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Psychosocial Studies with Psychoanalysis

Introduction

Psychosocial studies takes many forms, but in this article is presented as an emerging intellectual practice that works in a transdisciplinary way across psychology, sociology and several related disciplines (anthropology, feminism, postcolonial studies, queer studies, etc). It is derived particularly from European (especially British) traditions of critical social psychology and sociology, critical theory and political and social psychoanalysis. Its primary concern is with the ways in which psychic and social processes demand to be understood as implicated in each other, as mutually constitutive and co-produced, and hence always to be read together.

Psychosocial studies stands in a relationship of tension with psychology: it draws on psychological knowledge but seeks to situate it historically and culturally, and especially to explore how psychological knowledge can itself be constitutive of the 'reflexive' human subject (Frosh, 2003). It is also in a critical relationship with sociology, which tends to neglect the contradictory and often irrational 'inner' (subjective) experiences of human subjects but instead to abstract them into rational social forms. As Roseneil (2006, p.847) puts it, a psychosocial analysis 'seeks to transcend the dualism of the individual and the social, and takes seriously the realm of the intra-psychic, "the power of feelings" and the dynamic unconscious, but does so without engaging in either psychological or sociological reductionism.'

Psychosocial studies is methodologically and theoretically diverse, drawing on a wide range of intellectual resources. However, psychoanalysis has often taken a privileged position within this diversity, because of its well-developed conceptual vocabulary that can be put to use to theorise the psychosocial subject. Psychoanalysis' practices have also become a model for some aspects of psychosocial work, especially in relation to its focus on intense study of individuals (psychosocial studies has been primarily qualitative in its research orientation), its explicit engagement with ethical relations, and its traversing of disciplinary boundaries across the arts, humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, this possible hegemony of psychoanalytic discourse (which at times has made psychosocial studies seem like a branch of psychoanalytic studies) produces tensions with some other components of the psychosocial studies enterprise: notably, postcolonial and queer studies. This 'dispute' also governs debates about the type of psychoanalysis that might be most appropriate for psychosocial studies – for example, between British School and relational thinking on one side, and Lacanian on the other (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). The debate about the place of psychoanalysis in psychosocial studies is radically different from the longstanding question of the status of psychoanalysis as 'science' (Frosh, 2006; Grünbaum, 2002); here, the issue is not whether psychoanalysis is 'objective' and empirically established, but rather whether and how it can be deployed as an ethical practice in the context of an emergent area of socially progressive critical research.

This article begins with a brief description of some principles of psychosocial thinking, including its transdisciplinarity and criticality and its interest in ethics and in reflexivity. It will then explore the place of psychoanalysis in this and present the case for psychoanalysis' continuing contribution to the development of psychosocial studies. It will be argued that this case is a strong one, but that the critique of psychoanalysis from the discursive, postcolonial, feminist and queer perspectives that are also found in psychosocial studies is important. The claim will

be made that the engagement between psychoanalysis and its psychosocial critics is fundamentally productive. Even though it generates real tensions, these tensions are necessary and significant, reflecting genuine struggles over how best to understand the socially constructed human subject.

Transdisciplinarity, criticality, reflexivity and ethics

Psychosocial studies is a ‘transdisciplinary’ practice that aims to disrupt the premises on which psychology and sociology are based through interrogating them with concepts that derive from a set of critical theories, including critical and discursive psychology, but extending to poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, queer theory, phenomenology and – crucially – psychoanalysis. Its key notions do not circulate so much around power (although this is clearly relevant to its analyses) but to the idea of the transdisciplinary as a ‘decolonising’ practice of disruption of disciplinary authority. This distinguishes psychosocial studies from interdisciplinary projects, which themselves can be critical practices, but which can be understood to aim to establish new disciplines out of old ones. For example, cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field drawn from psychology and neuroscience; it does not aim to deconstruct either of these ‘parent’ disciplines but rather to establish a new hybrid that will eventually constitute a discipline of its own. In contrast, transdisciplinarity invokes a movement across disciplinary boundaries that is always restless and unsettling, or as Lisa Baraitser (2015, p.212) puts it, the ‘trans’ in transdisciplinary suggests that, ‘there are practices, objects, methods, concepts and knowledges that do not firmly belong within one disciplinary field or another, but move amongst them, somehow beyond the reach of disciplinarity.’ Baraitser goes on to offer a critique of the romance of freedom implicit in this formulation in terms of the ‘temporal drag’ of concepts that reappear as reminders of a history and tradition of thought that might have been occluded and that requires, or allows, reinvention in new domains.

