

The Poetic Mind Seminar Inaugural
Talk (With Mary Adams and Poet JJBola).
7th June 2025

Speaking in Metaphors: Truth and Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Poetry

By
David Morgan

"I just don't know how to live anymore. I mean, I know I can live. I mean, that's no problem. It's just that I don't know how I should live."

—Wallace Shawn, *My Dinner with André* (1981)

Introduction:

The Landscape of Poetic Truth

In one of my favourite films, "My Dinner with André", as quoted above, two old men, now my age, sit across a table and discuss what it means to be alive. They speak of dreams, awakenings, mechanical routines, theatrical rituals. It's intimate, clever, and existential. For many, including myself, the film is a kind of sacred text a gentle philosophical riddle about how to stay human in an inhuman world. But watching it today in 2025, after so many explosive world events, I find its eloquence both beautiful and unbearable. Because across countless other tables, set with cutlery, clutter and doubt, nothing or little is said at all.

There are moments in history when the greatest obscenity is not hatred but detachment. When neutrality becomes collaboration, when a poem or a dinner or an analytic silence becomes a wall, not a bridge. The opening meditation of this chapter was written not to cancel the aesthetics of these conversations, but to question what it means, what I mean, when conversation, poetry, and talking like this becomes a refuge from responsibility and from action.

We who dine well, who write poems or writes about poems, who psychoanalyse, light candles and quote Rilke, we must also ask, what do we refuse to see? What cries have we edited out of our daily scripts? What children lie unburied because we prefer the clarity of categories to the mess of conscience?

There is a moment in the film when André says: "I think it's quite possible that the 1960s represented the last burst of the human being before he was extinguished." Perhaps that burst is still possible a burst of truth that transcends both complacent aesthetic appreciation and wilful blindness to suffering.

In times of war, ideological extremism, or mass mobilisation, the individual psyche is in danger of being overwhelmed by the collective. Carl Jung observed that when the unconscious is stirred by crisis, "the conscious mind is no longer capable of distinguishing between what is itself and what is not." The ego collapses into identification with collective ideals or enemies; shadow projections multiply, and people cease to speak as individuals.

The reflective capacity the very faculty that makes thought, self-limitation, and symbolisation possible is drowned in the emotional tide. "The bigger the crowd," Jung wrote, "the more negligible the individual becomes." This insight finds a powerful echo in Wilfred Bion's writing on the catastrophe of thought in groups. For Bion, the failure to think is not merely a lapse but a defensive act, a refusal born of fear and psychotic anxiety. Under pressure, the mind may retreat into what he called attacks on linking, or destructive assaults on the connections between thoughts, between people, between past and present.

In such conditions, both psychoanalysis and poetry act as forms of resistance. They sustain the capacity to tolerate ambiguity, to speak symbolically in metaphor rather than literally, and to encounter the truth of one's own psychic pain rather than evacuate it into political enemies or seductive ideals. Hannah Arendt, reflecting on totalitarianism, wrote that evil in modern times was characterised less by monstrous intent than by the failure to think, that is, by the refusal to engage inwardly, to question, to remain present to moral complexity. The collapse of reflective judgment allows ideology to substitute for conscience, just as the metaphor collapses under the weight of propaganda.

When metaphor collapses into literalism when complex social problems are reduced to simple enemies, when political opponents become literal rather than metaphorical threats, we witness the same symbolic breakdown that characterizes individual psychosis. Propaganda works by eliminating the space between symbol and referent that allows for multiple meanings. The insistence that certain groups are literally vermin, that political solutions are literally final, represents the totalitarian destruction of metaphorical consciousness.

Walter Benjamin, too, saw in the aesthetic and allegorical a crucial space for interruption for slowing down the juggernaut of history and opening the possibility of remembering what is otherwise repressed. In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin evokes the image of the angel of history blown forward into catastrophe, eyes fixed on the wreckage. Against the forward march of progress, he proposes a messianic halt a space for recognition, mourning, and responsibility.

To write or read a poem under such conditions, or to engage deeply with the unconscious life of the analysand, is not a private luxury but a political and ethical act. Both preserve a commitment to symbol over slogan, to encounter over evacuation, to the painstaking work of thinking when thinking feels most impossible. In the face of the collective psyche's regressive pull, poetry and psychoanalysis honour what is most fragile yet most necessary: the capacity to bear tension without discharge, to remain human in inhuman times.

This chapter with this in mind, a response to cure world events, never-the-less explores the concept of poetic truth as it operates in psychoanalysis and poetry (touching on music, and visual art) proposing that these disciplines share a commitment to truth-seeking beyond empirical fact. While empirical science pursues measurable, replicable phenomena, these creative and therapeutic practices engage with a different order of truth one that emerges through metaphor, symbol, rhythm, image, and the layered meanings of both presence and absence in their respective mediums.

The enduring power of poetry over political discourse reveals something fundamental about how language operates on the unconscious mind. While political speeches function within established symbolic structures and quickly fade into the archive of forgotten rhetoric, poetry works through what psychoanalysts recognise as processes of condensation and displacement, engaging the psyche at a deeper, more primitive level resonating with profound truths. Like an effective analytic interpretation, poetic truth doesn't merely communicate but transforms, creating what Winnicott termed "transitional phenomena" that bridge inner psychic reality and the external world. Indeed, psychoanalytic interpretation itself operates through fundamentally poetic mechanisms, it works not through direct explanation but through metaphorical resonance, creating new symbolic connections that allow previously unconscious material to emerge into awareness.

When Shelley's "The Masque of Anarchy" (1819), written in response to the Peterloo Massacre.

"Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few."

This stanza has become one of the most enduring rallying cries for nonviolent resistance and popular uprising. It demonstrates poetry's capacity to give symbolic form to the otherwise unthinkable and unbearable, working through metaphorical displacement to access what Kristeva called the "semiotic" - those pre-linguistic, bodily dimensions of meaning that disrupt conventional discourse. The analyst's interpretive language must similarly function metaphorically, creating what Bollas calls "transformational objects" that don't simply describe psychic reality but actively reshape it through figurative leaps that bypass rational defenses. Most significantly, poetry's engagement with silence and complicity reveals its function as a vehicle for encountering the repressed, forcing us to confront not only what we consciously articulate but the vast networks of disavowal and unconscious knowledge that structure our psychic lives yet remain largely outside awareness.

The Unconscious Grammar of Metaphor

What emerges from examining both disciplines is that metaphor is not merely a literary device or therapeutic technique, but the fundamental architecture of how the psyche organizes unbearable experience into liveable meaning. In psychoanalysis, the patient's and analyst's reciprocal narrative reveals truth not through factual accuracy but through the patterns, contradictions, and symbolic structures that organize their inner world. Crucially, what remains unsaid, the pauses, the silences, the words that hover at the edge of expression carries equal weight with what is actually spoken.

