of the lake; or until you return from walking in the woods where sounds of living things accentuate the quiet. Give yourself time when you are less harried—between one task and the next, one email and the next—to enjoy these articles of reflection and remembrance.

Included in this issue, Paul Schwaber looks back on a life guided by twin loves of literature and psychoanalysis. Gretchen Hermes contemplates Freud’s early explorations of his “Project” in light of contemporary understanding of neuronal processes. And Rosemary Balsam reminds us of Dori Laub’s great work, his legacy, and his presence amongst us. So put this off for a quiet moment, when you have the leisure to read of our friends and the community we have.

In Memory of Dori Laub, MD
By Rosemary Balsam, MD
We received on June 24th 2018, the very sad news of Dori’s death. Just a few weeks before, I had written a letter in support of his nomination for a Sigourney Award, and I will share an excerpt from it below. His will be a great loss not only to his family and to WNE, but to the national and international communities of psychoanalysis. He had just recently closed his private practice. We remember now also his loved wife and our colleague Johanna Bodenstab, who passed away in 2015. And we extend our condolences to his first wife, Dalia, who many of us fondly remember, and his children Miri and Avi and their families.

I first met Dr. Laub, a loved colleague and fellow psychiatrist, when, in the late 1970s he was initiating the Holocaust Survivors Film Project in New Haven, Connecticut -- today the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. I was fresh from growing up in Northern Ireland -- a place with its own problems and political violence: vivid stories of the “troubles,” where my mother’s family were burned out of their house near Dublin in the 1920s; the devastation of the male population during WW1 where my father had survived the Battle of the Somme -- but talked about it movingly and eloquently and was thus preserved as full of life, (an important resilience I grasped only in retrospect from hearing Dori’s work with severe trauma and the resultant personality and

Photo courtesy of Lauri Robertson, MD

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intergenerational damage associated with ensuing and enduring silence); the blitz of WWII when my worried parents daily hovered over the crackling radio, plotting maps of the Allies’ defeats and victories. I remember without understanding, their aghast reactions to the phrases “the Warsaw ghetto,” and “the fate of the Jews in Europe.”

Here, in New Haven Connecticut, now an adult psychiatrist and one of the interviewers in these early phases of Dori’s project, in empty basements of churches with a few lights and an amateur movie-camera trained on the subject with a primitive tape recorder, I had first-hand exposure to the stories of American Jewish immigrants, people struggling ambivalently to recall their harrowing experiences in their original homelands. Dori instructed us to be in the background. He wanted psychotherapists to conduct these interviews, because they knew how to be patient, be quiet and not interfere, and yet recognize when to stop the taping, or to moderate the truly overwhelming moments. Previously silent people who now were able to come to be debriefed were often pained but desperate to be recorded for their progeny. They pushed themselves to remember, newly keen for other human beings “to witness” their experiences -- that verb that Dori subsequently became famous for, and from which he helped develop a whole aspect of psychoanalytic theory to go to the heart of shattering traumata and the dimensions of its psychic effects. Even a grainy film of their likenesses, and the timbre of their voices would prove to descendants that they had not only survived the vile circumstances but had defied Hitler. I saw also the empowerment they experienced from being heard. So much had been annihilated in those lives still present: yet what prevailed was sometimes even the more breathtaking.

For this child survivor of the Holocaust in Romania, subsequent multiple immigrations and first-hand encounters with casualty survivor soldiers in Israel’s own battles for survival, the formation of this ambitious Archive was an incredibly brave and elaborately creative act to bring to fruition. Dori had importantly the help of Laurel Vlock, an American Jew who grew up acutely aware of wartime miseries and anti-Semitism around her, and who became a television journalist. Dori’s energy for the project attracted help, money and cooperation. He was quiet, determined, deeply kind, understanding, with a rueful humor, and yet unsentimental, a man of few words who developed tremendous rapport with and emotional knowledge of the survivors. My husband and I joked that he was as passionate in his purpose, as staunchly reliable and as toughly persistent as a fire hydrant! This form of recording the horror of the lost past of these European families was, as you may appreciate, the first undertaking of its kind, thirty years after the events. Similar projects now exist in the United States and abroad, including the famous Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, established by Steven Spielberg. Such was and is the world-wide and historical influence of Dori Laub in this field.