Commenting on the idea of movement across disciplinary and other boundaries, she suggests that (p.213), ‘such movement may not be as untethered as we wish, and that we are never free of the history of both normative and emancipatory elements of field formation.’ Nevertheless, psychosocial studies lays claim to an idea of motion across apparently fixed fields, notably those positioning ‘subject’ and ‘other’ as opposed and distinct. This motion is also *critical*, in two related senses. The first is that it refuses to take the existing state of disciplines as settled, but instead is interested in the conditions of formation (historical and political as well as intellectual) of these disciplines, an approach that could perhaps be derived from deconstructionism, which is certainly part of its genealogy (Derrida, 1976). The second sense of critical used here is related to this, but respects the general affiliation of psychosocial studies to a ‘progressive’ mode of thought dedicated to the use of ideas and research to promote human flourishing. That is, psychosocial studies has shown itself committed to opposition towards (i.e. to being ‘critical of’) authoritarianism and anti-democratic practices.

Understood in these ways, the transdisciplinarity and criticality that characterise psychosocial studies link with two fundamental concerns or ‘commitments’, echoing similar concerns in psychoanalysis: reflexivity and ethics. Both the productivity and restrictiveness of psychosocial theory can be examined through reference to *reflexivity*. This claims that people and the socialities of which they are part *use* ideas in order to create themselves; they are, in this specific sense, meaning-making entities, responsive to the ideas that surround them. Under these circumstances, researchers and research activity are theorised as contributing to the

production of knowledge, rather than just uncovering or discovering what is already there. Reflexivity points to a potentially subversive procedure in which there is analysis of the conditions of emergence of knowledge as well as the apparent objects of knowledge themselves. Consistent with this is the vision of research as a mode of knowledge production that directly implicates the subjective presence of the researcher within the account of the object of study – a position opposed to the traditional objectivism of much social ‘science’. Further practice relevance is generated through the close historical association between psychosocial studies and psychoanalytic modes of psychotherapy. Psychosocial theory is often critical of the ‘therapeutic’ as an aim, seeing it as potentially normalising in a way that has been theorised by radical (Jacoby, 1975) and (some) liberal (Rieff, 1966) critics for many years. Psychosocial studies nevertheless engages with questions of how the subject of psychoanalysis is constructed in the clinical arena, and what this might mean for psychotherapy. There is awareness of how the ‘patient’ comes into being through the activities of psychotherapy as a mode of self-understanding that is saturated with general social assumptions; crudely, we only know ourselves as patients because psychoanalysis exists. More broadly, psychosocial studies is also interested in ways in which psychological and sociological knowledge give rise to the phenomena that are studied within those disciplines. In this respect, psychosocial studies functions as a critical interrogation of the knowledge claims of the disciplines themselves, undertaken from the perspective that reflexivity means that their apparent ‘objects’ of study are themselves ‘subjects’, agents whose interaction with the cultural construction of understanding has to be constantly re-examined.