The analytic space itself becomes a canvas, where meaning gradually emerges in the interplay between articulation and silence, much like the white space on a page that gives shape and breathing room to a poem's lines. At the beginning these can be large brush strokes dominating the canvas of the sessions, gradually becoming more nuanced and

subtle. A dream, a slip of the tongue, or a recurring fantasy carries meaning that transcends its literal content, pointing toward deeper psychological realities through the very rhythm and cadence of their telling.

The patient who arrives saying "There's a weight on my chest... I'm drowning... everything is black" is already speaking metaphorically, already reaching toward symbolic representation of what cannot be directly articulated. The analyst's role becomes not to translate these metaphors into "proper" psychological language, but to help them deepen into more sustainable symbolic forms that can hold complexity without collapse.

Poetry achieves truth through its precise deployment of language within space and time, where line breaks, stanza divisions, and the tension between sound and silence create meaning as much as the words themselves. The poet's craft lies not only in choosing the right word but in positioning it within the architecture of white space, allowing pauses and breath to become part of the poem's semantic structure. Like the psychoanalyst who listens for what cannot be said, the poet understands that meaning often resides in the gaps the enjambments that suspend thought, the caesuras that create moments of reflection, the way a single word can carry the weight of an entire stanza when surrounded by carefully orchestrated emptiness. A favourite of mine here demonstrates this beautifully:

*What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh*
—Edna St. Vincent Millay, "What lips my lips have kissed"

But poetry, too, faces an ethical challenge: does aesthetic refinement become a form of moral anaesthesia? When do we use the beauty of language to distance ourselves from the brutality of experience? Some great political poets that I love Owen, Akhmatova, Hughes understood that poetic truth must risk ugliness, must allow the world's wounds to bleed through the careful architecture of verse.

Music extends this exploration of temporal and spatial meaning through its manipulation of sound and silence. The composer's truth emerges not only through melody and harmony but through the precise timing of rests, the spaces between notes that allow music to breathe and signify. A musical phrase achieves its emotional impact through the interplay of tension and release, presence and absence, much like the psychoanalytic session where revelation often comes in the moments between words, or the poem where meaning crystallizes in the pause between stanzas.

Visual art contributes another dimension to this understanding of poetic truth through its use of negative space, color, form, and composition. The painter's canvas reveals truth not only through what is depicted but through what is left unpainted the areas of white or color that allow the eye to rest and the mind to complete the image. Like the psychoanalyst's consulting room or the poet's page, the artist's space becomes a field of potential meaning where absence and presence collaborate to create significance.

This shared commitment to poetic truth positions all four disciplines as forms of hermeneutic practice arts of interpretation that seek meaning rather than mere explanation. Where empirical science asks "what" and "how," psychoanalysis, poetry, music, and visual art ask, "what does this mean" and "how does this signify." They operate in the realm of significance rather than causation, concerned with the ways in which human beings create meaning from the raw material of experience through careful attention to both expression and the spaces that contain it.

The Poetic Function in Psychoanalysis: Between Revelation and Refuge

Freud's Reverent Uncertainty

Freud repeatedly acknowledged the uncanny resonance between art and psychoanalysis. In his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, he draws from childhood memories, dreams, and unconscious phantasy to interpret the artist's inner world. But he also confesses a profound limitation: "Before the problem of the creative artist, analysis must, alas, lay down its arms."

This reverence is telling. Freud understood that the artist accesses truths that precede interpretation. Art does not explain it evokes and symbolises what psychoanalysis seeks to name. The artist, like the analyst, listens for what lies beneath language, the poet, unlike the analyst, does not wait for the unconscious to emerge in speech the poem is the unconscious speaking.

Yet there is something troubling for me about Freud's reverent surrender before the creative act. Is this humility genuine, or does it mask a certain relief, the relief of not having to confront the ways in which art might challenge the analyst's interpretive authority? When we encounter a poem that refuses our understanding, do we bow before its mystery or do we simply turn away? I have been part of a poetry group that started during Covid and it's been interesting watching myself and colleagues having to surrender our usual interpretative equipment for poetry's deep mysteries.

Alpha Function and the Symbolisation of Experience

Wilfred Bion, perhaps the most poetically attuned of psychoanalytic thinkers, developed the concept of the alpha function that is the mental capacity to transform raw, sensory "beta elements" into thinkable, dream-able symbols. Without this function, the psyche is bombarded by unprocessed experience that cannot be digested emotionally. When psychotic or forensic patients begin to dream rather than concrete acting out it is often a breakthrough and the resumption of symbolism and metaphor over action.

When Bion describes the alpha function as inherently poetic, he points toward something revolutionary: that the transformation of raw beta elements into thinkable symbols is itself a creative act, a form of unconscious poetry. This suggests that the capacity for metaphor is not a luxury of the artistic mind but a necessity of psychic survival.

In the clinical setting, we see patients arrive overwhelmed by affects that lack metaphorical and symbolic form: "There's a weight on my chest... I'm drowning... everything is black."

Gradually, with the analyst's containment, these affective storms might find symbolic anchors: "This is grief. This is rage. This is fear of annihilation."

This transformation is not only analytical in the narrow sense it is poetic. It involves metaphor, rhythm, image, as James Fisher suggests in his idea of the "imaging position," the analyst becomes a kind of silent poet, midwifing meaning into being. Poetry performs a similar task in culture: it metabolises the unthinkable. Political trauma, historical injustice, collective shame these are not easily narrated. But they can be symbolised and in symbolising them, poetry makes them bearable, speak-able, survivable or at least bears witness in a way nothing else can.

I would also add the rider: when does the transformation of raw experience into symbol serve healing, and when does it serve denial? When does the analytic process help the patient bear reality, and when does it help them escape it? The alpha function can be a defense as much as a development a way of rendering the unbearable aesthetically manageable rather than ethically confrontable.

The Creative Paradox: When Symbolisation Fails

For many years I saw a writer Ms M for psychoanalytic therapy, her symbolic functioning had literally become encased in ice: she was stuck in a pattern of endlessly repeating themes of ice and the apocalypse in her writing without moving forward, in a condition of "repetition compulsion." She we discovered had harboured an abiding phantasy all her life, that there might be a second ice age and it was her belief that she had the capacity to save the world. She listened avidly to the regular shipping forecast on the BBC, waiting for an imaginary signal from which she could raise the alarm.

This messianic belief system, you will not be surprised to learn, provided a manic defence from her own internal world, which was dominated, as we discovered, by a cold post-puerperal mother who was depressed through much of her first child's early childhood. This first "ice age" was the experience she was trying to protect herself from, by creating a delusional system in which she was the saviour rather than the person needing urgent help. So we discovered that ice in her writing eventually crowded out all other imagery, inhibiting her more comprehensive creative work and symbolic capacities.

