

Title: The Smokey Mirror and the Relational Field---James Pearl, Ph.D.

The following case presentation is framed with two major themes in mind. An initial theme is a definition of a relational field and its importance for deepening human connection. I infer that deeply 'witnessing', 'listening' and interacting with the other's experience is a mutually creative formula for generative analytic change. A second theme is based on clinical work that has catalyzed a curiosity about dissociation. I have observed that an emergence of painful memories may affect the clinical dyad in both directions. Clinical work has also shown that dissociation is multi-faceted in that it can spontaneously emerge or unconsciously be transmitted as a latent memory of traumatic events throughout an ancestral field. The current uncertainty, pervasive in the world, may be individually experienced as 'emotionally flooding' stemming outside oneself. I view this phenomenon as a psychological epigenetics of sorts.

Trauma experienced as an adult or a child, can be linked to dissociation as a defensive mechanism to protect against emotional flooding and subsequent dis-regulation. Painful memories and concurrent phantasies may be over-laid on a present anxiety provoking event catalyzing an experience of temporality moving interchangeably from present to past/and or future. It is also apparent that the emergence of latent traumatic memories can induce a psychological 'split' that has a clinical connotation with 'psychosis'. This categorical diagnosis is quite relevant to the present condition of humanity. It has been stated that 'psychosis' is endemic in the human condition and the world's political leaders have not been conscious of how lack of empathy and irresponsible polarizing positions accelerate geopolitical, technological, and ecological upheaval. I hope to demonstrate with the following case presentation, how politically motivated uncertainty catalyzes and may be generated by dissociated, split off psychic aspects of political leaders.

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Key Words: dissociation, relational field, witnessing, temporality, uncanny phenomenon, metaphor, associations, oneiric reverie, selective attention, split.

One can hypothesize that the phenomenon of 'intuited knowing' is an awakening of ancestral or trans-generational awareness, where an infant's early maternal bonding brought to the present, is the psychical conduit. Bollas' famous work on the 'unthought known' is quite applicable here. I believe that this idea is partially what was written about in his book titled "The Shadow of the Object" (1987). The mother imago serves as the object and the ancestral past is the shadow. H. Faimberg (1989) identifies and writes about and labels this phenomenon, 'the telescoping of the past'. My interpretation and explanation is that the origination of the telescoping comes from the maternal bonding field, which is the conduit to the ancestral history. M.A. Silverman (in Katz et al. 2017) utilized Bion's idea: "Mother receives the baby's communication about its distressing overwhelming, chaotic and inchoate, negative and as yet un-definable sensations (beta elements). The mother willingly contains them within herself while she empathetically detoxifies and organizes them via 'reverie, and she returns them to the child in a clearer and more manageable form (alpha elements) through her contained alpha function" (p.73). It may follow that the ancestral past brought to the present in an analytic process is a collapse in temporality originating within the early dynamic field between mother and infant. My view possibly equates with Bion (1962), who wrote about the analytic 'field' as a 'container'. The analytic container serves as a holding function in order to protect an analysand from traumatized and split off aspects of self. Bion's idea of a field is very different from the model proposed by M. and W. Barranger (1961/1962). They view the 'field' as a mutually created relational connection. Bion's containing field appears to be similar to Winnicott's idea of 'holding' by the analyst exclusively, as a mother holds and regulates the emotions of the infant. Bion viewed unconscious process, according to Grotstein (2007), as a mysterious source of creativity, imagination, and ultimate generator of dreams and O (truth) (p.8). His idea suggests to me that the proto-memory of an infant's beta elements may re-emerge within the container of analysis, and also may give rise to dissonant 'uncanny' experiences.

Some relational theorists such as P. Bromberg (1998) equate dissonance with dissociation. I believe that dissociation is also a dynamic process of selective attention that moves between consciousness and unconsciousness. The case presentation below will represent and illuminate various psychoanalytic themes that arise when and space-time boundaries seem to collapse with the transference being the origination point. I want to be clear here that there is no implication of any form of analytic collusion or 'merging' without analytic thinking. I am implying the absolute necessity for the analyst to witness oneself, inner objects, etc. as well as the other's aspects of self. This is an example of psychically being in two places at once. Emotionally charged empathic resonance and thinking are simultaneous for the analyst in the holding process. Bollas (1987) views this as an experience of rapport with the other before the existence of language. "The aesthetic experience (un-thought known) is an existential recollection of the time when communicating took place primarily

through the illusion of deep rapport of subject and object” (p.32).

I have clinically observed that an awakening of latent trans-generational, traumatic, and epigenetic themes brought to consciousness, may elicit 'uncanny' experience through reverie, dreams, and parapraxis. I will demonstrate this by giving a clinical vignette and attempt to show how these themes can amplify, heighten, and further the process of analysis. This project can be viewed as an attempt at integrating psychic transmissions in the analytic dyad, leading to mutual transformation. The transformative process arises out of the analytic field, amplified by a transference-countertransference matrix.