In psychosocial studies, ethical commitments loom large because they are, generally speaking, understood to be not only about how to protect research participants from harm or unnecessary distress (the main focus of research ethics committees) but also to engage with a key issue for psychosocial studies: how ‘we’ (as theorists and researchers) regulate ourselves in relation to others – how we deal with them, how we recognise their existence as ‘subjects’, how we acknowledge similarities and differences, what agency we ascribe to them, and so on. Following Emmanuel Levinas’ (1991) influential philosophy, what that means is that ethics becomes foundational to the intersubjective moment of encounter between subject and other, because being a human subject is defined as constituted by the capacity to take responsibility for the other. Ethical concerns spread from the interpersonal and ‘intersubjective’ through to the interethnic and international; they particularly harness themselves to situations in which a group feels itself to have been wronged by another group (Frosh, 2015) – a state of mind that is generally encountered when conflict arises. This means that psychosocial studies is interested in a variety of factors that bear on this expanded notion of ethics and form a kind of ‘agenda’, as well as a set of criteria for evaluating the worth of its activities that are found regularly in publications in the field. These ‘criteria’ are embedded in a small number of repeated ‘switch-words’: recognition, acknowledgment, identification, power, colonisation and emancipation.

The place of psychoanalysis in psychosocial studies

Many of the concerns of psychosocial studies make psychoanalysis an obvious place to look for conceptual and methodological ballast. Indeed, this is so much the case that there have been times when psychosocial studies and psychoanalytic studies have been used as almost interchangeable terms (see the discussions following Frosh and Baraitser, 2008). It is important to retain a sense of difference here, so that the distinctions and potentially creative tensions that

enter the field with psychoanalysis can be explored and absorbed. Nevertheless, the appeal is real: psychosocial studies needs a set of ideas about ‘interiority’ (Wetherell, 2012) in order to examine how the agentic subject can be more than just an epiphenomenon or ‘fold’ of the social (Blackman, 2008). Psychosocial studies, because of its focus on how the human subject acts as a nodal point for the meeting of social and personal ‘forces’, also requires ways of thinking about how what is apparently ‘out there’ (social) comes to be *experienced* as ‘in here’ (personal), and vice versa. Psychoanalysis offers an especially powerful and well worked out set of concepts that does exactly that, conveying the complexity of a mind in communication with itself, trying to resolve the contradictions of social experience intersecting with what seem to be personal desires. In its various forms, psychoanalysis has always been concerned with this question of how we make sense of, and manage, ourselves in a world in which social structures and events are felt, and have dynamic force, in the most intimate way. Psychoanalysis is also, in principle at least, ‘transdisciplinary’ and so meets one core ambition of psychosocial studies. It functions as an epistemology, a methodology and a practice across a very large intellectual space, traversing academic boundaries: literature, social theory, politics, law, art history and film studies are all infected by it, albeit controversially in the light of arguments against an imperialist tendency of psychoanalysis to act like a ‘master’ discipline in these areas (Felman, 1982; Frosh, 2010). These important ‘psychosocial’ attributes of psychoanalysis have made it an essential player in the new space of psychosocial studies, impossible to ignore even by those who choose not to deploy it in their own work

There are various ways in which psychoanalysis informs psychosocial studies.

Methodologically, psychoanalytic ideas and sensitivities have been combined with the predominantly qualitative empirical work carried out by psychosocial researchers (e.g. Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Hollway, 2015; Saville-Young and Frosh, 2010). In this, psychoanalytic ideas are commonly used to create a space for the theorisation of personal ‘meanings’ that are taken to be the ‘psyche’ side of the psychosocial binary – an approach which is of importance in resisting social reductionism but which also runs the risk of reproducing the individual-social divide that psychosocial studies is largely dedicated to critiquing. So, for example, the claim has often been made (e.g. Frosh and Saville Young, 2011) that psychoanalytic understandings of emotional investment and fantasy as unconscious formations can enrich interpretive understanding brought to bear on personal narratives, especially those arising out of interview situations. This would especially be the case with qualitative methods such as narrative analysis, where the approach to identifying and reproducing narratives or ‘stories’ often stops at the *descriptive* level, whilst psychoanalysis might be drawn on to make sense of the ‘why’ as well as the ‘how’ of story-telling – explaining contradictions and gaps in texts, or emotional flows and engagements with the listener or interviewer that seem either highly charged or noticeably resistant. In principle, this does not exclude social explanations as sources of this ‘why’, but in practice the traditions of psychoanalysis push towards biographical accounts focused on familial, interpersonal and ‘internal’ events.

