Creating Space to Meet the Other: Reflections on the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' Annual Conference, 2012

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the creation and experience of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' Annual Conference and its theme, "The Face of the Other". It is written by a member of the Conference Organising Committee in a personal capacity and from a personal perspective. The author's role on the Committee was largely focused on relationship-building and communication. The author — and article — suggests that the Committee and the Conference itself were influenced by our Association's aim to work toward partnership with Māori, as tangata whenua, people of this land. My reflections are influenced by my encounters with Committee colleagues, keynote and panel speakers, and two of the papers I attended.

Waitara

E whakaata ana tēnei tuhinga i te auahatanga me te wheako o te Hui ā-Tau a te Rōpū Kaimahi Hinengaro o Aotearo me tana kaupapa: "Te Kanohi o Tētahi Atu.". Nā tētahi o ngā mema o te Rōpū Whakahaere o te Hui i tuhi i raro i tōna ake mana, ā, mai hoki i ōna ake whakaaro wheako. Ko tā te kaituhi mahi i runga i te Komiti i te nuinga o te wā, e arotahi ana i ngā ara taura here whakawhitinga kōrero hoki. E hōmai ana te kaituhi-me te tuhinga-i mau te Komiti me te Huinga, ki raro i tā mātou whāinga ki te whai kia tūtahi ki te Māori, te tangata whenua. te tangata tuatahi o tēnei whenua. Ko aku whakaatanga i hua ake i aku tūtakitanga ki ngā hoa o te Komiti, ngā kaikōrero, mai i te kaikōrero matua ki ngā kaikōrero rārangi, ā, mai i ngā kauhau e rua i haere au ki te whakarongo.

Keywords: space; the Other; NZAP Conference; culture; the real; intersubjectivite; thirdness; surrender; identity

This paper discusses conference, specifically the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' (NZAP) 2012 Conference, as a space that stirred the psyches of members of the Organising Committee and of Conference participants. I discuss how the Conference space evoked and held intersubjective experiences that were both greatly enriched and challenged in our cultural, geographical context by the inevitable encounter with the cultural "Other", our Treaty partners. This Conference also intentionally created space for the sexual and gendered "Other". I will discuss these conference encounters that opened up the complexity and multiplicity of identity and identity categories.

I am influenced in my use of Lacan's theory of psychic structure, particularly his idea of "the real" (Lacan, 1964/1998b; see also Eyers, 2012) by two conference presentations (Anttila, 2012; Younger, 2012), and by my experiences at Conference, particularly following the panel presentations (Stuthridge, Moeke-Maxwell, Orange, Woodard, & Younger, 2012). I also draw on Benjamin's (2004) writing about intersubjectivity in clinical practice, and the creation of "thirdness" (Lacan, 1975/1991) as a function or "a vantage point" from which we might experience relationship, in order to articulate what, in my view, became the Conference "space" and which contained these encounters with the Other/s.

I suggest that a shared third, that is a relational space, was created at Conference as a result of the willingness of both Māori and Tau iwi to engage with the Conference theme, and from the willingness of Tau iwi to surrender to the Other — a letting go of the self in order to take in the Other's reality and point of view (Benjamin, 2004). As Benjamin has described this occurring in clinical practice, I suggest that at Conference our recognition of mutual influence and our willingness to meet the different Other allowed us to create a thirdness together.

Background

Once every six years, each region or branch of the NZAP is tasked with creating a conference: an opportunity to choose a theme that we, a regional group of psychotherapy practitioners, wants to construct, deconstruct, reveal, and enhance. The organising committees become the hosts, welcoming and accommodating guests and participants. They — we — also invite and line up presenters and debaters, and, to contain all of this, locate a physical space.

Within our organisation, and amongst those who come for therapy, are many who might take, or be given, the space of "Other". Within Māori, European and many cultures, there are those, who, by their very being or expression of being, results in them standing in a marginal place in relation to much of our theory and beliefs about psychological health and psychotherapy. As Donna Orange, one of our keynote speakers, stated at conference: "Culture defines us as other, and outsider, even to ourselves" (Orange in Stuthridge, Orange, Moeke-Maxwell, Woodard & Younger, 2012, p. 184).