Harris et. al. (2016) writing on “Ghosts in the Treatment Room” possibly infers a perspective on the current political environment, which has catalyzed psychological interest in ancestral 'ghosts' that emerge in treatment. This idea certainly is applicable as trans-generational trauma appears to be embedded in the transference-countertransference matrix. I will integrate this important topic by weaving a pattern of 'knowing' by the analyst before the analysand becomes consciously able to articulate, draw, and process psychological links. The phenomenon of an analyst 'knowing' before the analysand is able to articulate a representation, possibly is based on mutually created associations, metaphors, phantasies, and reveries. At times, this can be viewed a synchronous 'knowing', which I interpret as an uncanny, oneiric understanding that potentially crosses space-time barriers within the analytic process. My hypothesis is that a deeply 'felt' analytic connection enables the quieting of mind and thus unconscious transmission in the form of oneiric reverie. Ogden (2014) wrote about this phenomenon as it pertains to the analytic space labeling it oneiric reverie. I equate this with a sensory and/or bodily experience, which is an implicit intuitive sense that emerges and re-emerges throughout an analysis.

Various analysts see and hear in many ways. Some are sensory, others are auditory, and sometimes, transmitted information comes through a visual sense. For instance, I recently visualized an analysand's great grandparent as having fought for the (grey) South in the civil war. There had been no narrative expressed, but later in our sessions together, my analysand linked his paternal 'resistance' with the civil war. One could state that this is a manifestation of an Oedipal conflict. Possibly, based on a certain analytic lens, but I am stating that there is something else unfolding! My oneiric image had much to do with his held in feeling of anger and lack of empathy that his paternal grandfather also felt. My patient did not speak of his internalized relationship at that time in our process. Eigen's (2016) idea of a 'felt' sense always encounters the unfolding of something unknown. The intersection of the known and unknown emergent imagery is usually stimulating for both the analyst and analysand. My example speaks to when an analyst intuitively senses an aspect of an analysand's ancestral history before it is spoken in a session. It is apparent that this form of imagery emerging in the analysis arises from unspoken 'gaps'. When strong imagery emerges and is uncannily transmitted to the analyst, it is vital not to take this as historical fact, only a source of information to be explored. The analysis itself may be amplifying

what Gerson (2009) has labeled the 'dead third'. This living phantom as a trans-generational transmission was the split off and deadened angry self that was transmitted from father to son and manifested as a repetitive or repetition compulsion (Freud). The following dream will serve as an example of how an analyst's 'witnessing' and reveries can be viewed as a catalyst for relational transformation.

### Awakening the Ancestors

Letti commenced twice weekly analytic sessions for bouts of severe anxiety. She was thirty-two when her treatment began. Within the first month, Letti brought a dream into the session. I asked her to draw the dream image as she had been dissociating in previous sessions with emergent images flooding images. It was difficult for her to verbally express what she was experiencing at times. The following dream emotionally affected Letti and her body language became noticeably regressed to a fetal position. Her vocal intonations were higher in pitch and softer. Letti's anxiety was palpable and permeated the treatment room.

### Letti's Dream:

The initial image that stood out for me was a barbed wire fence. Behind the wire fence was a very young girl and above was a floating head of a female with a crown. Her face had a contorted and devious smile. There was a small stone building behind the fence and all the dream figures were presented in black and white tones. My analytic method was not to interpret the dream but to witness the imagery and emotionality. I attempted to 'feel' into the images as Letti described her experience. An uncanny or inexplicable preoccupation emerged into my awareness as I listened to her description of the images. Letti spoke and experienced herself behind the barbed wire with strong bodily sensations and feelings of being small and trapped. She associated the crowned head with her emotionally abandoning and sadistic mother. Shabad (2006) describes a similar traumatic theme as "a psychic loss of a physically present parent, in which a child's underlying hopes for an idealized parent are repeatedly disillusioned by enacted character faults of the frustratingly real parent" (p.387). I immediately intuited the potential for a maternal introjection, which could manifest as sadomasochistic rage. I am aware that my own anxiety may have been triggered observing the face of the crowned image.

For a brief moment, I felt my own capacity for dissociation. Winnicott (1960) stressed that lack of maternal emotional and/or physical nurturing will affect an infant's nascent ego capabilities and the child will suffer, perhaps irreparably. The dream content also brought up associations as well as imagery for me with Nazi experimentation on children. I had no comprehension as to why these nauseating feelings came up at that time. I contained feelings of outrage at the imagined abuse that could be viewed as countertransference in a classical sense, but I do not believe that was the case in this instance. The following session, Letti described the stone house behind the barbed wire. She stated that a man was in the house and she did not recognize him. I distrusted her statement and felt that she did recognize the man, based on her body language and affect. I then had a phantasy that her father was the victim of Nazi perpetration as a child. I questioned and reflected on my intuited narrative as I had no explicit information as to the historical validity. Later dreams that Letti presented indicated that the man in the stone house was her father. The dreams brought up explicit memories of sexual molestation by him.