This use of psychoanalysis seems to hold much promise, yet it has been disputed from at least two different positions that are themselves sympathetic to the psychosocial project. One is from discursive psychology, with its latter-day turn to affective-material practices (Billig, 1997; Wetherell, 2003, 2012). The issue here is what is argued to be a polarity between psychoanalysis’ ‘top-down’ expert-centred approach that postulates a hidden set of mental processes, and a more cautious observation of the everyday discursive and affective practices of

psychosocial subjects. From this discursive perspective, the phenomena interpreted psychoanalytically as mediated by a dynamic unconscious are actually produced through social activity and the linguistic transactions between subjects, and are not ghosted by any underlying unconscious presence. Margaret Wetherell cogently summarises the disagreement as follows. What she calls 'social psychoanalysis',

draws attention away from the organisation and normative logics of the unfolding situated episode, context, interaction, relation and practice and on to a hidden, determining, individual, psychic logic instead. People's emotions and responses will need skilful interpretation as they will not know what they do or why. The audiences for social psychoanalytic research (if not the participants themselves) will need to be told the real meaning of the presented experience, and informed about the real nature of the participants' feelings, revealed through extensive conversation with an authoritative analyst who can form an opinion as to what is being repressed. ... The interpretations social psychoanalysts ... develop presuppose and re-negotiate the very personal substance and most intimate self-understandings of their research participants. This leads to some obvious methodological and ethical quagmires. (Wetherell, 2012, pp.133-4)

As Wetherell implies, the difficulty here revolves around assumptions of a hidden interiority when social practices might themselves explain the psychosocial phenomena in question. This also implicates the elitist 'secret knowledge' required by researchers if they are to adopt psychoanalytic spectacles – a longstanding criticism of psychoanalytic ethics that has come from many places, not least critical sociologists as well as discursive psychologists. As many such critics have noted (e.g. Gellner, 1985), psychoanalysis too often looks like a 'mystical' system in which knowledge is transformative but not necessarily open to scrutiny; and this mysticism can be imported rather easily into other fields, something Freud (1910) himself, with his critique of 'wild analysis', knew very well.

This criticism connects with a second one, which actually comes from amongst those psychosocial researchers interested in the employment of psychoanalytic ideas (e.g. Frosh, 2010). The critique here is again that psychoanalysis can be used too knowingly as a way of fixing rather than opening out meanings when faced with empirical material from research participants. This is a debate that moves between the practice of psychosocial methodology and the theoretical issues involved when psychoanalysis is employed as a contributor or frame for psychosocial studies in general. In essence, the question can be thought about as being concerned with the function of an 'interpretation'. The seemingly incontestable claim that we might need to make sense of material where not everything is clear, raises important epistemological as well as methodological issues around what kind of 'sense' we might be seeking and, behind this, what assumptions are being made about the nature of the human subject, particularly whether these assumptions are at odds with the fundamental idea of the human subject as a 'social subject' that is a defining characteristic of psychosocial studies. There is also the issue of ethics in relation to Wetherell's point above: some kinds of interpretive practice seem to assume a 'knowing' researcher or therapist who positions the subject (the to-be-interpreted other) in accordance with a pre-existing grid of knowledge, a process that participates in what Butler (2005) terms 'ethical violence.' Other interpretive approaches may be less expert-oriented, more suggestive or collaborative, and these would certainly be better aligned with psychosocial studies' ethical commitments.