Ms M's case reveals the profound ethical challenge of metaphorical thinking: when does metaphorical thinking serve truth, and when does it serve denial? Her literal belief in an approaching ice age functioned as both a defense against her internal frozen landscape and a prophetic response to actual climate crisis. Her "second ice age" was simultaneously a concrete defense against unbearable emotional reality, a symbolic representation of her actual childhood experience, a prophetic recognition of civilizational crisis

Yet as I worked with her, and this was before the current anxieties around climate catastrophe, I began to wonder, was her obsession with apocalypse entirely delusional? Living as we do in an era of climate crisis, mass extinction, and social collapse, perhaps her "ice age" was not only personal but prophetic. Perhaps her breakdown was not simply a retreat from reality but a breaking through to a reality the rest of us preferred to avoid. The

line between psychosis and prophecy is not always clear especially when the world itself has gone mad. Concrete thinking although carrying messages from the deep unconscious is also the thought unknown hovering on the edge of our unconscious.

The therapeutic work involved not discarding her ice age metaphor but helping it become more flexible, more able to hold multiple meanings simultaneously. The shift from concrete belief to metaphor was not a rhetorical flourish but a psychic movement from frozen narrative to living symbol. Metaphor became not a technique but a survival mechanism a way for the unspeakable to be spoken, the frozen to be felt.

Water in Virginia Woolf's writing has a similar repetitive appearance to the ice in my patient's mind. A mixture of symbolic and concrete thinking where metaphor is redolent with unconscious foreboding. In her 1925 novel *Mrs Dalloway* it is particularly hard not to see the images of water as a harbinger of Woolf's own suicide, although it may also be her fear of her unconscious made real, and she seems purposely to leave the water imagery ambiguous. At times water suggests a lack of boundaries or control, and throughout the story Woolf uses the language of diving and plunging as though she is bravely entering water, whilst at the same time we know retroactively it's a substance in which she eventually drowns herself.

The character Septimus Warren Smith, often seen as a literary representative of both Woolf's understanding of psychoanalysis and of her own illness, embodies this tension between breakdown and breakthrough. His fictional hallucinations of beauty and terror reflect not only personal trauma but the collective trauma of a civilisation that had just witnessed the industrial slaughter of World War I and the beginnings of Hitler's rise to power and World War 2, so madness again speaks truths that sanity cannot bear. The waters enveloping Woolf's mind a reflection of the waters beginning to once again overwhelm individual consciousness under the weight of collective actions.

Poetic Truth as Mourning and Meaning-Making: The Politics of Grief

Homer and the Origins of Political Mourning

The *Iliad* begins with rage, μῆνις, the wrath of Achilles. It is a narcissistic fury, not a noble one, Achilles, humiliated by Agamemnon, withdraws from battle in wounded pride, allowing others to die in his absence. This is a deeply psychoanalytic scene where symbolic thinking collapses under the weight of narcissistic injury.

And yet, the poem ends in mourning, not triumph, Achilles and Priam, once enemies, sit together in grief and Achilles returns Hector's body to his father. So this is not politics but mourning as recognition of the other's humanity what Melanie Klein called the depressive position, the capacity to hold love and hate, rage and remorse, in the same psychic field.

Poetic truth here is not the retelling of battle, but the symbolisation of loss. The *Iliad* teaches us that political violence is always underpinned by psychological fracture and that mourning, not revenge, is the real movement of civilisation. But we must ask ourselves: in our contemporary moment, who is allowed to mourn? Whose grief is recognised, and

whose is erased? The Iliad's lesson about mourning as the foundation of civilisation for me remains radical, precisely because our current political order systematically denies certain forms of grief, which is why war proliferates.

The poem's ultimate wisdom lies not in its celebration of heroic action but in its insistence that all action must finally submit to the larger rhythm of loss and recognition. Achilles' greatest moment comes not when he kills Hector but when he sees in Priam's face the face of his own father, when his rage dissolves into the larger truth of shared mortality, we are all human and killing others to rid oneself of this awareness is a failure to embrace mourning by causing pain and loss to others.

Dante's Inferno and the Ethics of Symbolic Speech

In Dante's Inferno, we see another powerful dramatisation of psychic truth. The souls in hell compulsively repeat their stories, they do not reflect or transform but endlessly narrate without change a trauma without working-through. This is what the analyst David Black calls the "moral unconscious": the repetition of justification in the absence of remorse.

Hell is not fire it is repetition without symbolisation, trauma frozen in form. Yet the poem itself enacts the opposite: Dante's journey is one of symbolic reintegration. Through metaphor, allegory, and dream logic, the poem transforms unthinkable suffering into narrative. In this, it models what psychoanalysis offers: not salvation, but the possibility of symbolic truth, a truth that frees because it can be felt, thought, and named.

But Dante's Hell also raises uncomfortable questions about the relationship between justice and mercy, between understanding and judgment. The poet who gives voice to the damned is also the one who consigns them to eternal punishment. There is something troubling about the aesthetic pleasure we take in others' suffering, even when that suffering is presented as deserved. The Inferno forces us to confront our own capacity for cruelty, schadenfreude, our own participation in systems of exclusion and condemnation.

I guess these days I might ask whose voices are excluded from our own symbolic orders. Who languishes in our modern hells while we construct elaborate justifications for their suffering? Dante's achievement is not that he solves these moral problems but that he makes them aesthetically bearable and thereby forces us to confront our own complicity in the structures of damnation.

Poetic Truth in Protest and Political Resistance: The Ethics of Witnessing

When Percy Shelley wrote The Mask of Anarchy in response to the Peterloo Massacre, he did not call for revenge. He called for awakening:

*Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few. *

This is not a fantasy of violence but a poetic reconstitution of agency. The lions rise not to kill, but to see, "chains" fall not with swords but with symbolic consciousness and they become "dew." The weapon is metaphor itself.

Shelley's poetry does what psychoanalysis does in the clinic, it reveals what was repressed and restores subjectivity. His poetic truth is political not because it denounces injustice, but because it transforms the reader's relation to power. It fosters symbolic agency the very capacity that trauma strips away. When Shelley writes "Rise like lions after slumber," he's not merely using decorative language but performing what we might call metaphorical consciousness-raising, transforming the reader's relationship to their own agency.

But there is also something troubling about Shelley's metaphorical transformation of chains into dew. Does this poetic alchemy risk making oppression beautiful, making suffering tolerable through aesthetic transformation? When we turn political violence into metaphor, do we illuminate its meaning or obscure its reality?