Symbolic particulars of future dreams as well as trust and love in the transference (parental aspects representing nurturing) fostered Letti's feeling of trust and safety, a verbal expression of her traumatic childhood. I am in full realization that love and desire in the transference may be problematic in cases of sadistic parental trauma and abuse. I was fully aware of her pull for a boundary violation. Sadomasochistic rage and hatred at not being loved could potentially be expressed with a suicidal enactment. I felt anxiety with this awareness and at a later stage in her analytic process, made a contract with Letti, regarding suicidal ideation that did in fact occur. I thought that it was prudent to bring in a psychiatrist at this stage in the treatment. Approximately six months later Letti was able to tell me the extent of the abuse involving her entire family. Throughout this process, I uncannily intuited through bodily feelings, reverie, metaphor, and imagery, important information about her father's childhood during the war before she was able to articulate it. He was hidden from the Nazis by a Hungarian family and then sexually molested by the family patriarch whom was supposed to be harboring him. I was aware that internalized sadism and images of abuse arise via the analytic process. Letti's 'ambivalent' nature of her relationship with her father became apparent, which was both nurturing and abusive. I wonder if this was a repetition of the traumatic 'ghost' of her father's childhood trauma.

Letti's experience and latent memory of multiple traumas catalyzes a defensive dissociative reaction, especially at times of heightened anxiety. An example is when a candle fell over on the table. There was nothing burnt and the table was glass. Letti was nonetheless flooded with terror and the consequent images of her house burning down with her children perishing. Her experience is analogous to Modell's (2003/2009) idea of the freezing of the past. Trans generational trauma can be re-experienced as timelessness. Letti subsequently informed me her paternal grandfather was immolated by Nazi soldiers. She also mentioned that she witnessed an entire family perish in a fire in her neighborhood as a child. She then stated that she was scared as she did not know where she was for a while when the candle fell over. Her experience and emergence of latent traumatic memory became enmeshed in a flooding experience with the present happening. This experience can be

described as a dissociative shadow that follows Letti. Helping her focus and ground in the present, being in touch with bodily sensations, as well as the various linkages with the past became vital aspects of the therapeutic process. Writing, music, and poetic expression helped Letti to stay present and experiment with viewing and interpreting her daily experience.

.....As her analysis deepened with more reflection, a curious transmission between us emerged. I had a waking dream as Letti spoke about her monotheistic belief. My reverie was that a female's hand reached out and took me by the hand to an ancient sand stone structure located in the Middle East. I viewed the building with awe as we approached. We both entered the structure and discovered a polytheistic society. I observed and felt overt sexuality eg. dancing etc. Uncannily, after the session I decided to draw a Tarot card and drew the high priestess whom opens the doorway to the unconscious. Could this synchronicity apply to my reverie? It is entirely possible that our deepening connection opened a doorway for a mutual dialogue regarding Letti's sexual desires and dissonance due to sexual molestation. Letti had a fear of her body and sexual desire, which tied into her orthodox religious orientation (father). She spoke of her desire for bisexual expression as well as her fear of it.

Letti expressed bodily shame and a short period later, she had a sexual affair with a woman. In following sessions, she began to express herself with more imagination, It is apparent to me that our mutual dialogue regarding the waking dream deepened our psychic connection....the Smokey Mirror, analytic love and sensuality, and bodily aliveness. Letti began to love herself. Mutual psychic observation became alive with meaning---we both became empty observers of psyche unfolding and emerging.

## Summary

Freud (1899/1901) wrote about the convergence between past and present as 'screens' for memories. Dahl (2010) writes about Freud's acausal time vector known as 'Nachtraglichkeit'. He points out how Freud understood a backward movement of time that allows for an analytic comprehension of unconscious fantasies. A. Modell (1990) also elaborates on an idea he labels 'emotional category'. "An experience of the present in some way is like an experience of the past."

The Classical Chinese poetry of Wang Wei arises out of a 3,000 year old tradition of Ch'an Buddhism and Taoist thought. This is a method for the exploration of 'reality' beyond words. This is a form of 'listening' much like Winnicott and Khan utilized. It is labeled as 'tzu-jan' and is a form of thought emerging from emptiness and disappearing back into it. The viewer is separate from the mental process of thought and memory and allows it to rise and fall. Silencing restless thought allows the generative realm of non-being to emerge.

This is what I have referred too in this paper as deep relational connection.

Once the self and it's constructions of the world dissolve away into the emptiness of non-being, what remains of us is empty consciousness itself....

Hilton (2006)

The thesis that I have presented in this paper is that relational and empathetic attunement heightens a rich connection that paves the way for individual and societal health. One may state that analytic love quiets the mind. I am positing that this is another facet of the transference-countertransference matrix described by Ferenczi via his 'mutual analysis' with Elizabeth Severin. The current political environment engendering and encouraging polarity and dissociative splits, clearly is fostering a depressive, unimaginative, and non-feeling societies. It is apparent that the projections of power and greed of certain of the world's leaders is catalyzing unconscious and split off memories underlying our ancestral wounds.

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Abstract and Presentation  
Trauma/ and or Fragmentation

Thank You,

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