To take this more slowly, there is a tension between the *integrative* tendencies of some psychoanalytic approaches and the *disintegrative* or perhaps deconstructive tendencies of others. The paradigm cases here as reflected in the literature on psychosocial studies and psychoanalysis is between a ‘British School’, mostly Kleinian, approach adopted by some leading empirical researchers (e.g. Hollway, 2015) and a more Lacanian-influenced approach used by some other researchers (e.g. Parker, 2005; Frosh, 2007; Saville Young and Frosh, 2010; Hook, 2018). Also at issue here, in part, is the question of whether it makes sense to talk about ‘inner worlds’ or ‘interiority’ in the psychoanalytic sense of a depth arena that has to be mined for its secrets, based on the notion that it is below the ‘surface’ of observable phenomena that the truth of the subject lies. For some, such as Michael Rustin, who comes to psychosocial studies from the position of a sociologist working in and through (Kleinian) psychoanalysis, there is no doubting the value of such an understanding, even of its necessity. ‘The recognition or disclosure of such “depth” (of beliefs, desires, meanings, and intentions),’ he comments (Rustin, 2008, pp.411-2), ‘is what psychoanalysis has always been about, both in its clinical and broader social applications.’ Such an understanding has both epistemological and methodological consequences. The ‘depth’ account implies the existence of meanings beyond (‘below’) the level of accessibility of the subject, available to scrutiny only through complex processes that are usually dyadic and are always reflexive – those moments when an encounter with another person reveals something else going on other than what the subject intended or had previously noticed. Dreams, parapraxes and symptoms are the classic psychoanalytic instances here; but repetitive patterns of relating, especially as enacted in psychoanalysis itself and understood as materialisations of transference, are especially relevant to the psychosocial domain. The consequence of this is that there is an explicit opposition between the ‘presentation’ of the surface and the ‘truth’ of the depths, and these depths are *personal* depths: ideas, wishes, conflicts and desires that are in some way hidden ‘in’ the psyche. It should be noted that this does not mean that this mode of psychoanalysis is necessarily neglectful of the social domain. In fact, the postulation of interior depth can be highly suggestive socially. For example, in the Kleinian world view there is no social life that is not mediated by phantasy; equally, there is no inner world unpopulated by ‘objects’ that have been (psychologically) ‘internalised’ as a consequence of encounters with sociality. This relates too to some psychoanalytic ideas about otherness and trauma, particularly as exemplified in the writings of Jean Laplanche (1999), which have been taken up by several significant social theorists (Butler, 2005; Fletcher and Ray, 2014). What is notable here is that there is an assumption that the inner space of unconscious life is formed not from some pre-existent, constitutionally given set of drives but as a process of incorporation of ‘enigmatic messages’ from the *outside*, specifically from the mother of early experience. The key idea is that ‘messages’ from the mother carry the weight of *her* own unconscious desires, which cannot be ‘translated’ by the infant (the infant simply feels their consequence and significance, what might be thought of as their ‘charge’) and so are incorporated whole and unsymbolised ‘into’ the mind, forming the core around which unconscious life is organised. This theory posits a real interiority but places its source in something external to the subject; the subject is founded in and by otherness, making the ‘social’ intrinsic to the most ‘personal’ aspect of the psychoanalytic subject – the unconscious. Implied in this is a particular view of the unconscious not as a personal possession, but as a mode of *dispossession* whereby the subject is made alien to itself. This idea is taken even further in some of the psychosocial work that arises from encounters with Lacanian psychoanalysis (e.g. Parker, 2005). Here, the emphasis is on how psychoanalysis might disrupt ordinary sense-making; it is a practice of exploring not what a narrative might ‘mean’, but where it comes from and what it

produces, always expecting it to misfire and reveal the fragments of psychic life at its source. Put simply, this mode of psychoanalysis is suspicious of 'deep' meanings and instead finds truth in the encounter itself, in which various spin-outs of the unconscious are produced without ever solidifying into 'knowledge'. Psychoanalysis consequently becomes a reflexive process itself.