His CV will inform those who want to take in the full national and international compass of his psychological research and psychoanalytic dedication to his task. Dori Laub’s studies are the quintessential form of the very best of applied psychoanalysis. He has had many awards, including The International Psychoanalytic Association’s Elise M. Hayman Award for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide. He has written immensely, mostly in the company of others, shared his ideas
generously, and also has done formal research. His works are in English and German and have been translated into other languages. He and his colleagues are responsible for the introduction of such original and captivating concepts as “the empty circle,” which “symbolizes the absence of representation, the rupture of the self, and the erasure of memory that together constitute the core legacy of massive psychic trauma.” (1998 p. 507 in “The empty circle: children of survivors and the limits of reconstruction” J Am Psychoanal Assoc. 1998;46(2):507-29.) or “witnessing witnessing,” the study of how the survivors’ testimony is received.

To a large and specific population, Dori Laub brought his own life, his talents as a doctor, a psychiatrist, a psychoanalyst, teacher, scholar and writer, with naturalness in his profound understanding of Freud and his way of listening and responding both to individuals and groups. He observed very closely; he theorized with colleagues; he formed communities; he wrote a great deal and traveled to involve others and publicize the worth of his projects. And he never lost sight of the individual as his subject, or the history of their being, or the psychic impact of their early lives that often -- but not always -- contrasted with the War with its chaotic and violent surround. He studied breakdown and he studied survival.

I am not the supporter to define in detail his psychoanalytic contribution as can my colleague in this nomination, Ilany Kogan. I am one who can convey to you the sheer power and accomplishment of this man, his vision, his value to the human community and the immensity of his contribution which deeply honors Freud. His work has extended beyond the victims of the Holocaust, to studying and helping Bosnian victims, all victims of current wartime crises and the domestic homeless. He still is the Deputy Director for Trauma Studies at The Macmillan Center for International and Area Studies: Genocide Studies Program at Yale University. To convey his immersion in his own work, and his modesty in feeling more in service to his vision than personal promotion for glory – I can tell you that I was the person who suggested to him at his recent 80th birthday party, that I would put him forward for a Sigourney Award. He had never thought of it before for himself, as he does not think of his work as sufficiently psychoanalytical. However, I would say that it is obvious that he richly deserves this award, and that his contributions and heritage are of formidable and compelling human significance.

We will sorely miss his presence in our lives.

SAVE THE DATE

2019 WNEPS Symposium

Saturday 6 April 2019

“A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND”

Donald Moss • Sidney Phillips • Elizabeth Brett
OFF THE COUCH
Candidates’ Column
Gretchen Hermes, MD, PhD

A Mitochondrial Vision for the “Project for Scientific Psychology”
In his unfinished manuscript “Project for a Scientific Psychology,” Sigmund Freud undertook, as he put it, “to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles.” He meant that mental activity had its material basis in the nervous system. In Strachey’s translation, these particles, invested with a discrete quantity of energy, were called neurons and by some neurobiological or neuro-electrical means, a conjecture of Freud’s, the movement of energy between these particles generated the experiences of thought, will, memory, and emotion.

The Project (as many refer to it) was ambitious in the extreme (in its time, in any time). It was composed in feverish states on train rides home from visiting his friend and mentor Wilhelm Fleiss. He wrote “I have never been so intensely preoccupied by anything.” The work is difficult—almost impossible in places— to read. It has been difficult to discern its relevance. Freud seemed to be operating out of a conviction that understanding a material, particle-based mind would result in a “rapprochement between psychology, medicine and psychoanalysis.” In the end, he was frustrated and ashamed of the work: “I had to rework a number of drafts and alternated between pride and happiness and shame and misery, and at the end of enormous mental

Figure 1:

Top: Mitochondria, electron microscope photograph

Middle: In this image of a mouse hippocampus (magenta), new cells are labelled in red, and mitochondria—the intracellular power packs responsible for driving cellular activities throughout the body—are labelled in green. The hippocampus, a brain region involved in learning and memory, is one of only a few areas in the brain that continues to create new neurons throughout adulthood. (Stelb, et al. The Journal of Neuroscience, 2014).

Bottom: Mitochondria (in blue) are not static, cylinder-shaped organelles but change shape and move about the cytoplasm on an almost continuous basis. These activities often appear to involve cytoskeletal microtubules, which influence the characteristic direction and dissemination of the mitochondria in various kinds of cells, like a microscopic highway or subway system. The number of mitochondria present in a cell is related to the metabolic needs of that cell, and may range from a single large mitochondrion to thousands of the organelles (Michael W. Davidson and Florida State University).
torture I tell myself with apathy: it does not work, maybe it will never come together.” He ultimately apologized, writing to Fleiss, “I can no longer understand the state of mind in which I hatched the psychology and cannot fathom how I could have burdened you with it.”