In the experience of being other, much is learnt about the power of relationship, of

recognition and identification, of being outside or different from the mainstream. The Other learns the language/s of the dominant culture, whose members are positioned as subject and "right". The Other learns to translate this into the personal and cultural language with which they more naturally identify. As becoming or being made Other is not a neutral or mutual process, but one which is often the result of oppression, discounting and, in this country, colonisation, it is useful to think about the Other as being "Othered". To create a space for the presence and voice of the Other and "Othered", different from the dominant voice, to discuss the experience of self and other/Other, in clinical practice and within social and cultural relationships, was the aim for the 2012 NZAP Conference in Wellington.

Our Association has made an ethical and relational commitment to tangata whenua and te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi ("the Treaty"). From both Māori and Pākehā perspectives, there is, present in our encounters, the experience of "them and us". Members of NZAP, and Māori colleagues both within and outside NZAP continue our struggle with this relationship at conferences, sometimes together, sometimes separately. There are more, within all cultures, who evoke a defensive "Othering" from hetero-normative insistences on binary notions of sex, love and gender identity. The queer place, with its deconstruction of essential categories of fixed, singular identities, opens up the sexually diverse aspects of identity and also describes a potential identity space. As Jeremy Younger, a panelist at the Conference, put it in his workshop presentation, a space: "full of paradoxes and mutual inclusions … [where we might notice that] we are ambivalent about what we desire" and "notice what discomfort in ourselves we project onto the different other" (Younger, 2012).

The Committee, the Group Task, and the Development of the Conference Theme

At our first Conference Organising Committee meeting the question was asked, "Are we the committee?" The response, "Perhaps yes, loosely, at the moment?", illustrated the committee's task: of holding and creating something that might happen, a structure which must be built, yet holding this loosely enough to provide open space: those crucibles of time, relating and intention, where "something" happens, that is felt between us, an experience that often locates us both within our Association and our therapy practice.

The relationship with our Treaty partners, both specifically with regard to Waka Oranga, and more generally, with other Māori colleagues, opened the Committee's discussions, and the uncomfortable grappling toward authentic invitation to our cultural Other persisted strongly through most of our meetings. We were a group of strong-willed people who believed in our right to speak and be heard; we negotiated content and structure on one level, and relationship experiences on another. We were mostly Pākehā, with one Māori colleague offering her perspective about tikanga, the protocols for welcoming and guiding us in our approach to mana whenua, the people who represent and hold the mana of the place of conference. We expressed a diversity of thinking about the focus of the Conference which encompassed: a way of finding connections between

Māori language and psychology and European psychotherapists who may have been invited to Conference; the rich tapestry that is international psychoanalysis and the connections made between indigenous Māori and Pacific metaphor; and poetry, ethics and philosophy.

We considered inviting post-structuralist academics to have us open up our comforting assumptions, our languages full of unexamined meaning, and to discuss the therapeutic space where two subjects meet, with or without a shared language, a space where we are open to, as Seán Manning, the then NZAP President, put it during the panel discussion: "the dialogue and the chaos we should sit with for a while". The theme, "The Face of the Other", emerged from everyone's words and, unconsciously, echoed the words of the French philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995), whose work and influence was represented by Donna Orange, our Tau Iwi overseas keynote speaker. As Lévinas (1974b) himself put it: "The other is, like Death, ungraspable and ultimately mysterious to us: the Other is what I myself am not" (quoted in Ellis & O'Connor, 2010, p. 115). Orange (2011) quoted Fryer (2007) who described Lévinas' view of the other person as "a radical other beyond my capability and capacity to know" (p. 582). Lévinas argued against reducing others to be studied, categorised or comprehended.

