

BEING THE OTHER: A CREATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE OTHER

Dwight Turner
Professor Jane Callaghan
Dr Alasdair Gordon-Finlayson
University of Northampton, England

Abstract

Influenced by Fanon's idea that the slave needs the master as much as the master needs the slave, this article uses sand play work to explore the unconscious draw for the other in relation to the majority. Offering an important insight into this difficult and contradictory relationship, this research argues that for difference to be fully understood we must make conscious and recognise this relationship for the other in order to free the other from their fear of their potential.

Key words: *Difference, diversity, sand play, the other, Jung, Buber, identity*

Review of the literature

We are all the other.

I, Dwight, am the lead author for this article. I am the son of Caribbean immigrants to the United Kingdom. Born in the UK, I have served within the British Military, lived in Berlin Germany, and currently work as a transpersonal psychotherapist. I, and my parents before me, have endured varying levels of racism, sexism, and marginalisation, experiences which have shaped our lives here in the United Kingdom, and yet still we endure here. Still, like so many other migrants and alternative others we look to the majority to accept us.

This research paper though from a psychotherapeutic perspective asked why we continue this endurance race towards acceptance. For example, what is it about the majority that means the other still remains tied to it even given the struggles? Given that we understand so much about the conscious experience of the other, what about the unconscious connection between the other and the majority? And how can creative techniques common to psychotherapy assist in helping the other to understand the unconscious link between the other and the subject?

Yet, what is the other? We all have an experience of being the other. The problem with

this is any research into otherness has tended to centre itself within one of the few predetermined, politicised categories. In the past these definitions of difference emerged out of a white, majority culture, heteronormative, paradigm and were often nothing more than the majority presenting an other against which it could define itself. These definitions were enforced from the upper classes, so were upheld from a position of extreme privilege, with the impact of said definitions being they negated any perspective which did not fit within this majority culture paradigm. The impact of this leads the other to conform to the idea of a normal identity, thereby playing the role given it by the majority. Should it fail to do so, it is then problematised by being seen as abnormal, hysterical, or aggressive, when its actions sit outside of this majority decreed normality. Yet, should the other conform there was a huge psychological cost to doing so, as evidenced by whiteness theorists whose ideas highlighted the negative social and psychological impact of conforming upon the sense of self of the other (Ahmed, 2007). The shift in focus from a majority defined idea of difference to one defined by the other frees this research from past categorisations.

Secondly, due to the power dynamic created by the splitting of subject and object by the majority, the categories themselves are therefore limiting and create their own levels of difference; for example, if one is not dark skinned then one is often considered not black enough to be black, yet also occasionally to be accepted one has to be lighter skinned and more like the majority. Psychotherapeutically, I would term this a *splitting of the other* where the other's identity is immediately challenged by the categorisation of the majority. One means of countering this is to take back the power inherent in self-identifying, for example, within the feminist arena, discussions around self-definitions of what it is to be woman shifted the ownership of such away from the majority (Beauvoir, 2010). The return of this power to self-identify is hugely important and adds flexibility to how the other is seen beyond the religious, cultural, or scientific categorisations of what it is to be a woman, black, or of a different race or culture. My research adopts this idea by

allowing the other to self-define what it is to be the outsider, as any attempt to do otherwise would have been from within one of the previously defined categories which would inevitably have led to a majority tainted, reductionist perspective. So the self-identification of the other was an essential cornerstone to this research.

As a psychotherapist though much of the discourse around difference has centred on the power relationships inherent within a consideration of the object relations and difference. The idea that we form groupings to define who we are in relation to that which we are not, sits central to the work of Piaget and Weil whose developmental stages centred around how we experience the other (Weil & Piaget, 1951). The problem here is this does nothing to explore the power dynamics inherent in a process of childhood othering, and fails to consider the difficult experience of the other in its separation and objectification by the subject. This failure of psychotherapy to consider the other being an issue raised by thinkers such as Said (2003), who was critical of psychoanalysis' overreliance on object relations when considering difference.

Even person centred or existential perspectives have struggled to psychotherapeutically engage fully with the experience of the other. Driven by his own wartime experiences as the other, Buber's (2010) ideas of our relationship to the other are also important here. Although these tended to explore this relationship from the perspective of the I, or the subject, he explored two types of relationships. Firstly, his work discussed an I – IT relationship where the other is utilised by the I for its own wishes, the type of objectifying relationship which echoes that where a man uses a woman for his own sexual needs for example. This is in marked contrast to his second type of relationship, the I – Thou relationship, which is one built on mutuality, where the I learns from and takes responsibility for the other, and vice versa. What his work failed to do though is explore the other's motivations in seeking out a relationship with the I in his dyad, in particular when the other is the objectified IT of his I - IT dyad. For example, whilst Hegel spoke not only about identity formation but also about issues of power and the need to feel powerful inbuilt

Dwight Turner is a PhD student at the University of Northampton, exploring the transpersonal meaning of being the other. As a psychotherapist his interests include creative explorations of difference.

