

Image Credit: Archive Ref. IN/3273, Freud Museum London



Open to Interpretation

*UCL Psychoanalysis Unit
Inaugural Postgraduate Conference*

Programme

Friday 2nd February 2024

Room 118, Marshgate UCL East

Programme

- 9:20 - 9:40 Welcome & Registration
- 9:40 - 10:00 Organiser's Introductions
- 10:00 - 11:20 Panel 1 - *Psychoanalytic Interpretations of the Arts*
- [Tobias Vollstedt](#)
[Kazue Niki](#)
[Dawid Poblocki](#)
- Chair: Liz Allison
- 11:20-11:40 Coffee Break
- 11:40-13:00 Panel 2 - *Lacanian Interpretations of Literature and Culture*
- [Rafael Holmberg](#)
[Ritika Shah](#)
[Ruby Towers](#)
- Chair: Jake Clwyd Roberts
- 13:00-14:10 Lunch Break
- 14:10-14:50 Keynote Speech - *Getting Personal: Interpretation and its Discontents*
- Liz Allison - Director, UCL Psychoanalysis Unit
- 14:50-15:00 Short Break
- 15:00-16:00 Panel 3 - *Contemporary Interpretations of Psychoanalytic Problems*
- [Wilson Adolfo Gallego Hoyos](#)
[Ali Bagherzanjani](#)
- Chair: Holly De Las Casas
- 16:00-16:20 Coffee Break
- 16:20-17:20 Panel 4 - *New Interpretations of the Psychoanalytic Tradition*
- [Gillian Wells](#)
[Gabby Waghorn](#)
- Chair: Tobias Jenkins
- 17:20-17:30 Thanks and Closing Thoughts

Organising Committee

Jake Clwyd Roberts

Jake Clwyd Roberts is an independent researcher of psychoanalytic theory, currently compiling a history of the 'academic turn' in the French psychoanalytic tradition, and particularly the work of Jean Laplanche, Piera Aulagnier, and Serge Leclaire.

He graduated from the MSc in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies from the UCL Psychoanalysis Unit in 2021, and since then has been involved in numerous projects aiming to communicate psychoanalysis to a broader audience.

He currently works for both the International Journal of Psychoanalysis and the PEP archive.

Tobias Jenkins

Tobias Jenkins is an AHRC-funded doctoral student in the English Literature Department of King's College London where he is researching W.R Bion's experimental autobiographical novel *A Memoir of the Future* and the psychoanalyst's engagements with literary modernism.

He graduated from the MSc in Theoretical Psychoanalytical Studies from the UCL Psychoanalysis Unit in 2021 and is an honorary psychotherapist at the West Middlesex Hospital.

“Mozart-Effect”: Hype, Hysteria, High Mass of Pleasure: Wolfgang Amadé Mozart’s Sonata for 2 Pianos

Tobias Vollstedt

Abstract

In 1993, Rauscher et al published a study showing that listening to the 1st movement of Mozart’s Sonata for Two Pianos improved spatial-temporal reasoning. A kind of hype developed, but the effect remained controversial, while the general public hysterically received the hope that listening to Mozart would make them “smarter”. Today, the core thesis of Rauscher et al has been confirmed using another test-methodology, other studies seem to confirm a reducing effect with regard to epileptic seizures. Scientific research, however, proved unable to adequately examine the musical material. Reason enough to approach this music with psychoanalytic methodology. For this purpose, I used the method of depth hermeneutics developed by Alfred Lorenzer. In contrast to classical “applied Psychoanalysis“, this method makes use of the psychoanalytic way of understanding (scenic comprehension), instead of applying prefixed concepts. It focuses on the social meaning, that goes beyond biography. Mainly used with pieces of literature, the method had to be adopted to fit with musical material. Here, scenes can be found on different levels: scenes comprised of musical gestures, scenes of interaction, irritating usage of formal concepts. By this means, the “situational draft” addressed in this music is described and historically classified: A panorama of lust and the struggle for the love marriage in the bourgeoisie. Is there a way to link these insights to the psychodynamics of spatial-temporal reasoning or epileptic seizures?