The theme in Māori was "Tona Kanohi", the other's face. The Committee wondered and discussed what these words might mean to our Māori colleagues? How would we include the cultural Other/s? How did this theme address the therapeutic relationship and our relationships with each other, as colleagues? As we later summarised it in the Conference booklet:

> We discussed and debated about how to understand this "face of the other." Culturally? Humanistically? Philosophically and what else? For some months we pondered on these, and also on bringing a post-modern perspective to conference. We were interested in post-modernism's invitation to dismantle culturally created categorization[s] of people. We were in agreement that a psychotherapist's work is to "not know" the other in advance of the person identifying themselves to us. We engaged with the idea of "not knowing the face of the other". (Wade, 2012, p. 22)

An image was created, a logo, a symbol for conference, one side of the bi-cultural invitation we wanted to create. We invited artwork for the Māori side of the invitation from Hinewirangi Kohu Morgan, Rangatira Poukotomanawa, kuia to Te Waka Oranga, and Pai Arahi to NZAP, whose neice, Jayne Te Hikuwai Kohu provided the image for the flyer (and this issue of the journal). Art-work with personal meaning and spirit was generously given by Jayne — and by Louise Marmont — and brought the Other into our Conference.

This was not a bicultural conference. We did not begin our discussions on the marae, co-creating from the start. We valued the willingness of our Māori colleague on the Commitee to guide and advise, and we heard her and others' frustration with our debates about tikanga, and about the protocol for opening the Conference. We were inviting Treaty partners to come to something we, with advice and guidance from Māori, were creating in a Pākehā way. Learning how to open up space for relationship with the other

evoked anger and uncertainty. Some of this was relieved when we engaged with Treaty partners and colleagues from NZAP's Te Tiriti Committee at Mana College Marae, Titahi Bay, Wellington. The generous invitation from mana whenua and colleagues to come and talk, to be assisted, and to be in the whare nui reminded us of being "other". Tikanga, the etiquette, the formality, the physical space, the respect for the encounter offered by our hosts brought the conference theme to life. The next steps in relationship with Treaty partners, and with our theme, became clarified.

Through the Committee process, we struggled with the need for the creation of structure while holding open space for the other. Each of us wanted to be understood, to have our ideas heard, to make a successful conference. We felt hesitant in our approach with invitations to our Treaty partners, slowed by old anxieties and projections, wanting to get it right. Perhaps dwelling in the illusion of Lacan's imaginary (see Miller, 1981), wanting an impossible synthesis: to be in good relationship with the wounded Other/s. We considered ways to keep a bicultural group experience out of the injuries of previous, never-forgotten gatherings where therapy group and whare nui tikanga and protocol or mores clashed, one cancelling the other/Other (see von Sommaruga Howard, 2007). We imagined, remembered and considered how bi-cultural group experience might be harmonious, and concluded it could not be — or, at least, not yet. We understood that as tangata whenua and Pākehā we may not blend together our healing practices, but instead, we might create different spaces for both. The structure of the Conference changed to offer a separate space for papers given by Māori, and a stream of papers from tangata whenua flowed through the Conference.

Months into the Committee's work, we benefitted from the elegant group facilitation of Hori Thompson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Morehu, Ratana), cultural supervisor for health workers. Hori's skill brought group cohesion. Our committee relationships settled, repaired by Hori's invitation to each of us to speak our perspective and to hear others. Gently authoritative and respectful, Hori listened and reflected, and promoted peace.

The Beginning of the Third Space

I suggest that Hori's intervention provided a vantage point from outside our individual and group dynamics and created a relational "thirdness":

> My interest is not in which "thing" we use, but in the process of creating thirdness — that is, in how we build relational systems and how we develop the intersubjective capacities for such co-creation. I think in terms of thirdness as a quality or experience of intersubjective relatedness that has as its correlate a certain kind of internal mental space; it is closely related to Winnicott's idea of potential or transitional space. (Benjamin, 2004, p. 7)