Professor Callaghan is Course Leader on the Masters in Child and Adolescent Mental Health at the University of Northampton. Her interests include the study of violence, childhood, family life, gender, professional identities and issues of social justice and inequality.

Rev Alasdair Gordon-Finlayson is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Northampton and a Zen Buddhist priest. His research interests include social and critical psychology, and transpersonal psychology

within the subject's need for the other (Hegel, 1976), this contrasts markedly with Kristeva, whose writings went some way to espousing the experience of the immigrant other, her words clearly detailing the fear and hatred directed towards the other (Kristeva, 1994). These experiences though are often offset by the other's financial needs, or desires for a seemingly better or just safer life, based on being refugees from areas of conflict, areas which have also been researched on numerous occasions by psychologists.

Yet, as a psychotherapist, my own feeling was that it was important to recognise the unconscious forces also working to maintain a dialogue between the subject and the other. Von Franz's (1980) work on projection is essential to understanding this dynamic. In her numerous writings on the subject she recognised that the subject would also be prone to projecting aspects of itself onto the other, a process repeated by genders, whole communities, and even whole cultures. This would therefore lead to the other holding aspects of the subject which it would have to recollect for the process of individuation to take place. What is not discussed is how this process might also be the same for the other, meaning that the other might also have its own unconscious projections onto the subject, its own psychic material which it needs to regain from that same culture, community or gender, and that it needs to recollect in order for it to separate and grow. What often keeps them apart is the narcissistic drive by both the subject and the other to destroy or at least distance itself from that which threatens the belief that it is perfect as it is. This is a perspective built upon the ideas of Benjamin (1998) who posited the idea that it is within the narcissism of the subject and the object that conflict resides which, for example, drives the other into relationship with the subject, no matter the level of hatred directed towards it.

Expanding on this further, for the I, the drive to be seen as superior to the other, for example, is driven by a form of grandiose narcissism which is threatened by the presence of an emboldened other (Ahmed, 2007). Conversely, there is also a narcissistic grandiosity for the other in taking on the burden of the unconscious material discarded by the

subject in the initial space (Perera, 1986). What this means is there is a narcissistic wounding that both parties sit with that forms a part of this contract of unconscious collusion between the pair. Considering Jung, it is important to recognise that even given his own prejudices around gender and racial differences, he often talked of the other being the shadow (Stevens, 1990). Although his ideas often clashed with those of Buber he also recognised that there was an interpersonal interaction between subject and the other which was yet to be explored. In fact, whilst it is important to note that whilst Buber saw the interaction between the I and the Thou as a conscious interpersonal one, Jung also recognised the unconscious interaction between the two, meaning that it was possible to combine the two perspectives. In recognising this potential, a combination of both the Buberian and the Jungian then creates the following equation: the I – IT(Thou). What this means is that when the other (the IT of the equation) is formed, its authentic sense of self is forced into the unconscious, hence the bracketed Thou.

So, in including the idea of unconscious material and the drive to individuation, then one can rightly assume there is also an unconscious pull towards the other out of a need to individuate. Yet, whilst the majority might have a projection onto the minority, which the minority holds, the minority also needs to recognise its own projections. Or, to utilise my Buberian/Jungian link from before, within this unconscious relationship between the It and the Thou, it is reasonable to assume that the bracketed (Thou) must reside somewhere. This research therefore worked to uncover just what the other's projections were, what forms this (Thou) might take, and how this projection then keeps the other tied to the majority in relationship.

Methodology

Given that this study involved understanding the relational human experience as the other, it was felt that a phenomenological methodology would be most appropriate in understanding this very human encounter. Merleau-Ponty's (1962)

perspective on phenomenology was selected for this project as his methodology was centred around the desire to provide a wider perspective on human experiences. Therefore to explore this human experience of difference, I interviewed 25 co-researchers using a blend of one-to-one interviewing techniques and the creative methods. The interviews were a maximum of two hours long and structured to provide creative data via:

1. A short Semi-Structured interview of 20 minutes which went into some depth around co-researchers' experience of difference;
2. A Sand Tray exercise, where myself and my co-researcher selected symbols that represented themselves, me as they saw me in that present moment, and our relationship.