The primary difficulty with the work may have been that it was decades ahead of its time. In recent years, a number of neuroscientists have revisited the Project to highlight ways in which Freud’s intuitions make sense in the context of more modern research findings. I, too, sense that we are at a moment when several of these ideas come alive again under the electron microscope, allowing visualization of organelles within the neuron, specifically mitochondria, the energy production centers in cells throughout the body and in neurons across the brain.

Our current understanding of the functional role of mitochondria did not emerge until after a method for isolating the intact organelles was developed in 1948. While the presence of mitochondria, in large numbers, in most cells of the central nervous system, supports Freud’s intuition about the ubiquitous presence of energy sources in the brain, the distribution of mitochondria, at times more populous in certain more active regions of the brain, supports a host of other speculations in the Project. Still, in order to be relevant to Freud’s larger project, mitochondria would have to be important, at minimum, to mental disease states and normal psychology, provide a basis of memory as well as linkages between the self and the environment, and help facilitate levels of consciousness, from aliveness to an awareness by the mind of itself and the world.

**Specifiable Material Particles and Disease States**
From the outset, Freud indicated that his quantitative line of approach was “derived directly from pathological clinical observations, especially from those concerned with ... hysteria and obsessional neurosis.” He was trying to make an explicit link between psychopathology and disturbances in neural excitations. Ultimately, his misgivings, furthered by the limitations in the neuroscience of his day, overpowered him. Of course, we now know he was correct. Major psychiatric illnesses are strongly associated with underlying impairments in neural excitations and synaptic plasticity. We also know that mitochondria, which support energy demanding processes like neural transmission and synaptogenesis, are points of intense research interest in the energetics underlying the neurobiology of mental illness [1]. For example:

- Patients with mitochondrial cytopathies (diseases) are overwhelmingly diagnosed with major depressive disorder (MDD), bipolar, and panic disorders.
- Evidence from functional assays, protein expression studies, and linkage analyses, point to a specific role for mitochondria in psychotic illnesses.
- Patients with bipolar disorder have been shown to have impaired brain energy metabolism and increased mitochondrial DNA mutations.
- A recent report on major depressive disorder demonstrated significantly reduced mitochondrial energy production in neurons of patients compared to controls.

The importance of the mitochondria, the specifiable material particles under consideration here, includes their role in neurodegenerative diseases—Alzheimer’s Disease, Parkinson’s Disease and Huntington’s Disease. These disease states may relate in part to the heritable nature of mitochondrial pathology. From the point of view of current neurophysiological research, however, Freud’s sense of dynamic brain-based communications is perhaps the most prescient aspect of the Project.

**Contact-Barrers: Memory, Development and the Shaping of Circuits**
Freud used the term “contact-barrier” to describe the neurophysiological entity subsequently known as a synapse, a space created between neurons which facilitates neuronal communication and a prerequisite for normal brain function. Freud speculated that the density and intensity of such communications between neurons could enhance or suppress memory.

We shall describe this condition of the contact-barrers as their degree of “facilitation” ("Bahnung"). We can then assert that memory
is represented by the facilitations existing between the 'Y -neurones...It is therefore more correct to say that memory is represented by the differences in the facilitations between the 'Y-neurones.

A number of researchers have asserted that Freud was describing long-term potentiation (LTP), a neurobiological process considered to be the foundation for memory and learning. LTP refers to strengthening of synapses based on a long-lasting increase in signal transmission between two neurons; the opposite of LTP is long-term depression, which produces a long-lasting decrease in synaptic strength. The ability of synapses to change their strength based on the internal and external milieu underlies synaptic plasticity. These modifications in synaptic strength are thought to encode memories.

More recent research has focused on the energy requirements in synaptic transmission. Mitochondria are the focus of these studies as they are actively recruited to synapses to provide the requisite energy for neuronal firing [2]. Mitochondrial motility across long expanses of neurons in the central nervous system as well as the dynamic size, shape and number of mitochondria present in some neurons and in some behavioral circuits have also garnered significant research interest. A number of preclinical studies have shown that mitochondrial activity is shaped by exercise, environmental enrichment, histories of acute and chronic stress [3]. These findings make it reasonable to image the effects of the residues of the day or après-coup experience, for example, on mitochondria and synaptogenesis and therefore might visualize what Freud had in mind about the mind.