The answer, I think, lies in understanding that Shelley's poem does not deny the reality of chains but insists on the reality of transformation. The "dew" is not a denial of bondage but a vision of its dissolution not through violence but through a kind of collective awakening that makes oppression impossible to sustain. This is poetic truth at its most radical, not the description of what is, but the imagination of what could be.

Unlike empirical truth, which aims for timeless validity, metaphorical truth is inherently temporal it emerges, develops, and transforms over time. Shelley's "lions after slumber" carries different resonances across historical moments, not because the words change but because metaphorical understanding is inherently alive, responsive to context.

Langston Hughes and the Disillusioned Dream

In *Let America Be America Again*, Langston Hughes performs an act of poetic reclamation that is both political and psychic. He does not simply abandon the American Dream as a falsehood, nor does he accept it at face value. Instead, he insists on its potential through the mournful refrain, "Let it be..." — a phrase that carries the paradox of both yearning and lament.

*Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.*

These lines are not naïve in their optimism. Rather, they articulate what might be called a *mature hope* — one that recognises the dream has always been haunted by exclusion and violence but refuses to surrender it entirely. Like an analyst confronting the image of a once idealised but ultimately disappointing parent, Hughes stages the collapse of a sustaining fantasy. And yet, rather than resorting to nihilism or disavowal, he enters a

process akin to mourning. He acknowledges betrayal without evacuating the dream of its imaginative and affective force.

This is the work of the *depressive position*, in Melanie Klein's sense: the psychic capacity to hold the loved object as both good and bad, sustaining and failing, without resorting to manic denial or paranoid splitting. Hughes does not destroy the dream; he subjects it to truth. In this, his poem is psychoanalytic in its very structure. It refuses omnipotence, tolerates ambivalence, and speaks from a position in which political vision arises through the labour of inner conflict. His poetic truth does not retreat from disillusionment — it embraces complexity. The poem insists that liberation demands not only structural change, but also psychic honesty: a reckoning with collective fantasies, with history, and with the capacity to mourn what never was, so that something new might be born.

The Artist's Relationship to Analysis: Fear, Transformation, and the Question of Complicity

Lawrence and the Defense of the Primordial Self

D.H. Lawrence represented the true spirit and primordial self, pre-empting Freud and Winnicott's concept of the true self. "Understanding is a fallacy and a vice in most people," he wrote. "All we can have is wisdom. And wisdom is not a theory; it is a state of soul." He wrote about his own version of the unconscious as a response to the psychoanalytic criticism that followed the publication of his first novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913). He felt the Oedipal understanding was reductive.

Lawrence criticised Freud vehemently as someone who "demonstrated the serpent of sex coiled round the root of all actions" and by extension the entire practice of "know-it-alls who pose as healers and physicians, attempting to be scientists, hoping to become apostles." He saw Freud's view of the unconscious "as a cave containing a 'myriad of repulsive little horrors spawned between sex and excrement'" and questioned "why it cannot contain anything beautiful."

As a man who developed his creative capacity against a poor working-class environment, it might have been galling to feel that Freud was treading on the ground he himself was writing about. Lawrence was continually making out a case for what he called "the real, real flame of feeling" against the cerebralizing intellectual impetus of industrialisation in modern society.

Yet Lawrence's resistance to psychoanalysis also reflected a deeper anxiety about the relationship between understanding and feeling. He feared that analysis would kill the very vitality it sought to comprehend that the flame of feeling would be extinguished by the cold light of interpretation.

There is truth in Lawrence's concern. Analysis can become a form of violence against experience, a way of reducing the mystery of being to a set of explicable mechanisms. But there is also something defensive in his position a refusal to examine the ways in which unconscious forces might be driving his own creative work. Lawrence's claim to pure feeling

is itself a form of interpretation, a way of organizing experience that excludes certain forms of knowledge.

Woolf's Complex Relationship with Analysis: The Tragedy of Uncontained Trauma

Despite the influence of the Stephens and Strachey's who were clearly steeped in Psychoanalysis, and Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf's husband, publishing Freud and psychoanalytic papers with Hogarth Press, Virginia Woolf, who struggled with breakdowns from the age of 13, never saw an analyst, though she did consult psychiatrists. This for what we might now recognize as bi-polar symptoms or the result of the many early losses she experienced.

At times Woolf railed against her illness, felt frustrated and impeded by it, and at other times, she felt that it was essential to her. In diaries and letters, she returned to the question repeatedly without reaching a resolution: was her illness a terrible obstacle to her art, or was it the necessary condition for it?

Woolf wrote in her diary: "I suppose I did for myself what psychoanalysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest."

This contrasts painfully with her final, beautifully written suicide note to Leonard:

*I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So, I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness... If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. *

The tragedy of Woolf's death lies not only in the loss of a great artist but in the failure of her cultural environment to provide adequate containment for her suffering. Surrounded by people who were theoretically sophisticated about unconscious processes, she remained fundamentally alone with her pain.

Her suicide note reveals the terrible paradox of depression: the conviction that one's pain is a burden to others, that love requires self-erasure. The depressed person becomes convinced that they are toxic, that their very existence poisons the lives of those they love. This is not simply individual pathology but a response to a culture that struggles to contain unbearable affect.

Woolf's relationship to water imagery in her work becomes, in this context, not simply a personal symbol but a cultural one. Water represents the dissolution of boundaries, the return to an oceanic state of being that precedes the painful work of individuation. But it also represents the failure of human community to provide adequate holding for psychic pain.

Bearing Witness: Poetic Truth as Testimony in an Age of Atrocity

Wilfred Owen and the Psychosomatic Imagination

In *Dulce et Decorum Est*, Wilfred Owen does not argue. He bears witness.

“Bent double, like old beggars under sacks...
Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling...
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...”

This is trauma rendered symbolic. The physicality of the poem the choking, the blood, the obscenity does not describe war; it enacts its psychic horror. This is poetry as embodied truth. Owen's poem doesn't describe trauma; it enacts it through rhythm, sound, and image in ways that bypass rational defense and create embodied understanding.

This suggests that effective metaphors in both poetry and psychoanalysis work through what we might call somatic resonance they activate bodily responses that carry meaning below the threshold of conscious interpretation. The patient who says "I feel like I'm drowning" is not just using a figure of speech but accessing a somatic memory pattern that can then be worked with therapeutically.

Owen's work exemplifies what trauma theorists call "aesthetic witnessing." When rational discourse fails, the poetic form becomes the container of pain. This is also true in analysis, where affect often arrives before language, and metaphor becomes the first step toward psychic containment.

But Owen's poem also raises difficult questions about the ethics of aesthetic representation. When we transform suffering into art, do we honour it or exploit it? Owen's answer lies in the poem's final stanza:

“If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.”