These interviews were tape recorded and the drawing and sand tray photographed before being discussed to gather any further information from the co-researchers after reflection. The semi-structured interview was designed to allow co-researchers to speak freely about their experience of being different, bringing their experience into the room where it could be witnessed by myself the researcher without judgement (Braud & Anderson, 1998). The style of interview was also important here. For phenomenological research, it was important to remember that as I too was part of the process, I would be participating within the interview myself, a view held by Sorrell and Redmond (1995) who discussed this very style of interviewing in an article on nursing. It was important to understand my own role in the process as the object for my co-researchers.

To explore this from a psychotherapeutic perspective, Winnicott (1969) spoke about the importance of the psychoanalyst being able to hold the projections of the client, with projections being the unprocessed unconscious psychic material of the client. When correctly contained, the ability to hold and reflect these projections back to the client in manageable form offered clients the chance for reintegration and individuation.

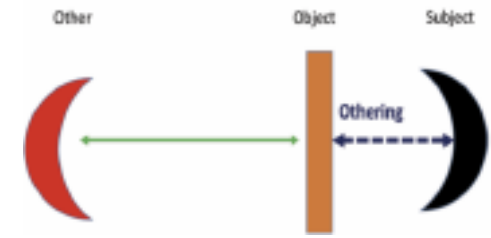


Figure 1. Othering the subject

The exercise was then constructed to use myself as the signifier as outlined in Figure 1, *othering the subject*, above. The meaning behind this was because my co-researchers had already self-identified as other, positioning myself as the absolute, and working with the sand tray technique, would therefore bring to the surface the unconscious material that ties the other to the subject. This would then allow me to uncover both the projections the other has onto the signifier and also to uncover some of the reasoning behind the pull of the other towards the signifier.

Within psychotherapy sand play is an established method for accessing unconscious material. It was used in this study because, again, working with symbols allowed for the unconscious presentation of internal or repressed unconscious material around difference. The exercise involved the co-researcher selecting three objects from a thousand predetermined toys to represent themselves, myself and our relationship. These toys would then be placed in a tray of sand. Although this worked more with the unconscious, it was also built around Jung's (1968) idea that the symbols used will be aspects of the archetype beyond it; in this case meaning the archetype of the other. The use of sand tray in psychotherapy here invoked one's ability to move beyond the limitations of the verbal and connect with the pre-verbal, and perinatal, consciousness, crossing cultural, gender, sexual and other boundaries and offering a more universal experience of an unconscious phenomenon than using just words (Labovitz Boik & Anna Goodwin, 2000). Another crucial consideration when working with symbols and sand tray in this context is their ability to hold the duality of 'psychic

opposition' (Turner, 2005, p.38). For example, Homeyer and Sweeney (2011) offer an interesting perspective on sand play therapy, seeing it as an expressive and projective mode of psychotherapy involving the unfolding of intra- and inter-personal issues through the use of specific sand play materials as a nonverbal medium of communication.

Co-researchers

To advertise for my co-researchers, notices were sent out via a counselling centre in London, where flyers and leaflets directed potential co-researchers to my research. The co-researchers who entered this research all self-selected, feeling they had an experience of being the other that they wanted to discuss with myself, with the interviews being conducted throughout 2013. The only real consideration here was that the co-researchers had to have worked through their sense of difference (within psychotherapy for example) so ideally they would be comfortable discussing their challenges.

Data analysis

This research had a phenomenological epistemology, with the interviews being analysed using phenomenological research methods (Moustakas, 1994). This approach was chosen because it would enable an engagement with the lived experience of difference, and would allow an analysis of the unconscious relational and transpersonal understanding co-researchers have of that experience. It would also offer personal and social significance (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Moustakas, 1994). As this research is based around the extrapolation of an overall picture of a phenomenon that humanity encounters almost daily, it was therefore hugely important to allow for the 'overall' providing space for the possibility of the missed experiences of others as well. Therefore the picture just has to be good enough. In following closely the various stages laid out by Moustakas, I felt I would gain a clearer perspective on an entity that is in constant movement and flight and that cannot really be contained within a single theoretical strand. That is not to say that other

research methodologies could not be employed in future research but a more feminine, relational, and in addition cautious perspective was needed to understand this unconscious entity.