As might be obvious, this reading of psychoanalysis, which parallels some of the recent non-psychanalytic 'affect-oriented' or Deleuzian work on human subjectivity as a kind of 'folding' of the exterior (Blackman, 2008; Wetherell, 2012, p.128), presents problems for the empirical practice of psychosocial – or any other kind of – research. If psychoanalysis only works when it is turned on itself, what use can be made of it to help understand a 'real' object of study – for instance, the experience of people faced with violence, or intense public emotion, or trauma, or love? Psychosocial studies faces similar conundrums in answering the question of how, in the context of the interlacing subjectivities that characterise psychosocial research, one can analyse them in a reasonably convincing way attuned to the ethical project of supporting human flourishing. How does one advance psychosocial understanding if one is relentlessly suspicious of any fixed position, any interpretive framework that tries to pin down knowledge and locate it in the 'meanings' generated through interpretation of speech? In practice, as one might hope, the situation is less polarised, recognising the danger of dividing psychoanalytic approaches to psychosocial studies into two opposing camps, each claiming to be the more legitimate version. Claudia Lapping (2012, p.2) refers to the risk of closing down the opportunities offered by psychoanalysis and reifying the clinic as 'the originary point of reference.' Her work is an instance of a visible move towards 'critical eclecticism' along with an advancing recognition of the way psychoanalytic formulations are worked out in the context of particular individuals struggling to relate to one another. Following a parallel pragmatic line, different qualitative interpretive approaches within psychosocial studies have adopted various strategies for 'grounding' interpretation in close analysis of textual material and presenting this openly for scrutiny by readers. One approach to this (Saville Young and Frosh, 2010) has been to explore a process of 'concentric reflexivity' that begins with a tight discursive analysis of a speaker's account of some experience (in the cited paper, relationships with brothers) and moves 'outwards' to explore its relationship with theory and, in particular, the situated way in which narratives are produced in specific relational contexts (interviews in particular, but also diaries or ethnographic encounters). None of these concentric circles 'represents' the psychosocial subject; rather it is in the interplay of the concentric circles that the subject might be articulated, including the 'subjectivity' both of the researched and of the researcher. Concentric reflexivity is always unfinished because we can never reach a point where we are able to stand outside of assumptions and knowledge; therefore, the end point is not so much a conclusive 'finding' as the process of engaging in these reflexive interpretations and movements. Following this line of thought, psychosocial studies can deploy psychoanalytic understanding not only to 'fill out' the theory of the subject, but also to disrupt it. Just as psychosocial studies itself is 'trans' in relation to disciplines, so its engagement with psychoanalysis can be used to unsettle 'provincial' knowledge based on investments in expert positions.

This is a route into responding to a major challenge from Wetherell, presented as follows:

I want to argue that social psychoanalysis is both right and wrong. ... Social psychoanalysis tackles important questions and issues typically brushed aside in models of affect without a subject. ... It suggests that who performs affect, and their particular history, matters, and offers ways to think about this mattering. But, I think it is also the case that the dividing

lines between the psychic processes and social processes are much more blurred than social psychoanalysis suggests. The metaphor of an intrapsychic world with its own distinctive and irreducible processes hinged with social processes is misleading. (Wetherell, 2012, p.128)