The poem's aesthetic achievement serves an ethical purpose, which is to make the reality of war so viscerally present that romantic glorification becomes impossible. Owen does not beautify suffering but makes its ugliness so undeniable that we cannot turn away.

Akhmatova and the Silence that Speaks

Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*, composed during Stalin's purges, was passed orally between women queuing outside prisons. It existed in memory, not on paper as the risk was too great.

“This happened when only the dead wore smiles—
they rejoiced at being safe from harm.
I was with my people then,
There, where my people, unfortunately, were.”

This is solidarity through speech, and speech through silence. Akhmatova performs what psychoanalysis might call the ethical function of the witness to hold pain, to refuse forgetting, to speak truth even when the state demands silence. Something as a psychoanalyst I have experienced with deeply traumatised patients managing my own sense of helplessness in the face of their exposure to the unspeakable.

Silence is not the absence of metaphor but perhaps its most profound form. The pause in the analytic session, the white space on the page, the rest in a musical phrase these create meaning through absence. Akhmatova's “*Requiem*”, existing in memory rather than on paper, demonstrates how silence can become the most powerful form of resistance.

The poetic form becomes what Winnicott called the holding environment a psychic space where trauma is recognized, not denied. But Akhmatova's poem also demonstrates the political dimensions of holding. So that under totalitarianism, the simple act of remembering becomes a form of resistance.

The women queuing outside the prisons create an alternative social order based on shared suffering rather than shared ideology. They hold each other's stories in memory when the state tries to erase them.

This reminds me of the mothers dancing a silent vigil for their disappeared lost sons in Chile. In the song and lyric “*They Dance Alone (Cueca Solo)*” by Sting, there is haunting protest song inspired by the Chilean women especially mothers and grandmothers who danced alone in public, holding photos of their “disappeared” sons and husbands who were abducted, tortured, or killed during the Pinochet regime. The dance is based on the Chilean folk dance *la cueca*, traditionally danced in pairs. Here, the absence of the partner becomes a political and emotional metaphor for state violence and grief.

*Why are these women here dancing on their own?
Why is there this sadness in their eyes?
Why are the soldiers here”

“They're dancing with their fathers
They're dancing with their sons
They're dancing with their husbands
They dance alone, they dance alone.”

This is poetry as a form of collective witnessing, a way of maintaining human connection across the fractures imposed by political terror.

Akhmatova's and indeed Sting's achievement lies not only in the beauty of language but in the creation of a community of witnesses. The poems exist not as an individual achievement but as a collective holding of unbearable experience.

Tony Harrison's V: Desecrated Language, Desecrated Mourning

Tony Harrison's V, written amid the social decay of Thatcher's Britain, stages a double mourning: the death of the father, and the death of working-class ritual.

"This graveyard stands above a worked-out pit...
And the dead go under, just like the men below."

Harrison discovers racist graffiti on his father's grave language as desecration. The cemetery becomes a battleground not just of class but of symbolisation itself. The gravesite of mourning is violated by the very political fundamentalist forces that deny grief and history.

But Harrison answers with language, with rhythm and poetic truth. In Kleinian terms, V shows the triumph of envy over gratitude, destruction over symbol and yet, the poem insists on reparation, as his father tells him,

"read the dictionary every day. Your life depends on your power to master words."

Poetry becomes the act of restoring language when it has been vandalised by politics. This is also to my mind the creative task of psychoanalysis.

The poem's genius lies in its refusal to sentimentalise either working-class culture or its destruction. Harrison acknowledges the violence that has always existed within his community while mourning the loss of structures that once gave that violence meaning and limit. The graffiti on his father's grave represents not the introduction of violence into a peaceful space but the triumph of meaningless violence over meaningful ritual.

Harrison's response is not to deny the reality of social breakdown but to insist on the possibility of symbolic restoration. Language becomes a form of reparation not a return to an imagined golden age but a creation of new forms of meaning adequate to contemporary reality.

Hanna Segal and the Breakdown of Symbolic Function

Hanna Segal's distinction between symbolic representation and concrete thinking helps us understand why poetry is essential not just to culture but to mental health. Symbolic thinking allows for ambiguity, for paradox, for the holding of contradictory truths. Concrete thinking often a defence against trauma insists on single meanings, binary oppositions, certainty.

When societies collapse into propaganda and fundamentalism, they enact the same collapse of symbolic capacity that we see in psychosis. Poetry, then, becomes not decorative but defensive a psychic defence of ambiguity, of complexity, of truth. This is why totalitarian regimes fear poets and why psychoanalysis is, at its best, a defense of the poetic mind.

Segal described a concert violinist who was no longer able to play as he confused his violin with his penis. In the symbolic equation, the symbol is equated with the thing symbolized. Think of Van Gogh who cut off his ear because he felt his girlfriend wasn't listening or responding to him. It is profoundly upsetting that writers and poets who we love and who have articulated life in ways that inspire and deepen our lives are sometimes unable to find help for their own self-destructive mental states. This is when psychoanalysts as beautifully demonstrated by Segal become the poets restoring symbolic representation to minds that have lost themselves to concrete processes.

Metaphor as Transitional Phenomenon

Building on Winnicott's concept of transitional objects, we might understand metaphor as a form of transitional language existing in the intermediate space between self and other, internal and external reality. The metaphor belongs neither fully to the speaker nor to the listener but exists in the potential space between them.

This has profound implications for both poetic and analytic practice. The most powerful metaphors are those that emerge spontaneously in the therapeutic encounter or in the act of writing they are co-created in the moment of contact rather than being applied from the outside. The analyst who says "It sounds like you're carrying a heavy load" is offering not an interpretation but a potential transitional object that the patient can use, modify, or reject.

The Clinical Understanding of Metaphorical Transformation

In our early sessions, Miriam my patient with fears of the second ice age, said to me It was not a matter of if but when. Her language was devoid of metaphor: glaciers would return, crops would die, the world would freeze. She read scientific blogs late into the night and annotated government temperature charts with the intensity of someone decoding a prophecy. Initially, it would have been easy to diagnose this as a form of paranoid preoccupation or environmentally themed delusion. But what became increasingly clear was how this literal belief system served as a bulwark against something unspoken but deeply known a personal psychic winter that had long predated any climate data.

When I tentatively asked her what the cold might feel like if it had already begun, a silence fell. After a long pause, she said quietly: "I think I've been preparing for it since I was a child." She went on to describe her mother's long bouts of withdrawal whole days spent in bed, unreachable and a household in which emotional contact was almost entirely absent. The family was functional, clean, and wordless. The cold, in this context, became something not external but internal, not future but already here, the second ice age was the first one, repeating.