Moustakas outlined several stages for this research starting with the *epoche* where one discovers, develops and refines an internal receptive space for the phenomenon to reside; to *phenomenological reduction*, where the material is refined over and over to discover different textual and structural descriptions of the interview questions and creative exercises; to *imaginative variation*, where I considered the phenomenon from a myriad of angles; to a *final synthesis*, where the phenomenon is finally understood in its totality (Moustakas, 1994). For my research the *epoche* stage involved the initial reading around the subject of difference and the other, the writing of the initial research proposal, and the undertaking of a preliminary personal practice interview.

Once this stage had been completed, the *phenomenological reduction* period involved myself as the researcher reading through each of the completed transcripts and their descriptions of their sand trays six times in order to fully absorb the co-researcher's experience of difference and how they related to their experience as the other. Only when fully understood did I start the formal analysis, and began to build themes that were emergent from the data. The interviews were analysed to produce a co-researcher textual experience, where how they experienced difference was fully understood, contrasted to their structural experience of the other, where the other itself was seen and witnessed. Essentially, I was able to present both how the co-researchers encountered difference, and its impact upon them, alongside their own understanding of just what difference actually was through their eyes, thereby showing their relationship to the phenomenon of the other.

The *imaginative variation* stage was the most complicated, yet also the most important section here, as it involved the drawing forth from the material further themes that represented my co-researcher's experience of difference, knowledge that would then further inform the individual structural and textual descriptions. The particular challenge

here was to use imagination, intuition and the co-researchers' transcripts to understand fully their experience of the visualisation exercise and the sand tray work, this other side of this double hermeneutic. Hours were spent therefore reading through the text and studying the sand tray in an attempt to understand more fully their experience as the other, what drew them as the other to myself as the subject, and to uncover the other's projections onto myself.

At the end of this process the twenty-five textual and structural descriptions were then combined to create an overall phenomenological textual study of the all co-researchers' textual experience of difference, and an overall structural presentation of just what the other was for the co-researchers. This stage then led to an overall *synthesis*, where the other was understood from a purely phenomenological perception. Through this process, I aimed to build a thorough understanding of difference that included both the *noema* and *noemesis*, meaning an understanding of that which was experienced, called the 'noema' by Moustakas, and the actual way it was itself experienced, otherwise called the 'noemesis' (Moustakas, 1994).

Results

The other fixes its identity in relation to the subject

In his paper Frosh (2002) talked about the signifier being aware of the object but, even though this may at times be a concern, this is secondary to its own needs. Frosh's point centred around the signifier's primary need to find its identity through the mirrored gaze of other, a need that then ties them together. What he does not do is really try to understand just what it might be that the other wants, instead preferring to observe and understand the other from a distance, since there is as much of a need for the other to find an identity as there is for the signifier. This would therefore echo the Hegelian idea that the slave needs the master just as much as the master needs the slave. Where my research differs greatly from other approaches is in its continued consideration of the unconscious

perspective of the other itself; for example, to reflect back Frosh's point, what does it want from the signifier? What has been most important in my use of sand play to understand the other is that it has assisted me in understanding the nature of the other-signifier relationship. For example, the first important thing to notice under this theme is my awareness that othering in this instance involves the unconscious suppression of one's own signifier. This signifier is then projected out onto a supposed signifier/object in order unconsciously to maintain the master/slave dialect which Fanon (1959) talked of.

An excellent first example of this emerges out of Daniel's interview. A middle aged man, he was bullied as a child both at school and at his local church group for being gay. Originally from Portugal, another of his differences was that he often did not find it easy to relate to other gay men. For the sand play exercise, Daniel chooses a bear to represent me, a shaman for himself and a hippo for our relationship. The sand play is presented as Figure 2 below.

As we explore the sand play, Daniel expresses the following about the symbols:

Dan: The first thing I thought is I really hope there's a bear for you, because I have the sort of bear, but the side of the bear that is sweet. A sort of motherly figure in a sense, a bear, because that's how I perceive you, very gentle, caring and yeah, um, I just couldn't think of anything else, it just came straight away. Bang! There's a bear, you know. And, you know, very likeable animals, you know, bears you can think also of the polar bear, one of the most sort of the, and of course there's the other side to a bear, but I don't know you enough to know what the other side is. In terms of me that was easy, the other two I really struggled with. The second one I finally found something, and that's because I see myself as a shaman, and I thought that's it, it was the one that grabbed me. So I thought that's a shaman, and then I just for the relationship, I don't know why I picked it, a hippo. I don't know why, I just suddenly thought that's cute,



Figure 2: Daniel's sand tray

I'm gonna go for that.' I don't know what it is but I just went for it. I don't know you, but there is something sweet in hippos, and they're very, I think now that I think about it, if you think phenomenologically about a hippo. Hippos are very ancient animals, they live in waters, but they live in the land as well, it's very, they're big but they are soft at the same time, they're not attacking. There's something sweet and soft in them, at the same time I have never seen any of them, so I think there is something of the really unknown, as I know you but really I don't. I was going to say I put them close together, it didn't feel they belonged in the centre, I like them there in the corner, me and you and then this thing coming up out of us, and we're sort of guiding it.