**Levels of Consciousness: A Particulate State of Being Awake and Aware**

In the Project, Freud clearly attempts to delineate a model of consciousness. In the most fundamental sense, consciousness requires a state of being awake. An individual, human or animal, is defined to be in a conscious state empirically by the behavioral ability to respond meaningfully to stimuli, whereas the loss of consciousness is defined by unresponsiveness. In this formulation, the role of mitochondria becomes more explicit. In states of anesthesia-induced loss of consciousness, we know through PET studies that there is a 45% reduction in cerebral energy consumption [4]. Because baseline brain energy consumption has been shown via magnetic resonance spectroscopy to be almost exclusively dedicated to neuronal signaling, some scientists propose brain energy as the necessary property of the conscious state, a state afforded by the cellular power stations—the mitochondria.

Still, Freud’s larger unsolved problem goes beyond this level of consciousness and includes an even more difficult brain/mind problem, which is how differences in the quantity of energy translate into differences in the quality of experience. Consciousness, in this case, is an aspect of the mind generally thought to comprise qualities such as the ability to perceive the relationship between oneself and one's environment. In his own attempts to account for mind at the level of the brain, Freud wrote that the “mechanistic explanation is not successful.” For us now, mechanistic explanations, while at a remove, are much closer to offering potential understanding. How might we apply contemporary mechanistic explanations to something distinctly, powerfully psychoanalytic?

Harold Searles, the enigmatic physician and psychoanalyst, wrote a moving description of an ‘aha’ moment of his own, a moment when his mind gained simultaneously in subjectivity and relatedness.

For many years I have enjoyed washing dishes and not rarely have had the feeling that this is the one thing in my life that I feel entirely comfortably capable of doing. I have always assumed that, in my washing of dishes, I was identifying with my mother, who routinely did them in my early childhood. But in recent years…it has occurred to me that I have been identifying with my mother not only in the form but also in my spirit of washing dishes. I had not previously allowed myself to consider the possibility that she, too, may have felt so chronically overwhelmed, so chronically beyond her depth in life, that this activity, washing of dishes, was the one part of her life with which she felt fully equipped to cope comfortably [5].

To offer any comment about the role of neural excitations in response to Searles’ account...
feels like a clash of aesthetic values. I wonder if Freud too might have felt this, that a mechanistic explanation didn’t rise to the level of the pathos or grace in analytic narrative and that this contributed in some measure to his reluctance and skepticism.

My own sense is that there is now sufficient beauty in either direction: quantity or quality. Presumably, Harold Searles stood at his kitchen sink at approximately the same time of evening for approximately the same number of minutes for most nights for many years. He often thought of the comfort in doing dishes and thought of places in his life away from the kitchen sink where he felt less comfort. He likely often thought of his mother as well. One can imagine that while Searles’ body and mind dwelled in these spaces, there was a neurophysiological dance taking place involving mitochondria sliding and fusing and dividing across meters of distances in neurons, especially in the axons and dendrites in neurons. This choreography was in response to Searles’ routine, his physical activity, his stress, strain and relief. The entrainment of his nervous system—around an emotional awareness that had been held in abeyance until at a moment of psychological ripeness when an intuition about his mother gets incorporated into consciousness—was almost certainly supported by the neuro-energetic forces that sub-serve learning and memory.

Despite his nervous disappointment and despite hiding the Project in a desk drawer for decades, Freud’s preoccupation with the world of energy and neurons was not for medicine, nor psychiatry nor psychoanalysis what he feared most, a ‘philosophical stammer.’ He was on to something that could not be seen then but that we can see now as the beauty that supports life, memory and knowing (see figure 1).

References


Continuing Education for WNEPS 2018-19

By Deborah Fried, MD

Plans are afoot in the Continuing Education Committee for the upcoming academic year. There are new and ongoing classes planned, including:

- continuing the study group on gender.
- continuing the study group on primitive states.
- a new class on ‘hate in the consulting room’.
- a new class about analytic perspectives on sexuality and sex therapy.
- the return of Reprisal of Tragedy, a highly regarded class from several years ago.

Moreover, the Continuing Education Committee would be quite glad to offer further options to the community!
Pleasures of Mind
By Paul Schwaber, PhD
A slightly modified version of this article initially appeared in JAPA 52/3: 427-435 (2005). Paul also presented a version to fellow-retirees at Wesleyan’s retirement center last year. Paul thought this recollection may be of interest to candidates and fellow-analysts as a piece about the bearing of psychoanalysis on other disciplines, and vice versa. The editors feel it says much more, including how a life develops and flourishes in psychoanalytic work and study, and how there is room for many original paths and explorations.