Biography

Dr. phil. Tobias Vollstedt studied Philosophy, Music, Pedagogy & Music therapy at Rostock and Hamburg, Germany. He took part in the MSc Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies in 2000/01. For several years, he worked as music therapist in a psychiatric Hospital for Adults, and finished his PhD in 2013 in musicotherapy at the Academy for Music and Drama, Hamburg. A Training in child and adolescent Psychotherapy & Psychoanalysis followed (Hamburg, Bremen). Since 2021, he is working in private Practice at Bremen. He teaches Infant Observation (Psychoanalytic Institute Bremen, PSIB) and since 2023, he teaches in the postgraduate Training Psychoanalytic Social and Cultural Theory of Deutsche Psychoanalytische Vereinigung (DPV). His Research interests are Mozart effect and psychoanalytic Theory of Music, Film & Society (The Act of Killing), the Work of Alfred Lorenzer. He is affiliated DPV-Member, as well as full member of the Vereinigung für analytische Kinder- und Jugendlichen Psychotherapie (VaKJP).

*The role of sublimation in creative works:
The interpretation of the works of Yayoi Kusama*

Kazue Nikki

Abstract

Contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama's works are filled with polka dots of various sizes. She has been living in a psychiatric hospital for over 40 years and continues to create works from her studio in the museum built opposite the hospital. The popularity of Kusama's long-term exhibition 'Infinity Mirror Rooms' at the Tate Modern and her collaborations with popular high-street brands are testaments to the widespread interest in her work.

When the hallucinations with a sense of 'self- obliteration' experienced by Kusama take the form of artworks such as images, paintings, objects, and videos, they fascinate people. What factors make a person's psychological struggles, conflicts and sometimes some pathology a work of art that attracts and moves many people? What factors make people accept such expressions as art rather than pathology? Those questions seem to have been by Freud in 1908 - where the creative writer gets his material and how it can make an impression on us and evoke emotions, we never thought we would have. One hypothesises that the mechanism of sublimation, which turns unconscious material into art and creates resonance in observers, has a crucial role. Inspired by the work of Yayoi Kusama, I would like to explore this hypothesis by tracing it back to Freud. As Kusama captured me, the creative artists' expression captured Freud, who attempted to elucidate the creative process through psychoanalysis. In this presentation, I will focus on the mechanism of Freud's sublimation and re-examine the role of creative writers and their work for Freud.

Biography

Kazue graduated with an MSc Theoretical Psychoanalytical Studies program in 2011. She works at Japanese schools in London as a consultant to support children and parents, collaborating with teachers. Kazue is interested in applied psychoanalysis and the early work of Freud. She would like to explore how Freud accepted and interpreted creative writers' and thinkers' works and thoughts and used them in his own work while trying to grasp the unconscious mind. Kazue has been away from psychoanalytical thinking, so this opportunity is challenging. However, she would expand her ideas by communicating with everyone here.

Utopian Fantasies of the Movida Madrileña: Pepi, Luci, Bom Open to Interpretation

Dawid Poblocki

Abstract

Pedro Almodovar's work has been heavily influenced by the 'Movida', the socio-cultural movement which coincided with Spain's transition from decades of dictatorship to democracy. The Movida has been described as the 'spectacular return of the repressed', however no attempt has been made to interpret the link between its powerful revolutionary and anarchist tendencies with its accompanying sexual emancipation. The Movida shaped the filmmaker's artistic interests, and the movement was itself shaped by him. The death of Spain's dictator Francisco Franco meant the end to the era of societal oppressions. Almodovar, among other great artists emerging during the Movida, was able to give expression to that 'return' which guised itself in fantasies which were both perverse and utopian. 'Pepi, Luci, Bob y otras chicas del monton', having been extremely influential in Spain at release, the film depicts an illusory world in which authority of the father, the Law, is disdained, which contributes to the fulfilment of one of the deepest unconscious fantasies - those of becoming one with the primal object. Apart from capturing the novel ways of thinking about sexuality and sexual orientation, the film is also a portrayal of the spirit of the movement itself that manages to transport the spectator into the middle of Movida's chaotic reality. My presentation will interpret the film to shed some light on the fantastical and perverse narratives that underpinned the movement.