Hori's facilitation provided something outside of ourselves that held the group and brought us into better, more accepting relationship, helping us to clarify the sometimes opposing priorities of organising the physical conference space and the relationships with guests and presenters. Acknowledging our differences in focus, and our differing

views of Conference aims helped clarify our shared purpose and our relationship with the Conference theme. At one point, the question was asked: "Are we putting on a conference, or pushing NZAP's insistence on bicultural relationship?" This question articulated a rift, often felt over the past years, as members of our Association request conferences that focus on clinical practice and theory, while the Association, via Council and Te Tiriti Committee, has made a commitment to bicultural relationship and asks that conferences also work toward relationship with local Māori. Hori encouraged us to "own" this Conference and to create a gathering that worked for us, as an Association of psychotherapists. In order to meet the Other, we did not have to give up our own culture. Perhaps, via the willingness of our Māori colleagues, we had brought the Other into the centre, into relationship with us, thereby reducing fragmentation. As Younger (2012) put it: "All relationships and cultural systems are constructed in the "third space".

Benjamin (2004) has challenged Lacan's idea of the third as another, a father, interrupting the mother/child dyadic relationship by bringing in the symbolic, the world of language. Benjamin extends the idea of the third to describe a shared perspective that participants in a relationship co-create:

> To the degree that we ever manage to grasp two-way directionality, we do so only from the place of the third, a vantage point outside the two. However, the intersubjective position that I refer to as thirdness consists of more than this vantage point of observation. The concept of the third means a wide variety of things to different thinkers, and has been used to refer to the profession, the community, the theory one works with — anything one holds in mind that creates another point of reference outside the dyad. (p. 7)

I further suggest that the Conference theme, and the Conference itself became "the third": the focus that evoked and also contained our differences and our shared experiences. The task of putting on a conference and "behaving" the theme — connecting with people, inviting and communicating the intention expressed in the theme — seemed like putting flesh on the structural bones of the Conference.

For the Committee, the line-up of keynote speakers and panel presenters became an experience of uncertainty and of trust. We had firm commitment from Dr Donna Orange, who was enthusiastic about Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi, and our struggles as an Association to be in relationship with our Treaty partners. We put the call out for a keynote to be chosen by our Treaty partners, and waited in the belief our call would be heard. During an encounter with Dr Tess Moeke-Maxwell, Ripeka August-Tampeau, our Māori colleague on the Committee, talked about our Conference, and Tess liked our theme. As someone who has, by her own account, a "hybridity" of identities, Tess, in one person, represented personal and cultural diversity, and embodied complexity. From dialogue within and without the Organising Committee, after consultation with Waka Oranga and with colleagues who understood the social construction of identity, and the perspectives of the "Othered", the panel speakers emerged. The Conference theme was coming to life.

Surrender to a Shared Space

In the last few days before Conference a request came, via Te Tiriti Committee, for four tohunga from Te Mauri o Te Manuka Tutahi, Ngati Awa, and Tuhoe to attend the full Conference, offering an open workshop throughout the Conference on "Mahi Wairua": working with wairua, the spirit, in the healing of individuals and whanau. A request was made for a space for the tohunga to work: a space that enabled access to local Māori and to Conference participants. We were asked to hold open options, to wait for the tohunga to choose their space after they had arrived, and encountered the Conference.

Some in the Committee welcomed this request, feeling honoured that the kaupapa, the theme of our Conference interested these esteemed others who were willing to know our healing work and to show us theirs. Some felt derailed, feeling that the structure of Conference was having to bend, to reshape. Surrender was required: giving up our order of things to welcome the cultural other/Other. We shifted over, and the tohunga, with their gifts and contributions, came and worked their therapeutic ways with us and separately, willing to be in relationship, beside us. Our moving over, sharing space, brought us into closer encounter with the faces of the Other. Benjamin (2004) has described how "a third" can be created by intersubjective encounter. I suggest that this is what began to occur at Conference, as we opened up our Conference structure to let in the other with whom we are always in relationship in Aotearoa:

> We might say that the third is that to which we surrender, and thirdness is the intersubjective mental space that facilitates or results from surrender. In my thinking, the term surrender refers to a certain letting go of the self, and thus also implies the ability to take in the other's point of view or reality. Thus, surrender refers us to recognition — being being able to sustain connectedness to the other's mind while accepting his separateness and difference. Surrender implies freedom from any intent to control or coerce. (Benjamin, 2004, p. 8)

Always a wonder at conferences is the experience of the theme developing. It seems that participants come together to wrestle with, consider, understand the theme of each conference by way of encountering each other. We become part of a large group gathering around an idea. Each of us bringing ourselves, contributing, and so conferences begin to create themselves. In a way, we immerse ourselves in the theme, surrending even, to the subjective and intersubjective experience and to whatever outcome or ending.

> The crucial point was that surrender is not to someone. From this point follows a distinction between giving in or giving over to someone, an idealized person or thing, and letting go into being with them. I take this to mean that surrender requires a third, that we follow some principle or process that mediates between self and other. (Benjamin, 2004, p. 8)

Gathering

The NZAP 2012 Wellington Conference followed this familiar group experience: the first encounters began at the pre-Conference workshop, run by NZAP's Te Tiriti Committee. In the past, a meeting for Pākehā to talk and encounter our culture/s, this time the workshop was open to all. We talked of our different, Māori and Pākehā perspectives on healing of the mind and spirit and heard perspectives about traditional Māori healing from the four tohunga. Following the connections made at the pre- Conference gathering, people arrived at the Conference and the space filled with faces, greetings, and accommodating. Voices entered and the physical space was energised. The Conference stood on good foundations: 18 months of committee work; our group encounters, struggles and resolutions; and the willingness of our Māori colleagues, Ripeka August-Tampeau, Matewawe Pouwhare and her colleagues at Mana College Marae, and members of Waka Oranga. The Conference came to life. In the keynote presentations, we heard descriptive languages, symbolism and meanings made and unmade. Projections were challenged. In the first keynote presentation, all that we, the Committee, had wanted from our theme was expressed: fixed, binary identities were deconstructed and reformed into an hybridity of Māori, European, diverse sexualities, life, corporeality, narrative paradoxes, and death: "Contesting the idea of a singular, quintessential subjectivity by uncovering the *other* face/s subjugated beneath biculturalism's preferred subjects" Moeke-Maxwell (2012, p.149) spoke about Māori bi/multiracial hybridity and the socially transformative space the bi/multiracial occupies. In doing so, Tess introduced us to the Other, with their/our multiple and complex identities and relationships.

The ethics of surrender to the Other, letting the Other take us somewhere, to know them in their expressions of subjectivity, became central to the discussions at Conference. As Susan Alldred-Lugton said when she introduced Donna Orange: "Let us all lose ourselves in this space of trust as we listen to your paper." Following Tess, Donna Orange (2012) with her "linguistic hospitality" invited us to embrace "genuine otherness" (p. 174), and to invite the stranger to say what they want to say in this situation. She named our "mourning" for the perfect translation and, the next day, in her contribution to the panel discussion, Donna offered us more understanding of our experience of trauma, and of lack, when we meet the wounded Other and feel the woundedness in ourselves. As Donna put it (I paraphrase): being open to the Other changes us. She suggested that the fate of all of us facing Otherness means that perhaps we accept a life of mourning; perhaps we wander and cannot find our way home; and that, if we open up to otherness, we cannot stay comfortably at home.

How Culture Creates Other: Traversing Difference or Fractured Divide? The Conference Panel

The panel presentations and discussion deepened the experience of encounter with the Other. The diversity of language, metaphor, perspectives described by the panel speakers wove an entrancing web: a tone and rhythm that reached into and around us. Our speakers used language that challenged familiar meanings and categories of identity: Māori, Pākehā, hybrid, complex, queer, suffering stranger, insider and outsider — identities

formed by recognition of others "like me" and others "not like me"; identities created and essentialised through the power of language and projection. Hierarchies of identity were challenged; that some identities dominate others was revealed; and that some identities are centred in our language and some marginalised was acknowledged: "pointing out that deconstruction is not an operation that can ever be completed, but a continual, no doubt infinite process" (Derrida, 1972, p. 57, quoted in Whitford, 1991, p. 127).