Often when I meet people socially for the first time, I’ll be asked: “How did you come to have two professions?” Well—as this audience can well imagine—it’s a long story. Usually I mumble something about narrative and fascination and try to shift the attention back to them. Today’s occasion offers a chance to reflect about my two professions, what drew me to them, and how they overlap and integrate. One emotional truth governs for me. They are sources of pleasure: more exactly, intellectual, moral, at times sober and dreadful, at others humorous, playful, anxious, or conflicted, often complex pleasures—in short, sublimatory pleasures. Both professions are alike in that. They allow me ranging joys of thought in the work I do, even when the work itself may involve distress.

For a long time, my path to them was more serendipitous than chosen. The youngest in a lively, affable, verbal family; an identified Jew emerging to consciousness during World War II, the discovery of the camps, and the struggle to protect the fledgling State of Israel, all while safely ensconced in America, where Jews were a minority but hardly threatened; and an adolescent tacking through average-expectable adventures and turmoils at a huge public High School in Brooklyn, after intense grade school years in a small Zionist Yeshivah, I had a lot to fathom, a lot to be puzzled and curious about. When I was a child, I asked so many questions, my father would call me Pinocchio. I was that nosey. And nosiness (since the ego is first of all a body ego) is a good word for it, the spark that energizes my fascination, my continuing pleasure, in figuring out what’s going on and whether I have a sufficient take on it.

In college it took only brief exposure to Chaucer’s Canterbury pilgrims, Wordsworth’s poetry, and introductory Physics to convince me that literature, not medicine, was for me. Chaucer surprised me: those characters were like New Yorkers on a subway car. Wordsworth seemed to read my soul. Suddenly too, the lilt of language proved captivating. A gifted teacher, John Hicks, exemplified that such things constituted manly work. So the door to my first profession opened easily enough. I was a much slower study about psychoanalysis. Norman O. Brown, in those years at work on Life Against Death, offered a course in the psychoanalytic interpretation of Greek and Roman myths, which I took with a combination of befuddlement, bemusement, and skepticism. One day he began the class by looking at me and asking, “Schwaber, why does Athena, goddess of wisdom, carry a spear?” I replied that I did not know. He said, “Think! Why does Athena, goddess of wisdom and rationality, fully sprung from the head of her father Zeus, carry a spear?” Even more confused, I could only confess, “I.. really…don’t know.” Upon which he asked, “Have you ever thought that you might be too nice for this course?”

I might have talked of hard-edged clarity and rules of thought, of masculine pride and castration fear, of repression, hysteria, penis
envy. I might have commented on the oddly absent mother or the patriarchal denial of the female. I could have chuckled at the repressed returning, sprung solely from father Zeus’s head, in the goddess who lent her name to the lauded city state. I could have, had I known then what I know now. But Professor Brown was right: I was naïve, still too nice for all that, perhaps even willfully innocent. I thought it a funny moment, embarrassing but silly—though I was glad enough to learn about Athena. Defenses too serve pleasure, and mine were humming. Yet somehow I’ve never forgotten that Athena carries a spear.

Skip two decades now to another revelatory moment. I’d earned a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia, having written a thesis on the mad peasant poet John Clare, and taught for a number of years at Wesleyan, where I’d been tenured--to the chagrin of the Psychology Department, I might add, because I apparently took Freud seriously. Life having had its way with me by then, and I with it, I was ready to resume my analysis, which had been interrupted when my analyst moved away. Robert Rubenstein, with whom I consulted, kindly suggested that I consider a training analyst and clinical training, given my interest in psychoanalytic criticism. I hadn’t known that was possible, nor anything of how unusual it was at that time for an institute of the American Psychoanalytic Association to give full clinical training to someone not an M.D. I think only Western New England, the Chicago Institute, and some California institutes would have entertained the likes of me as a candidate in those days. But Western New England’s first generation of teachers included David Rapaport, a psychologist; Ernst Kris, an art historian; and Erik Erikson, a kindergarten teacher and artist (by then, too, a Professor at Berkeley who, during the McCarthy days, refused to sign a loyalty oath). Roy Schafer was Western New England’s first research graduate. Among its trainees were Joseph Goldstein, a Yale law professor; George Mahl and Sidney Blatt, both psychologists; and closer to my time Meredith Skura, who would go on to write a magnificent book on literature and the psychoanalytic process. She encouraged me to apply. So it was my blind good luck that Western New England was there and hospitable. I knew that without clinical training, I was stymied in what I could do professionally as a scholar-teacher or critic of literature with my interest in psychoanalysis. Because what I wanted couldn’t be gotten from books. I needed sustained experience with the idiomatic actuality of minds other than my own.