To employ Wetherell's own language, this seems both right and wrong. It accurately portrays the strength of the psychoanalytic contribution to psychosocial studies, in suggesting that 'who performs affect' (and, one might add, who produces all sorts of ideas, desires and actions) 'and their particular history, matters, and offers ways to think about this mattering.' Without this, there remains a danger of sociological reductionism, leaving the space of the subject empty in a way that neglects agency and reduces subjectivity to an effect of the social, creating 'social dupes' rather than subjects. Wetherell is also accurate in pointing to the danger of delineating dividing lines that are too rigid, a kind of 'psycho-social' in which the two spheres have independent development, interacting as the person finds her or himself in the social 'environment', as in many social psychological formulations, but not mutually constitutive, flowing into one another as psychosocial theory proposes. However, this is not a necessary consequence of adoption of psychoanalytic perspectives in psychosocial studies, because there are ways of doing this that do, precisely, blur 'the dividing lines between the psychic processes and social processes.' Those modes of psychoanalysis that focus on exploring the processes that occur as unconscious material circulates within the intersubjective and social worlds – for instance, in empirical research based on narrative style interviews or group processes (e.g. Hughes, 2017), or more analytical and interpretive theoretical work aimed at larger social processes such as conflict and social violence (e.g. Hook, 2017) – do not necessarily assume a 'private space' of the interior that is untouched by social forms. Instead, the attention that psychosocial studies pays to the interweaving of social and personal can be enhanced by a set of concepts and practices drawn from psychoanalysis that attends in a highly focused way to exactly how this interweaving might take place: how the forces of the social, both in the form of 'other' people and of the 'Other' of the social order itself (Hook, 2008), operate to create exactly that 'private space', those sets of 'psychic processes' that are frequently bracketed off from social analysis. As an aside but also summary point here, one might note the usefulness of the term 'psychic', with its various occult associations. It suggests a mind that is somehow open to all kinds of flows and boundary violations, in which things come in from the 'exterior' and are transmitted from 'inside' in ways that contradict the idea of a firm inner-outer divide. 'Psychic' life is populated by many unknowns, which seem uncanny, mostly because their points of origin in the social world are so hard to trace.

Exterior Critiques

By way of conclusion, I want to briefly comment on the many tensions between psychoanalytically inclined researchers and those scholars who we might claim as 'psychosocial' but who are associated more with feminist, queer and postcolonial perspectives. The critiques of psychoanalysis from these perspectives have been extensive (e.g. Goldner, 2003; Greedharry, 2008) and cannot be reviewed in detail here. It is in relation to gender politics that the best-known work has taken place, both because of the strength of the feminist movement since the 1960s and the centrality of sexuality, sexual difference and gender to psychoanalysis itself. Freud's early vision of femininity, which he was always unhappy with (Freud, 1925) was contested by the second generation of psychoanalysts (especially women) in

the 1920s and 1930s. The rise of second wave feminism was to some extent predicated on a rejection of psychoanalysis, seen as a normalising discourse of patriarchy. Oedipal theory, which seems to insist on sexual differentiation along gender lines and to conflate gender identification/identity and sexual object choice, was (and is) regarded as a reactionary tool for sexual normativity and gender conformism, pathologising non-heterosexualities and gender diversities (Goldner, 2003; Benjamin, 2015). The increasing visibility of trans has also shown up psychoanalysis' transphobia (Gherovici, 2010), a process previously very visible in relation to its history of homophobia (Frosh, 2006). Nevertheless, the engagement between psychoanalytic and feminist thought, in which each could be seen as an internal critic of the other, has been one of the most important sources of change within psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis has also dynamically and controversially influenced feminist, gender and queer theory over the last four decades. Serious feminist writers with psychosocial investments such as Judith Butler (2005) and Lynne Segal (1999), both deeply embroiled in the political and philosophical understanding of gender, routinely deploy notions of unconscious life, albeit showing care to avoid reductiveness and individualism in so doing. Indeed, in Butler's case, the centrality of psychoanalysis has been very marked. Importantly, the key concepts she uses are not those put forward by Freud and later analysts as explaining sexual difference, so she does not really engage with such tribal points of dispute as castration anxiety and penis envy. It is rather the psychoanalytic formulation of mental mechanisms, particularly the identificatory ones described in Freud's (1917) *Mourning and Melancholia*, which give shape to her continuing interrogation of identity and identity politics. For her, for instance, in a highly influential move that also embraces (and provoked) queer thinking, the formations of heterosexual gender identity are 'melancholic', based on the occlusion of homosexuality in the formation of the social subject (Butler, 1997). Links between sexuality and gender are reinstated in this work, which sets a process of repudiation and melancholic loss at the core of gender identity. This theme has been taken up significantly in psychosocial thinking as one route into the question of how identities are both formed and subverted through the processes of social and sexual subjectification (Palacios, 2013; Sabsay, 2016).