Wilfred Bion reminds us that the analyst must resist the urge to explain and instead contain, to hold the emotional storm without retreating into knowledge. In Miriam's case, it was only when her apocalyptic narrative was listened to not as fact but as metaphor, as symbolic communication, that something began to thaw. The therapeutic work allowed her to re-experience her early emotional world not through detached data but through emotional contact: her felt history of absence, loneliness, and numbed despair. She of course complained about her cold analyst and his icy theories used to drift her, but a thaw began despite it because of this. There was a period of profound mourning for her mother and her own frozen self.

This is where psychoanalysis and poetry meet: in their shared refusal to reduce the human to the literal. They honour instead what is obscure, what is unformulated, what trembles on the edge of speech. For Miriam, the shift from concrete belief to metaphor was not a rhetorical flourish but a psychic movement from frozen narrative to living symbol. In this sense, metaphor became not a technique but a survival mechanism a way for the unspeakable to be spoken, the frozen to be felt.

Segal's insights also apply to the political realm when political discourse becomes concrete rather than symbolic, when metaphors are treated as literal truths, when complexity is reduced to slogans, we witness the same breakdown of psychic function that characterizes individual psychosis.

The defence of symbolic thinking becomes, in our current moment, a profoundly political act. To insist on ambiguity, complexity, and multiple meanings is to resist the totalitarian impulse toward simple answers and final solutions. Poetry and psychoanalysis share this commitment to the irreducible complexity of human experience.

The Contemporary Crisis of Symbolisation

In our current cultural moment, we face what might be called a crisis of symbolisation. The collapse of traditional sources of meaning religious, political, cultural has left many people vulnerable to forms of concrete thinking otherwise known as fundamentalism, that promise certainty at the cost of complexity.

Social media platforms reward simple messages and punish nuance. Political discourse becomes increasingly polarised, with each side treating its opponents not as fellow humans with different views but as literal enemies to be destroyed. The symbolic space necessary for democratic deliberation the space where different perspectives can be held in tension without immediate resolution contracts under pressure.

In this context, the preservation of poetic and psychoanalytic truth becomes a matter of democratic survival. Poetry and psychoanalysis offer ways of thinking that resist the rush to judgment, that insist on sitting with uncertainty, that honor the irreducible mystery of human experience.

The Paradox of Form and Formlessness

Both poetry and psychoanalysis work by creating structured forms (the analytic frame, the poetic form) that allow for the safe experience of formlessness (unconscious material, raw emotion). The sonnet form, with its strict constraints, creates space for the exploration of unlimited emotional territory. Similarly, the analytic frame the consistent time, place, and method creates safety for the emergence of chaotic, unstructured unconscious material.

This suggests that metaphor itself functions as a kind of form that can contain formlessness. When the patient says "I feel like I'm falling apart," the metaphor provides just enough structure to make the experience of fragmentation bearable and communicable.

Analysis and Creative Transformation: A Contemporary Voice

To understand the contemporary relationship between analysis and creativity, I wish to share a letter from an ex-patient a writer and a poet, who was helped by analysis. He has become a colleague now and he has given me permission to use this text, and it provides a contemporary perspective on the relationship between analysis and creativity:

JE: "Whenever the relationship between analysis and creation crops up, I think of Graham Greene's fascinating observation that with the death of Henry James, the world of the novel lost a dimension... It feels as though psychoanalysis has been trying to fill the gap created by the death of James, and God, ever since.

I can say that this prediction [of losing creativity through analysis] has never come true for me. Over eight years in the 1990s I had two longish periods of analysis, two periods of unpacking that initially darkened my writing, then lightened my life... I did stop writing for a short time. I sought more collaborative ventures, made radio programmes, films; I got married and had a son. But I was still writing on the quiet: a diary, notes, short stories, as well as my scripts. Finally, I started to write another book, an extremely long book, as if to make up for the gap...

So no, the curse of analysis has never been laid on me. It helps, I found, if you have an analyst who has a sense of humour... Because laughter, too, is an important part of understanding yourself, the world, what the fuck it's all about... Honestly, if I hadn't had my years of analysis, I might still be writing, but I feel I'd almost certainly be walking on dark paths too, without any of the shafts of sunlight those years have given me, and I don't think I'd be laughing."

This testimony speaks to the possibility of analysis as expansion rather than reduction, as a form of creative collaboration rather than destructive interpretation. The key insight is that analysis did not cure this writer of the need to write but helped him write from a place of greater freedom and less compulsion.

The reference to laughter is particularly significant. Humour represents a form of symbolic thinking that can hold contradictions without resolving them, that can acknowledge pain without being destroyed by it. The capacity to laugh at oneself and at the human condition generally may be the ultimate mark of psychological health.

Conclusion: The Analyst and the Poet as Keepers of Truth in Dark Times

Marion Milner, herself writer, artist, and psychoanalyst, captured the essence of this convergence when she wrote about "Moments when the original 'poet' in each of us created the outside world for us... are guarded in some secret place of memory because they were too much like visitations by the gods to be mixed with everyday thinking."

The convergence of these practices suggests that truth itself is accessed through precise attention to form whether the form of spoken language in analysis, the spatial arrangement of words on a page, the temporal structure of musical phrases, or the visual composition of elements within a frame. Each discipline recognizes that meaning emerges not from content alone but from the relationship between elements, the way presence and absence interact to create spaces where understanding can unfold.

Political poetry and psychoanalysis are not disciplines of mastery. They are disciplines of listening. They attend to the silenced, the disavowed, the painful, the forgotten. They do not resolve. They contain. They do not promise healing, but they offer symbolisation and with it, the possibility of survival.

But we must go further. In our current historical moment, the practices of poetry and psychoanalysis face a profound test. Can they maintain their commitment to complexity and ambiguity in an age that demands simple answers? Can they hold space for difficult truths when truth itself has become a political battleground? Can they resist the temptation to retreat into aesthetic refinement or therapeutic comfort when the world burns around them?

The answer lies not in abandoning these practices but in deepening them in recognizing that new forms of consciousness adequate to new forms of crisis are needed. Will they foster the kinds of thinking and feeling necessary for collective transformation?

André's question from my opening film association remains: "I just don't know how to live anymore." In a world of climate crisis, mass displacement, rising authoritarianism, and technological surveillance, mental health issues, this question has become urgent for all of us. The pursuit of poetic truth offers no easy answers, but it offers something perhaps more valuable: a way of sitting with the question itself, of allowing its difficulty to work on us rather than rushing to premature resolution.

The metaphors we choose matter. When we speak of the earth as "mother," we invoke care and responsibility. When we describe refugees as "floods" or "invasions," we justify cruelty. When we frame mental illness as "chemical imbalance," we may medicalise what is actually social distress. The work of both poet and analyst is to pay attention to these linguistic choices, to recognize their power, and to use them responsibly.