I joined the class of ’78, as we came to call ourselves, and after two and one-half years qualified to see patients. But as my first clinical hour not as a patient but as an analyst came hurrying near, I found myself in a bit of a panic. Sam Ritvo, my first supervisor, seemed startled when I asked, “What if the patient doesn’t follow me back into the office?” I recall him saying, “I thought I’d heard everything.” What really was bothering me was something else. How did one listen with a third ear? It’s one thing to read and discuss Freud’s technique papers, Greenson’s book, or Theodor Reik’s. It’s another to be exigently responsible for doing something one had never deliberately and consciously done before. And doing it right mattered. When I pursued the question with Sam, who seemed relieved that I’d regained my focus, he explained sensibly that one might listen to why the person had come seeking help. The opening session in fact went quite well, and at our next supervisory session I recounted what had been said, when, and how and all that had emerged of the patient’s past. I even concluded that the patient seemed introspective and analyzable. Sam smiled his little cat smile and said, “You see what you get into just sitting there?”

I soon had another realization. The process of listening with evenly hovering attention and, as it were, a third ear (which was one’s own subjectivity), was strikingly similar to reading poetry as I had learned to in the heyday of the New Criticism. That is, one reads attentively, perhaps sounding it in one’s head, attuned not only to manifest meaning and story but to diction, flow, music, imagery, recurrent patterns like rhyme, meter, and stanzas, alert to intruding intensities or strangenesses that tweak one’s curiosity—to images that force themselves forward, to slant rhymes, discords, unexpected hesitations, silences, or sudden turns. “A poem must not mean but be,” Archibald Macleish wrote. It is a ground for experience, not an idea or attitude suitably summarized. Poems have shape, development, emerging structure, unfolding thoughts, feelings, and situations. That aesthetic assumption immediately seemed to
apply when I listened to a patient, letting the words reach me, inviting not formulaic judgment but what Coleridge called the “willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith,” what Blake invoked with the epigram: “Anything possible to be believed is an image of truth.” Significances emerge not from content only but from style, form, and a reader’s receptivity. Significances emerge from the shape and mood of an hour, from what is said and how it is said, from how it is heard and by whom, from how it is understood—or not. As well, of course, as from what isn’t said, except perhaps disguised in displacement and condensation.

Thus my trained but personal responsiveness to poetry brought a pleasure of familiarity to analytic listening, an activating parallel that offered entry to a new role and experience. The concord of difference between the two fields formed a methodological metaphor, which helped me to make sense without imposing what Keats described as “irritable reaching after fact and reason.” One didn’t aim to conclude; one aimed to explore. What psychoanalysts now call “intersubjective,” the recognition of both self and other in the exploration, began for me in aesthetics—an aesthetics that prioritized the text while also respecting the self.

Every clinician, of course, can supply examples of intruding strangenesses or intensities without needing a literary prelude: an angry patient says “you” instead of “I” (as in “You won’t put up with it any more”), a patient in pain comes late, a long-term analysand, reporting a great success, sighs and calls it “not too bad,” another tells a joke about ageing bald analysts. One has only to be there and notice, and the work is joined. But the activating parallel between literary and psychoanalytic processes, though it continues helpful to me, is not limited to methodology. Freud alluded easily to European high culture—to Sophocles, Goethe, Shakespeare, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Balzac, Ibsen. He called on them in formulating his theory and in illustrating it. Would psychoanalysis ever have taken hold—whether clinically or as one of the great informing ideas in Western culture—without its central allusion to the myth of Oedipus? Moreover, in his prose Freud emerges as a persona, a literary character if you will. He poses mysteries and patiently goes about solving them; he expounds with care, boldly synthesizes, probes, questions and argues with his own notions—clarifying, augmenting, reformulating. His writings consistently present a narrator distinctive enough to trust or to take distance from. Thus one can identify, admire, agree, doubt, disagree, refuse, but only by enlisting in the sociability of thought, person to person, and, one hopes, intelligently. Because whether persuading or provoking resistance, Freud involves us. He meets us in what Winnicott designated “the play space of culture.” Indeed, when people praised his expository powers, Freud suspected resistance to his ideas. That of course still happens. Praise of his literary skill can serve to disavow his thought. The dynamic of interaction between his prose and his readers, however, has surely been crucial to the spread and influence of his ideas. Literature helped him to shape and transmit his discoveries. It helped me to attend closely to my patients. The activating potential between the two fields, moreover, runs both ways.