Biography

Both Dawid's psychology degree and the psychoanalytic master's instilled in him an interest in mental health and psychopathology. After his studies, he went on to volunteer at a suicide prevention charity offering face-to-face support to individuals in suicidal crisis. His work experience in the field includes working both in the community and in in-patient settings. He was employed as a mental health officer in a halfway house supporting individuals in their recovery after discharge from psychiatric units, and he is currently employed as an assistant psychologist in a forensic psychiatric hospital. In this role, he supports acutely unwell patients in intensive care units (e.g., mania, psychosis, suicidality) as well as patients in a long-term lowsecure unit with more complex psychiatric histories (e.g., serious offending, personality disorders). Dawid's interest in psychoanalysis lay in how it lends itself useful to our understanding of the art of filmmaking - which is reflected in the topic he will present.

The False Category of Nature: Sexuality and Hegel

Rafael Holmberg

Abstract

Hegel insists that the category 'nature', as articulated in aesthetic determinations of beauty, is not nature as such but a supplementary deviation coloured by the subjective position from which this 'nature' is posited. We cannot distinguish nature 'in-itself' from the ideological/artistic conditions of the distorted aesthetic or political 'use' of nature. Nature exists to us only in the form of its contingent formulation in an active subjecthood. A similar relation is posited by Lacan in his famous assertion that 'there is no sexual relation'. For Freud and Lacan, the all too human sexual drive derives from its deviated enjoyment of the failure to enjoy a natural sexual relation as such – an inevitable castrated enjoyment, where 'natural' sexuality is revealed as impossible. In other words, sexuality is for Lacan and Freud its own distortion of the category of 'natural'. The sexual relation as 'natural' becomes a necessary fiction enjoyed by an objectless, paradoxical libido (hence the proposition that fantasy 'plugs the hole' in an incomplete desire). The sexual drive is in itself a fetishist distortion, where it embodies its failed relation to a natural 'state of things'. Sexuality finds a way to gain an excess enjoyment out of the fact that it can only posit any 'natural' end to sexuality through the internal contradiction that such an end contains. This paper would explore precisely this fiction of 'nature' in sexuality and in Hegel, as a structuring necessity of sexuality as such, and as the dialectical reversion characteristic of the artistic Idea.

Biography

Rafael is a Swedish-Francophone PhD student specialising in Psychoanalytic Theory and Philosophy and recent graduate of the Master's program in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies. His research interests centre around understanding the intersection between psychoanalysis (in particular Freud, Lacan, and Laplanche) and philosophy (in particular German Idealism and 20th century continental philosophy). He has published in philosophical/theoretical journals on topics such as philosophy, psychoanalysis, film, and neuroscience, and currently work on book-chapters/articles in English and Swedish, which generally focus on the presentation of ontological paradoxes constitutive of everyday life (a project which he thinks Freud and the German Idealists had in common).

*The Burari Deaths:
Acting out as a mode of subaltern speech?*

Ritika Shah

Abstract

This paper will examine the dissonance and overlaps between subaltern theory and psychoanalysis by bringing scholars such as Antonio Gramsci, Ranjit Guha, and Gayatri Spivak into conversation with Freud and Lacan. In her seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak posits a discontinuity between subjectivity and agency by insisting on the subaltern's failed speech. For the subaltern, and especially the gendered subaltern, this discontinuity between subject and agent destabilises any attempts at collective unity. By bringing these propositions of failed speech and the impossibility of collective agency to psychoanalytic theory, the article will ask what the status of such a non-subject in psychoanalytic theory might be. When and why does a subject fail to speak? What prevents a subject from accessing group unity? Is there a position between non-subject and complete subject, failed and full speech that might be accessible to the subaltern? And if a mode of speech between failed and full speech can be identified as accessible for the subaltern, what psychoanalytic interpretations and interventions become possible? These questions will be explored through Freud's Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, where he reflects on mechanisms underlying group unity, and Lacan's Seminar X, where he develops the concept of 'acting out' as a coded message for a deaf Other. The theoretical concepts will be explored with the help of a singular example of the Burari case, which occurred in Delhi in 2018, where a group of 11 committed suicide, leaving few traces behind for the analyst's interpretation.

Biography

Ritika Shah is a London-based researcher and writer. An alumnus of Theoretical Psychoanalysis (MSc) from University College London, she is completing her second Master's in Philosophy from IGNOU (India) and has an undergraduate degree in Economics from the University of Delhi. Researching questions at the intersection of culture and psychopathology, Ritika integrates psychoanalysis and philosophy, particularly postcoloniality and feminism. She is a Research and Editorial Assistant to the Vice-President (Education) at Queen Mary University of London. Previously, she worked at various think tanks, such as the Centre for Civil Society and Trayas Foundation. Her writings have been published in The Print, Mint, Hindustan Times, and Journal of Indian Law and Society.