In his presentation Wiremu Woodard likened the wild and dangerous African killer bee to Māori youth gangs: suppressed and subjugated by constructions and deconstructions of indigenous identity; struggling to survive; and projecting negative self-objects onto the dominant culture's monolithic systems. Wiremu went on to challenge unilateralism and insistence on homogeneity. In effect he laid down a challenge to recognise those we defensively attempt to contain in the margins and shadows of our own psyche, and warned that "Any movement towards the Other precipitates an existential crisis. A terrifying recognition that we not only create the Other, but are also created and dependent on the Other" (Woodard in Stuthridge, Orange, Moeke-Maxwell, Woodard, & Younger, 2012, p. 183). Then Donna, reverent to the language of the marginalised, the outsider, spoke of those who are inside and who are outside. Narratives brought into the therapy relationship are always situated within culture. People who come for therapy, many of whom experience themselves as outsider, need to be welcomed into the therapy space, to be accepted as seeking, as mourning, as themselves. Speaking of language, Donna said: "we cannot hear the way we sound to the other" (Orange in Stuthridge, Orange, Moeke-Maxwell, Woodard, & Younger, 2012a, p. 149), and should, in an hospitable spirit, assume to be told. Following this, Tess spoke of those in this country who identify as bicultural/multi hybrids, who "straddle more than one landscape" (Moeke-Maxwell in Stuthridge, Orange, Moeke-Maxwell, Woodard, & Younger, 2012, p. 185) and see things through more than one set of eyes. Tess invited us to think laterally about identities, not to assume a singular cultural belonging but, rather, to hear when the soul voice opens, to recognise its presence and to welcome it home. Tess asked that we listen and hear this voice as expression of the other's personal and cultural identity. Jeremy Younger, our final speaker talked of recognition and that we cannot recognise the other from our own projections. He talked of the space of "intermediary knowledge" (Geertz, 1973, cited in Younger in Stuthridge, Orange, Moeke-Maxwell, Woodard, & Younger, 2012, p. 185) where the other is not known. Jeremy argued that "any identity — cultural, sexual, perhaps even psychotherapeutic — is always constructed in an ambivalent space, which contradicts any notion of 'purity'" (ibid., p. 188). In his own paper (which he delivered in a workshop at Conference) he challenged psychotherapists to recognise that queer identity presents us with opportunity to appreciate difference:

> that our therapy profession needs to discover and celebrate being queer, and that, if being queer is about embracing an exploration of the unlimited freedom of difference, rather than the closing down of identity, then we have in this a beautiful and challenging summation of what we are about as a profession and as practitioners.

As therapists I believe we need to grapple with this: that we are "queer", not because we are in the business of promoting liberal tolerance, but, rather, because we are constantly discovering the countercultural connections, risks and meanings in our social alienation. What does it mean then for therapists and clients to do the work of therapy in the freedom of difference? (Younger , 2012)

Jeremy talked of the label "gay" as an identity "box", whereas "queer", he suggested, "extends the politics of sexuality beyond sex". What I take from this, is that "queer" is about a more complex, diverse identity: queer is opposed not to straight, but to normal. Thus Jeremy invited us to cease accepting the idea of normal, one-dimensional gender and sexual identity, to see this as culturally imposed and to welcome the different and unfamiliar, in ourselves and in our clients.