You hardly need to be told that psychoanalysis has had enormous influence in the humanities since Freud’s time. The ideas and processes of psychoanalysis have resonated broadly. My own contributions often focus on the explication of texts—what I.A. Richards called “practical criticism”—but by bringing clinical experience to bear when I consider a text. Let me illustrate.

Everyone knows Robert Burns’s little poem, “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose.” Its opening line alone lifts the spirit; and despite their overuse, roses still smell enchantingly and red roses in particular send singular messages. So a doubly red rose invites one to linger and look, however momentarily.

O my luve’s like a red, red rose,
That’s newly sprung in June;
O my luve’s like the melody
That’s sweetly played in tune.

The stress on “red, red” and the phrase “newly sprung” suggest a bit of sexual arousal, but not so as to divert from the speaker’s charming compliment or the melody sweetly played in
in tune, with a true rhyme to confirm it. The lover’s compliment continues through four stanzas, and the analogies expand:

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun
O I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o’ life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve,
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile.

He’s exaggerating and palavering, flirting with her, proclaiming devotion. The diction could not be simpler, the rhythms and rhymes more dependable. Yet he is going away, bidding farewell for a while. And what of his exaggerations? They combine humor and extremity to provide comfort. But think of the images his reassuring rhetoric controls. Till all the seas go dry (said twice) and the rocks melt in the sun, life figured as dry sand, ten thousand miles of distance between them: some stuff of nightmare there, evaded by syntax. In thought, he’s horrified and traveling far away. So he may be comforting himself as well as her. This love poem is more complicated than it is reputed to be—no less gracious, playful, and sincere, perhaps, but implying a well of fear too, which the surface covers over. The fellow is not only in love, he’s “so deep in love,” as he says, that he may not be able to get out. The intensely red rose signifies both loveliness and threat. Intimate love can be terrifying, we know. Burns knew it too, and he wrote an enduring poem about it. But “My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose,” recognized and relished by just about everybody, rarely is remembered through to the end. Most people’s memories stop with the melody sweetly played in tune. Evenly hovering attentiveness opens to a richer, more troubling poem. It all depends on what pleases you, on how intrigued you are by the workings of the mind.

That fascination—the workings of the mind—brought me to literature in the first place and, in time, to the discipline of psychoanalysis. No doubt you can hear in my thoughts today a bias toward persons—my father, the Canterbury pilgrims, riders on a New York City subway, Wordsworth, Freud as a literary character, the speaker of a love poem. It dovetails with an interest in each patient’s distinctiveness; and it helps to account for the emphasis in my teaching and published criticism on character and aesthetic realization (that is, made real in words)—on Thoreau in Walden, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Egypt, tough-minded fragile John Clare in his poems; on representations of John F. Kennedy in poetry; on Freud in his dream book, Freud and women, King Oedipus, Robert Lowell’s confessional poetry, Poe’s Usher and ratiocinative detective Dupin; on Juliet, Othello, Cleopatra, Gabriel Conroy, Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom—on the cast of character within a world. As it happens, my interest in character and aesthetics cuts against the grain of developments in professional literary study in recent decades; but it is what pleases me. No doubt some pride in difference and in rabbinic hermeneutics contributed. But bolstered by the training in clinical psychoanalysis I was lucky enough to get at Western New England and by the intellectual community I have found there, as well as by the consistent support of my colleagues in Wesleyan’s College of Letters, I’ve been able to hold to my course. For that I am grateful beyond words.