The use of the psychoanalytic rendering of melancholia is also instructive in relation to postcolonial theory, where the critique of Freud's colonial assumptions (for example, the opposition 'civilised-savage' with which he worked in *Totem and Taboo* – Freud, 1913) is entrenched and persuasive, and where the continuing trace of these colonial assumptions is also very evident (Brickman, 2003; Andersen et al, 2011; Vyrgioti, 2018). It is striking, however, how much postcolonial theory has nevertheless drawn on psychoanalysis, either through this trope of melancholia (Khanna, 2004) or more often by referencing Fanon's (1952) foundational exposition of the psychic effects of coloniality, in which Lacanian (as well as Sartrean) ideas are drawn upon (e.g. Bhaba, 2004; but see Burman (2018) for a critique of Bhaba's representation of Fanon). The key issue here is not to absolve psychoanalysis of its colonial culpability – it clearly has shared in many racist assumptions and is still struggling with its own background notions of universal modes of psychic functioning, the ubiquity of family forms, and ideas about primitivity that often resurface in theory and in clinical work (Frosh, 2017). Nevertheless, perhaps precisely because of its colonialist stain, psychoanalysis offers a route towards explicating the workings of the colonial mind and its legacy in the postcolonial world. There have, for instance, been markedly successful attempts to understand the investments of the postcolonial subject in racist modes of thinking and feeling, from both Kleinian and Lacanian perspectives. In the former case, quite a robust account of the mechanisms of racist hate has

been developed out of analysis of the dynamics of projective identification and the 'lodging' of hated aspects of the psyche in derogated others (Rustin, 1991). In the latter case, the Lacanian idea of 'enjoyment' is a versatile, if still controversial, way of acknowledging the excitement with which racist imagery and identities are seized upon (Hook, 2018). What this suggests is that the tensions that exist between anti-racist and 'decolonising' perspectives and psychoanalysis are potentially productive in teasing out the ideological fault-lines with which all disciplines have to contend; and that in the context of psychosocial studies, psychoanalysis, as an exemplary instance of an approach that insinuates itself into intellectual work across many disciplines and carries with it both a colonial legacy and a set of ideas useful for intellectual activism, remains a prime site for such critical exploration.

The external critiques of psychoanalysis are not external to psychosocial studies but are rather amongst the fervent and fluid debates that run across this new transdisciplinary domain. For the reasons given in this paper, psychoanalysis has proved an indispensable tool for the development of psychosocial studies, offering it a vocabulary that can be taken up and developed to consider the inmixing of the 'psychic' and 'social' and also providing ballast for its ethical and transdisciplinary commitments. Equally, also for reasons given here, psychoanalysis retains a controversial position and has to be warded off from becoming definitional of psychosocial studies. The various critiques – methodological, discursive, ethical, queer, postcolonial – of psychoanalytic assumptions and orthodoxies are important in their own right and as sources of creative tension within psychosocial studies, forcing it to repeatedly reconsider its own founding principles. What does it take to become an ethical domain of academic practice? How well can we sustain a non-aligned, deconstructive position in relation to powerful existing disciplines? How can any approach with an investment in ideas of the 'inner' or 'personal' withstand critique from post-humanist and radical perspectives on social formation? How can psychosocial studies participate in a decolonising agenda in the social sciences if it injects psychoanalysis, with its own troubled implication in colonialism, into its core? Psychoanalysis helps in thinking through all these issues and it makes psychosocial studies vulnerable when it does so; it fuels disputes and provides a vocabulary with which we might understand what is going on when they occur. The hope is that so long as psychoanalysis' tendency to become a 'master discourse' can be restrained, these tensions and disputes will continue to be productive for the future of psychosocial studies as an ethical, transdisciplinary and critical field of work.

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