The Space Without Words

A space opened after the panel speakers, a space without words, a silence. I recall this silence as both uncomfortable and pleasurable, perhaps taking us to a place before or without words, without familiar language? I wonder if the presenters deconstructed identity categories so that these became less stable and we were left with a deconstruction, an open, "not-knowing" experience, where the words spoken became less fixed with singular meaning, no longer anchored by one familiar interpretation. Were we no longer "at home" within ourselves? As Tess had said in her keynote speech "when the noise of clashing cultural symbols quieten and the battle fatigued traveller of fractured internal landscapes settles long enough, a sliver of space is opened up" (Moeke-Maxwell, 2012b). Tess was describing an intersubjective space, a relational space, and I wonder if this space, in the context of recognising the other's experience, took us to a place of reality, of the reality of the different other, the traumatised, wounded other and of our own lack: that we cannot make the other, or the difference better or repaired?

Talking of primary, early childhood processes and the effect of recognising lack, the loss of the imagined, ideal other, Lacan (1964/1998a) suggested that "the trauma reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled" (p. 55). I wonder about Lacan's (1964/1998a) description of the reality system as leaving "an essential part of what belongs to the real a prisoner in the toils of the pleasure principle" (pp. 55-56), and, though we attempt to maintain our happiness, our sense of self as good and capable, we experience "those radical points in the real that I [Lacan] call encounters … which enable us to conceive reality as … souffrance", meaning "in abeyance, awaiting attention, pending" — and perhaps, in another translation, in "pain" (p. 56).

I wonder if, briefly, our sense of self, our identities were destabilised, held "in abeyance", suspended. If culture defines us, as insider/outsider, central/marginal, normal/queer, and these categories are momentarily undone, what cultural and personal space, what psychological space remains for us to inhabit? Were we taken out of comfortable knowing of ourselves and the other through familiar concepts — into the experience of not knowing who we are and who the other is?

> Thus the Real operates here, in its very "exclusion", through a function of simultaneous *constitution* and threatened *dissipation*, or through a double logic of formation and deformation: at the level of the Imaginary, the Real, as the antagonism at the heart of primary narcissism, both contributes to the constitution of the subject and installs trauma at its centre. (Eyers, 2012, p. 160)

The place of the real, the trauma of the lost other, the lost self, is without words, in that is pre-symbolic, before language that becomes the third, that articulates self, other and relationship:

> The real is the impossible … the term begins … to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic [languaged] order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic. (Lacan, 1964/1998b, p. 280)

I wonder if the panel speakers, with their poetic imagery and invitation to understand their experience, their difference, first left us in an encounter with the real, the place of trauma, of the realness of alienation: of lost imaginary identities of self and other. On the other hand, we may have encountered the non-verbal experience of thirdness that Benjamin (2004) described as "the one in the third":

> In my view of thirdness, recognition is not first constituted by verbal speech; rather, it begins with the early nonverbal experience of sharing a pattern, a dance, with another person… I consider this early exchange to be a form of thirdness, and suggest that we call the principle of affective resonance or union that underlies it the one in the third—literally, the part of the third that is constituted by oneness. (pp. 16-17)

Perhaps there was a felt experience of merger, of difference and individuality suspended as we listened and joined with the tones, the images created by the speakers. Feelings described by the speakers felt within us. We held this for a few minutes and then we moved, with language, back to an interactive space, back to the wider tangible world of people and place, thus articulating our recognition of the injured other and our own distress, going back to the co-created third space, where we recognised each other a little more.

In his workshop, "Facing the Russian Doll", Olli Anttila (2012) spoke of such a space, starting with our location: the physical, natural world of this country. He reported a friend of his telling him this place "is for the birds". A space wide open, not always or originally home, but a space now lived in. "This Conference is good for me," said Olli, "something real" is experienced: "something starts to open, and then it closes."

Holding the space open to hear the others' symbols, tone, and language is the work of therapy that creates the intersubjective experience and allows us to experience the other, in their physical and emotional reality. At Conference, following the panel speakers, for example, did we become uncomfortable with the silent space of not knowing, what to do, how to repair? Did we grasp for words as habit, defensively? As Olli put it:

> I will talk about the truth that disappears if it is spoken and how to become and to stay conscious of the myriads of interpersonal experiences that take place in our daily sessions without trying to force these subtle moments into spoken words. (ibid.)