Fräulein Else's Passage à l'acte

Ruby Towers

Abstract

Arthur Schnitzler was one of the most central figures of Viennese modernism—working at the Habsburg metropolis the same time as Freud. In a letter to him, Freud wrote: ‘I have gained the impression that you have learnt through intuition—though actually as a result of sensitive introspection—everything that I have had to unearth by laborious work on other persons’. Freud references his work several times to provide literary illustrations for his psychoanalytic theories. I propose using Schnitzler’s 1924 novella *Fräulein Else* to better understand Lacan’s *Passage à l’acte*. This concept and specifically a distinction between it and Acting Out does not seem to exist in other psychoanalytic paradigms. Indeed, even within French psychoanalytic circles, the terms are sometimes conflated. I deem the distinction crucial for the clinic, especially when working with acts of violence, self-harm, and suicide. Both acts are two different paths a Subject can take to transform their anxiety, but with very different destinies. Acting Out has a demonstrative function: it has a communicative purpose, a message for the Other, and can be viewed as an attempt for the Subject find symbolic foothold in the world. But it is *Passage à l’acte* that poor Else seems to choose as she puts an end to an unbearable situation; after a scene of insufferable embarrassment, she exits the stage by overdosing on Veronal. Using Lacanian theory alongside Schnitzler’s novella, I hope to further psychoanalytic insight by, for example, investigating the triggers of the respective acts.

Biography

Ruby is currently studying at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research (CFAR) after graduating from UCL’s MSc in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies in 2022. She has previously studied Psychodynamic Counselling at the University of Oxford and Psychotherapy Studies at University College Dublin at postgraduate level. For the past few years, she has been working closely with people who experience and act on their suicidal thoughts. Next year, she hopes to begin a PHD in this area at UCL. Today’s presentation will return to a novella she read during her undergraduate degree that has been somewhat of an ‘après-coup’ for her research on suicide.

Mentalising Internalised Stigma

Wilson Adolfo Gallego Hoyos

Abstract

The author departs from the idea that mentalising, an imaginative process aimed at generating coherent narratives to elucidate behaviour based on the underlying cognitive processes that give rise to it, is a versatile concept applicable across different psychotherapeutic models. Following the concept's development and based in his clinical experience, the author explores the notion that internalised stigma/homophobia emerges as a failure of the child's environment to mirror and validate the spontaneous expression of some elements of the self. This Confusion of Tongues, in Ferenczi's sense, provides fertile ground for a traumatic experience. As such, the negative response becomes part of the self by creating a self-critical and shameful stance that finds its place within an alien self. The maintenance of this alien self will fluctuate depending on the widened social response, and the developing person's biological endowment. The author illustrates his considerations through clinical vignettes.

Biography

Wilson Gallego Hoyos is a Clinical Psychologist and Alumnus of the MSc in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies and the PhD programme at the UCL Psychoanalysis Unit. He is also a Psychosexual and Relationship Therapist with an Interest in Gender, Sex and Relationship Diversity.

He works as a Principal Clinical Psychologist with a Psych-Liaison and Psychological medicine Team in London and in private practice.

*The Quest for Everything:
A Neuropsychanalytic Exploration of Human Destructiveness*

Ali Bagherzanjani

Abstract

Freud, in investigating the origins of human destructiveness, moved beyond the pleasure principle and argued about the presence of instinctual impulses—in opposition to the life drives—within the psychical apparatus whereby the organism resorts to earlier states of life and recedes into inanimateness and inertia. He referred to this archaic force as the “death drive” and stated that such a tendency toward the elimination of tension and keeping constant is diverted into the external world by the muscular apparatus, manifesting itself as the pursuit of mastery of power.

Winnicott, considering the synthesis of the concepts of death and drive unfounded, put forward a contrasting point of view by asserting a primordial unity between the forces of life and destruction. In Winnicott’s viewpoint, destructiveness was inextricably intertwined with the aliveness of tissues, bodily functions, and sensory experiences. Destructive impulses once again appertained to movement; nonetheless, they contributed fundamentally to the exploration of the world and the institution of the reality principle.

Decades later, Panksepp introduced basic emotional systems and stated that all human strivings were ultimately driven by ancient neurochemical networks of the subcortical regions of mammalian brains. In particular, the SEEKING system featured persistent forward locomotion and engagement with the world and had a goalless exploratory inquisitiveness which provided dynamic support for all other emotions.