In the end, speaking in metaphors is not about finding clever ways to avoid truth but about finding forms adequate to truths too large for literal statement. The metaphor of the consulting room as sacred space, the poem as witness, the artwork as holding environment

these are not decorative flourishes but necessary containers for experiences that might otherwise overwhelm or fragment consciousness.

Let us end where we began with the voice of Audre Lorde:

*So it is better to speak
Remembering we were never meant to survive. *

Psychoanalysis speaks through the analysand. Poetry speaks through the collective wound and in both, we find the kind of truth that transforms not because it is correct, but because it is felt. Not fact or indeed fiction but the symbolic ground upon which new life can be at first a pre-conception, be conceived and begin.

The dinner conversation continues, the analytic session endures, and poems wait to be written and in these spaces imperfect, insufficient, but irreplaceable, we practice the difficult art of staying human in a world we're inhumanity beckons. The metaphors we inhabit shape the worlds we create in choosing them carefully, we choose not only how to speak but how to live.

Poetry and the Articulation of the Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Exploration

The Language of Dreams and Verse

Poetry and psychoanalysis share a fundamental preoccupation with the unspeakable—those dimensions of human experience that resist direct articulation yet demand expression. Both disciplines recognize that truth often emerges not through linear argument or rational discourse, but through the oblique pathways of symbol, metaphor, and associative leaps that mirror the unconscious mind's own logic.

Freud's revolutionary insight that the unconscious operates through mechanisms of condensation and displacement finds its perfect aesthetic counterpart in poetic language. When a poet compresses multiple meanings into a single image, or when metaphor displaces literal meaning to reveal deeper truths, we witness the same psychological processes that Freud identified in dream-work. The poet's craft becomes, in essence, a conscious deployment of unconscious mechanisms—a deliberate embrace of the mind's natural tendency toward symbolic thinking.

Building on this foundation, the post-Kleinian tradition offers additional insights into poetry's psychological function. Ron Britton and Wilfred Bion's contributions to understanding the mind's capacity to process experience through containment and perspective-taking illuminate how poetry serves not merely as expression but as transformation—converting raw emotional material into symbolic forms that can be thought about and shared.

The Talking Cure and the Poetic Voice

The psychoanalytic "talking cure" depends on the patient's ability to speak the unspeakable, to give voice to repressed material through the act of verbalization. Poetry functions as a parallel process, offering a socially sanctioned space for articulating experiences that lie beyond the boundaries of ordinary discourse. The poet, like the analysand, uses language not merely to communicate but to discover—to uncover layers of meaning that were previously unconscious.

This parallel becomes particularly evident when we consider how both poetry and psychoanalytic session work through free association. The poet following an image or sound to its unexpected conclusion mirrors the patient following a chain of associations toward buried psychological material. In both cases, the conscious mind must learn to trust the wisdom of seemingly irrational connections, allowing the unconscious to guide the process of discovery.

The rhythmic dimension of poetry adds another layer to this parallel. The repetitive patterns of meter and rhyme can induce a kind of hypnotic state that bypasses rational defenses, much like the repetitive nature of psychoanalytic sessions gradually erodes psychological resistance. Poetry's musicality speaks to pre-linguistic aspects of psychic life, accessing emotional and somatic memories that predate our capacity for conceptual thought.

Bion's Container-Contained and the Poetic Process

Wilfred Bion's concept of the container-contained relationship offers a particularly illuminating framework for understanding poetry's psychological function. Just as the mother's mind serves as a container for the infant's unbearable emotional states, transforming them into manageable experiences, poetry functions as a cultural container for experiences that would otherwise remain unprocessed and potentially destructive.

The poet's craft involves taking raw emotional material—what Bion termed "beta elements"—and transforming them through the alpha function of creative work into meaningful symbolic forms. This transformation parallels the analyst's work of helping patients convert overwhelming sensory and emotional experiences into thinkable thoughts. Poetry becomes a space where primitive anxieties, unformulated experiences, and inchoate feelings can be held, contained, and gradually metabolized into symbolic meaning.

Bion's emphasis on the capacity to tolerate uncertainty and "not knowing" finds direct application in poetic practice. The poet must maintain what Keats called "negative capability"—the ability to remain in uncertainties and doubts without irritably reaching after fact and reason. This psychological stance allows for the emergence of authentic poetic insight rather than premature closure or false certainty.

Ron Britton's Triangular Space and Poetic Perspective

Ron Britton's development of the Oedipal triangle as a space for thinking offers crucial insights into poetry's capacity to generate new perspectives on experience. Britton argues that the ability to conceive of the parental couple creates a "triangular space" in which

multiple perspectives become possible—the child can observe the relationship between others while being observed in turn.

Poetry operates within this triangular space, allowing the poet to observe their own experience from multiple vantage points simultaneously. The poem becomes a site where the poet-as-experiencer, the poet-as-observer, and the reader as witness create a dynamic field of perspective-taking that generates new understanding. This multiplicity of viewpoints prevents the collapse into either pure subjectivity or false objectivity, maintaining the productive tension necessary for genuine insight.

Britton's concept of the "third position" is particularly relevant to understanding how poetry can serve integrative psychological functions. The poem occupies a third position between raw experience and defensive intellectualization, between private meaning and public communication, between conscious intention and unconscious process. This intermediate space allows for the kind of symbolic work that Britton identifies as essential for psychological development.

The fragmentation characteristic of much modern poetry—from Eliot's "The Waste Land" to contemporary experimental verse—can be understood as an attempt to maintain multiple perspectives simultaneously rather than resolving them into false unity. These works create textual analogues to Britton's triangular space, where contradictions and multiple viewpoints coexist productively rather than being prematurely resolved.

The Therapeutic Dimension of Poetic Creation

Writing poetry can function as a form of self-analysis, offering the poet a means of accessing and processing unconscious material. The act of composition becomes a method of psychological archaeology, with each draft revealing new layers of buried meaning. The poet's revision process mirrors the analyst's work of interpretation—returning again and again to the same material, discovering new significance with each encounter.

The ambiguity that characterizes great poetry serves a psychological function beyond mere aesthetic complexity. By refusing to resolve into single, definitive meanings, poems create spaces for readers to project their own unconscious material, making the reading experience itself a form of psychological exploration. The poem becomes a kind of literary Rorschach test, revealing as much about the reader's psychic landscape as about the poet's intended meaning.

This therapeutic dimension extends to the communal aspect of poetry. When poems are shared and discussed, they create opportunities for collective processing of unconscious material. The poetry reading, the workshop, the critical discussion—all become sites where individual psychological insights can be tested against communal understanding, where private revelations can find public validation.