What might have happened if we had stayed with the silence and spoken about our experience of this? I return to "the real" — Lacan's place of trauma. I wonder if our silence held moments of recognition: recognition of the doers and the done-to in colonisation, recognition of the real experiences of the real marginalised others, and recognition of our own part in these injuries, and recognition of ourselves as injured?

I sense that we, as an Association, are moving, slowly, away from a sense of complementarity, of opposites, in our relationship with our Treaty partners. That we are increasing our recognition of the other/Other as we relate, learn and know them better. This complementarity is played out in ideas of gender and sexuality: straight and gay, normal and queer, right and wrong. Holding views of essential, singular and fixed identity categories that we ascribe to the Other, I suggest, inhibits recognition of the Other.

Donna Orange spoke of our hurting of the Other, with our therapeutic prodding and insertion of our own cultural and identity definitions, what she called the "microaggressions, from which we will never be free" (op cit., p. 184). I suggest that the "open tent" that Donna encourages us to maintain offers a potential space (Younger, 2012), a space of suspended definitions, a space where we are hesitant with language and meaning, where we make ourselves teachable (Orange, 2012). Instead of projecting "Other", we welcome the emerging subject. "Once we have deeply accepted our own contribution — and its inevitability — the fact of two-way participation becomes a vivid experience, something we can understand and use to feel less helpless and more effective" (Benjamin, 2004, p. 11).

> Intersubjective process aimed at recognition of the other creates thirdness — a relationship. It appears that this space is invested in by those doing the relating and includes "the intention to recognize and be recognized by the other" (Benjamin, 2004, p. 19). The Conference Organising Committee, and the Conference itself, parallelled psychotherapy in the struggle toward co-creation of an intersubjective encounter that aims for recognition — between two or more emerging subjects. "In this sense, we surrender to the principle of reciprocal influence in interaction, which makes possible both responsible action and freely given recognition. This action is what allows the outside, different other to come into view." (ibid., p. 11)

A Kind of Ending

The Committee decided to let the content and structure of the poroporoaki, the ending session, emerge from participants. We wanted to allow a place for speaking of Conference experience, and to say farewell. A few people spoke of their experiences and then, after we handed over the Conference to the 2013 Auckland Conference Organising Committee, the space became fragmented, messy, with people leaving to catch their transport home.

I was aware of the loss of people, and that the Conference was dissipating, undoing — in its own way. Some of us were anxious to get the farewells right, and to thank those who had contributed so much. We felt harried by the early leavings, and again, our kaumatua, Hori, who had come to close the Conference, soothed, "Kei te pai, kei te pai". It is alright.

We might leave a conference with all our fragments, hopefully loosened, more comfortable with mirrors that do not reflect us as ideal, more comfortable with the struggle to be subject in relation to other subjects whose difference is better known, better tolerated, better welcomed and better mourned. I was challenged and stirred by this Conference, where the faces of the others willingly came into relationship, revealed themselves, and gave so much.

I appreciate my colleagues on the Committee, and know them better. In this task of producing a conference, I recognize the process of becoming a working group, through stages of forming, finding a shared theme, then the struggles with difference, struggles with individual and sub-group perspectives and priorities. Gaining perspective from the "vantage point" outside of our process, via a wise group facilitator moved us out of impasses, through hesitation and brought clarity about our shared focus. I wonder if, perhaps unconsciously at first, conference committees begin to live the conference theme that the group produces. Perhaps in Whanganui-a-tara/Wellington learning to be hospitable and open to the face of the Other, always different from ourselves, will enhance our collegial relationships, deepen our willingness and commitment to grow relationships with mana whenua as well as benefit our psychotherapy practice.

Kii mai koe ki ahau "He aha te mea nui o te ao?" Maku e kii atu: "He taangata, he taangata, he taangata" (Māori whakatauki or proverb). You ask me: "What is the greatest thing in this world?" I must reply: "It is the people, it is the people, it is the people."

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