Let me close with yet another moment. It took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the site last June of the annual meeting of Joyceans around June 16, Bloomsday. Robert Scholes, a distinguished Emeritus Professor at Brown and the keynote speaker, asked the group whether it wasn’t time to recall to Joyce studies the importance and availability of sentiment, which he believed had been lost in the hubbub of narrative technique, neologisms, post-structuralism, deconstruction, gender criticism, and post-colonialism. He wasn’t being reactionary. He’s been at the forefront of much cutting-edge work. But he wondered whether we’d grown so sophisticated, so ingenious to meet Joyce’s genius, that we’d lost touch with directly available sentiments that Joyce himself loved. When it was the audience’s turn to
comment or question, someone brought up the moment in Ulysses, when Stephen Dedalus, at the climax of the penultimate chapter—a chapter so remarkable for its positivist zeal Joyce named its technique “mathematical catechism”—sings an anti-semitic song to Leopold Bloom. It is about a beautiful Jewess who cuts off the head of a little Christian boy—the very stuff that started pogroms. Stephen’s act is stunningly rude and rendered suddenly, without feeling but complete with musical notes on the page. He sings that to the man who picked him up from the gutter, protected him from arrest by the police, and brought him home to sober him up. Stephen then offers a theological explication too abstract to follow, and Bloom is described as wishing he’d sung about something else and then himself thinking about something else: his own delightful daughter. So the meeting and companionship of these two lonely figures—a Jesuit-educated, grieving, non-writing young writer and a middle-aged canvasser for ads, Jewish but not really so, who this day has been cuckolded—to which the whole book has elaborately built, comes to this; and they soon part, presumably forever.

Several other members of the group admitted puzzlement, and the stage was set for me to raise my hand. Evidently they hadn’t all read my book though I didn’t say that. But I could explain the immense load of sentiment in that highly attenuated moment—Stephen, grateful to and even grudgingly admiring of Bloom, unable to bear more for which he yearns and backing strikingly away, as is his wont; Bloom entering into wool-gathering diversion and denial, as is his; and the multivalent performer narrator too, stressing to parodic extreme externality and objectivity—all three refusing affect but yielding it in trust to the reader, who has known to know each of them intimately through the course of June 16, 1904. The reader recognizes Stephen and Bloom within character if not immediately understanding why they do what they do. And the narrator joins his characters in not feeling, saying goodbye to them in this chapter—the next one is Molly Bloom’s—but leaving the felt emotions of loss to his readers, many of whom admit that they are immensely moved by this “facts” chapter, which itself seems determined to refuse feeling. It is an epic and risky projection, and it works. I could explain that to the group, and people seemed immediately to agree. There were headshakes of comprehension and friendly smiles. Someone said that really made sense; others came up to me afterward to ask the title and publisher of my book. It was akin to a good clinical interpretation perfectly timed, and not the sort of thing that in my experience usually happens in the academic world. I could not have given that explanation, could not have written the book, and would not have had that moment of professorial pleasure, without my training at Western New England and my colleagues through the years there and in the American. So once again, thank you.
Peregrinations
(Please submit news of your journey so we may know where to find you.)

Rosemary H. Balsam MD
Meetings:
Grand Rounds Westchester/Cornell and NY Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Jan 9, 10 2018.
The Pregnant Body and Psychoanalysis: Fantasy, Gender, Theory-making.
The 15th Annual Bruce A. Gibbard, M.D. Memorial Lectureship Program
Sponsored by the Department of Psychiatry, The Robert M. Larner, M.D. College of Medicine at The University of Vermont, April 6, 2018: How is the (Pregnant) Body involved in the Mind? Missed Opportunities in Theory and Clinical Practice.
Faculty retreat.
American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting, May 5-9 2018 NYC.
Matrescence: The Psychological Birth of a Mother, from Cognitive and Hormonal Changes to Intergenerational Psychodynamics, with Alexandra Sacks, Catherine Monk.
Center for Modern Psychoanalysis, NYC: May 18th 2018 From “The Child Woman” to “Wonder Woman.”

Publications:


Sybil Houlding, LCSW
2018 to 2019
WNEPS
Scientific Meeting Schedule

September 22nd
Steve Ablon, MD
Discussant: Larry Levenson, MD

October 27th
Ann Pelligrini, PhD
Discussant: Anne Dailey, JD

November 17th
Ken Corbett, PhD
Discussant: Matt Shaw, PhD

December 15th
Lynne Zeavin, PhD
Discussant: Elizabeth Wilson, MD

January 19th
Anne Dailey, JD
Discussant: Barbara Marcus, PhD

March 18th
Joel Whitebook, PhD
Discussant: Paul Schwaber, PhD

April 20th
Lisa Marcus, PhD
Discussant: Eileen Becker-Dunn, MSW

Meetings convene at 4 and end 6 pm.
Scientific Meetings are free and open to the public.

Dinner receptions following the Scientific Meetings are held at Society member’s homes.

Dinners are open to all Scientific Meeting attendees. Candidates and trainees are invited and encouraged to attend.

CE/CME Credits are free to Society members. Credits are $10 for non-members.