Symbol and Symptom: Poetry's Diagnostic Dimension

Psychoanalysis treats symptoms as symbolic expressions of unconscious conflict, requiring interpretation to reveal their hidden meaning. Poetry operates through a similar symbolic logic, using concrete images to convey abstract psychological states. The poet's choice of imagery often reveals unconscious preoccupations and conflicts, making poems potentially diagnostic texts that offer insights into both individual and collective psychological conditions.

The recurring symbols in a poet's work function much like the recurring themes in a patient's sessions—they mark sites of psychological significance that demand attention and interpretation. A poet's obsession with images of water, enclosure, or flight may signal underlying psychological themes that the creative process helps to articulate and potentially resolve.

Contemporary trauma poetry exemplifies this diagnostic dimension particularly clearly. Poets working through experiences of war, abuse, displacement, or loss often develop distinctive symbolic vocabularies for articulating the ineffable nature of traumatic experience. Their work becomes both personal testimony and collective witness, offering language for experiences that resist ordinary articulation.

The Revolutionary Potential of Poetic-Psychoanalytic Discourse

Both poetry and psychoanalysis possess revolutionary potential in their ability to challenge dominant cultural narratives and reveal suppressed truths. Poetry's capacity to articulate alternative ways of seeing and being parallels psychoanalysis's ability to uncover the unconscious assumptions that shape social and individual behaviour.

The surrealist movement's explicit embrace of psychoanalytic principles demonstrates this revolutionary dimension most clearly. By attempting to write directly from the unconscious through techniques like automatic writing, the surrealists sought to bypass cultural censorship and reveal the radical implications of unconscious truth. Their experiments suggest possibilities for a poetic practice that could serve not merely individual therapeutic purposes but broader social and political transformation.

Conclusion: Toward an Integrated Practice

The correlation between poetry and psychoanalytic articulation of the unconscious suggests possibilities for integrated practices that could enhance both therapeutic and aesthetic work. Therapists might benefit from attending more closely to the poetic dimensions of their patients' language, while poets might gain deeper access to their creative material through engagement with psychoanalytic insights.

This integration need not collapse the important distinctions between therapeutic and aesthetic practices. Rather, it can illuminate the ways both disciplines serve essential human needs—the need to make meaning from experience, to find language for the unspeakable, and to transform psychological suffering into shared understanding.

Poetry remains one of our most powerful technologies for accessing and articulating unconscious experience. Its correlation with psychoanalytic insight offers both disciplines opportunities for mutual enrichment, pointing toward new possibilities for healing, understanding, and creative expression. In recognizing poetry as a form of psychoanalytic articulation, we acknowledge the profound psychological work that aesthetic creation performs—not merely expressing unconscious content but actively participating in the ongoing project of psychological integration and cultural transformation.

References

Akhmatova, A. (1987). Requiem. In: Anderson, M.S. (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*. Zephyr Press.

Arendt, H. (1963). *“Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Viking Press.

Barner, M (2019) *Virginia Woolf and Freud: The Implications of His Work on Her Mental Health* University Honors Theses.

Bell, Q. (1952) *Virginia Woolf: A Biography**. Hogarth Press.

Benjamin, W. (1968). *Illuminations* (ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn). Schocken Books.

Bion, W.R. (1962). *Learning from Experience* London: Heinemann.

Black, D. (2006). *Why Things Matter: The Place of Values in Psychoanalytic Theory* London: Routledge.

Bollas, Christopher (1987). *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*. London: Free Association Books.

Calvino, I (2002) *The Written World and the Unwritten World* Penguin Modern Classics.

Dante Alighieri. (2006). *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*. Trans. R. and J. Hollander. New York: Anchor Books.

Dylan, B. (1963). *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall. On: The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan** [Album]. Columbia Records.

Freud, S. (1910). Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood. In: Strachey, J. (ed. & trans.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, Vol. 11. London: Hogarth Press.

Gibbons, S (1932) *Cold Comfort Farm** Penguin.

Halton-Hernandez, I. (2022). Marion Milner's 'Pliable Medium' and the Role of the Patient's Creativity in the Analytic Encounter. *British Journal of Psychotherapy**, 38(1), 1–11.

Harrison, T. (1985). "V" .London: Penguin.

Hinshelwood, R.D. (1990). "Virginia Woolf and psychoanalysis": Comment. *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 17(3), 367–371.

Homer. (1998). "The Iliad" . Trans. R. Fagles. London: Penguin Classics.

Horney, K (1950) "Neurosis and Human Growth" Norton.

Hughes, L. (2002). Let America Be America Again. In: Rampersad, A. (ed.), The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York: Vintage Classics.

Jung, C. G. (1957). "The Undiscovered Self". Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Jung, C. G. (1959). "Civilisation in Transition, Collected Works" Vol. 10. Princeton University Press.

Klein, M. (1946). Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms. In: "Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946–1963" London: Hogarth Press.

Kristeva, Julia (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lawrence, D.H. (1923) "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious" Dover Publications.

Lorde, A. (1988). A Litany for Survival. In: "The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde "New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Milner, M. (1950). On Not Being Able to Paint London: Heinemann.

Orr, D. W. (1989). Virginia Woolf and psychoanalysis. International Review of Psycho-Analysis 16(2), 151–161.

Owen, W. (1994). Dulce et Decorum Est. In: Hibberd, D. and Onions, J. (eds.), Poetry of the First World War London: Macmillan.

Pick, D (2003) The Id comes to Bloomsbury. Guardian. August 16th.

Roeto, H (2019) "What a Lark! What a Plunge!" The influence of Sigmund Freud on Virginia Woolf. Antioch University, Los Angeles, United States.

Segal, H. (1957). Notes on Symbol Formation. International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 38, 391–397.

Shawn, W. (1981). "My Dinner with André". (Film) Dir. Louis Malle. New Yorker Films.

Shelley, P.B. (1819). *The Mask of Anarchy* London: Edward Moxon.

Sting. (1987). *They dance alone (Cueca solo)* [Song]. *On ...Nothing like the sun* [Album]. A&M Records.

Taylor, D. (2003). *Telling Lies in Psychotherapy* London: Karnac.

Waddell, M. (2002). *Inside Lives: Psychoanalysis and the Growth of the Personality* London: Karnac Books.

Winnicott, D.W. (1965). *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment**. London: Hogarth Press.

Woolf, V. (1925). *"Mrs Dalloway"* London: Hogarth Press.

Woolf, V. (1941). *Suicide note to Leonard Woolf*. In: Bell, Q. (ed.), *Virginia Woolf: A Biography**. London: Hogarth Press.

David Morgan
31 Adamson rd
London NW3 3HT
07786900656

After this there was a paper by Mary Adams and poetry by JJ Bolla

--