The present paper, bringing together psychoanalysis and affective neuroscience, attempts to discuss the development of Freud’s conception of human destructiveness amidst Winnicott and Panksepp’s convergent approaches to the human navigation of the world.

Biography

Ali Bagherzanjani was born in Tehran, Iran. He received a master’s degree in clinical psychology at Allameh Tabatabai’ University in 2017. In 2021, he was awarded a Chevening scholarship and moved to England for a year to study Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies at University College London. Following his graduation with his second master’s degree, he returned to Tehran and started working at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He is currently a senior durable solutions assistant, attempting to empower Afghan refugees in Iran via their local integration or resettlement to third countries.

Searching for synthesis: How Bowlby, Anna Freud and Winnicott combine to benefit short term talking therapy

Gillian Wells

Abstract

After the Controversial Discussions of 1942-44, there was an agreement between Kleinians, Freudians and Independents to find a *modus vivendi*, despite irreconcilable differences in their interpretation of the psychoanalytic idea. In this paper I argue that in looking at the work of such apparently different thinkers as Winnicott, Anna Freud and John Bowlby it is possible to identify, beneath continuing antagonisms, a subsequent, if sometimes grudging (and for the most part unacknowledged) movement towards a rough synthesis, one which has been vital to recent developments: most importantly as part of the psychoanalytic theory underpinning new models for short term therapy such as those developed by Fonagy, Hepworth and Lemma.

The paper will show that it is not possible to entertain such a synthesis or its efficacy without examining three major factors: first, the way these three thinkers looked at the crucial role played by environment, and by implication separation. This consensus (though theories differed) is crucial. Second was their understanding of the vital importance of the transference and what part it should play. Third, acting as an additional glue was that all three thinkers were reluctant to loosen ties completely with Freudian theory. These factors would mitigate their differences around drive theory, object relations and psychosexual development, and allow more common ground than is usually credited. It is on such ground that contemporary theorists have combined the powerful ideas offered by A Freud (*Developmental Lines*), Winnicott (*The Capacity for Concern*), Bowlby (*The Secure Base*) into the much needed, analytic but short term, therapeutic methods.

Biography

Gillian Wells is an accredited psychodynamic psychotherapist who trained after a career in the media as a producer, writer and director. In addition to an MA in English Literature, she completed the MSc Course in Theoretical Psychoanalysis at UCL in 2022. She became interested in the theory and the value of short term, psychoanalytically based therapy during her time at UCL and recently completed a course in Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy (short term psychoanalytic) at the Anna Freud Centre. She will continue further training under supervision. She works in private practice and as a psychotherapist at Waterloo Community Counselling.

How can Winnicott's concept the 'use of an object' develop understanding of the psychoanalytic concept of narcissism?

Gabby Waghorn

Abstract

When tracing the evolution of the concept of narcissism in psychoanalytic theory, it becomes clear to see that different schools of thought, or different paradigms, within psychoanalytic theory, use the concept of narcissism differently. This can be explained by the underlying theoretical assumptions of different paradigms. Does looking through the lens of the Winnicottian paradigm, provides a useful and original insight into how narcissism is understood and incorporated in psychoanalytic theory to date?

I will explore how Winnicott (1969), in his paper 'the use of an object', understands the process of an infant achieving a sense of being a separate and integrated self, through the destruction of the object and the object's survival, leading to the object being able to be 'used' by the infant. How this process begins on the assumption of primary narcissism (Roussillon, 2010) making it a clinically useful concept, will also be explored. Furthermore, I will focus on the importance of Abram's major advances of Winnicott's formulations, especially the concept survival-of-the-object and the dual concept of a surviving object and non surviving object (Abram 2022). I will explore whether there is an implicit theory of narcissism woven into Winnicott's (1969) concept of 'the use of an object.' I hope to contribute to the advancement of the understanding of the concept of narcissism in psychoanalysis from a Winnicottian perspective by setting out Winnicott's theory of narcissism explicitly.

Biography

Gabby Waghorn is a candidate at the Institute of Psychoanalysis passionate about Winnicott's work. Gabby completed the MSc in Theoretical Psychoanalysis at UCL and is now undertaking a PhD in Psychoanalytic Studies in the Department.