Daniel seems to have taken to me in this tray. His first instinct is to choose something 'sweet' for myself in the form of the bear, seeing me as gentle,

caring and motherly. This symbol and the symbol for the relationship, the hippo, he also found difficult to select, whereas the shaman for himself was much easier. Also, his exploration of the nature of his relationship to his projection is that it is an enduring one, one that has lasted a long time. It is therefore important to notice three things when considering Daniel and his sand play. Firstly, bears and hippos, as he says, are also family-orientated animals, territorial, and aggressive, whereas the shaman is a solitary soul often situated on the outside of the tribe or group. Daniel has projected the more group centred aspect of himself onto me here. It is also important at this point to notice the relationship as the hippo. For him the relationship is based around power dynamics, hence the choice of a symbol so calm but also so deadly. The positioning of his symbols is also important. Daniel says that he chose to place all his symbols in the corner of the tray. The position of these symbols, and in particular that of the hippo, facing outwards

at the other symbols, suggest a defensiveness, or something of a deficit, a common theme when considering his position as the outsider. Where this fits in with my research is we immediately begin to see on a deeper level the projections of the other onto the majority, unconscious aspects of the other that, when not owned, tie the other to be absolute.

Returning to Daniel, his choice of the Shaman is interesting. As well as being solitary people, during the interview he makes what I feel was a very important point about them, stating:

They're quite crazy, as I said they have proto borderline character traits, and they're very angry people, the original shaman.

As well as the shaman having a purpose, an element of madness and anger resonates from his side of the tray towards mine. In their presence and positioning, there is an anger within the shaman and the hippo, that is there less with the bear, although all three collectively seem to have an anger towards my own side of the tray. The last point here is an interesting unconscious perspective on bears, centring around his going to a 'Bear Week' festival, which is presented below:

Dan: Do you know what Bear is about? It's a gay category. It's sort of big, hairy, maybe old, but it's actually quite, yeah, big but not muscle with fat if you want, in that sense. It was Bear week and I had lost a stone, and I, you know, I was 'oh my god, I'm in the wrong week! I shouldn't be here!' But the interesting part is, it's big thing. They come from all over Europe. The place is gay friendly usually, and it was, what's the word if you have a bee's nest. A hive. I was like 'oh for god sake' and there were loads of gay bars and places, and everything. I was on my own and there were couples. I hadn't expected that, silly me of course, I had expected to go on holiday and maybe you chat to the person next door, but not in a cruising way, just chatting and having a chat, and it was good to know somebody, and that's it. I wasn't aiming for a whole full on Soho/Vauxhall sort of thing.

And I was there and I just felt like I didn't fit in, because people were like in couples or groups and I was going out for dinner and I was on my own. I didn't notice many people on their own like that. It was really weird, really weird, because all the memories came up. I thought I'm so different, I feel so different, I feel like, you know, it's still there, but it was great because for me it was an opportunity to actually check in with me about that. It was difficult, but like even my, I was renting a room in a guesthouse, even the landlord, the owner, was like going clubbing, going out at midnight.

Relating this back to his sand play, Daniel has unconsciously sexualised my objective self in his tray, from the projection of the 'Bear Week' onto myself, to the statements above that I was 'sweet', meaning that there is an erotic element in the other remaining connected to the subject, or that the subject is desirable. Secondly, whilst there is a desire here to fit in with the group, yet also a fear or anger at the majority, projected both as the bear and as the authority across the room. This is even presented via his story where he chooses to attend 'Bear Week' yet finds himself on the outside from the very beginning. In the end, Daniel is more comfortable being in his own space, the majority being a threat to his sense of being, and something he has to fight against. He both desires to be with the objective me, and eroticises my presence, but is also wary of being too close to me, hence the aggressive presentation.

The idea that the other projects its anger at the objectified signifier (in this case myself as the researcher) also sits central to the sand play exercise of another of my co-researchers, Rowena. A white middle-aged woman who was born in Rhodesia during the days of colonial rule she left the country to study in South Africa. For her sand play exercise, Rowena chooses a white princess for herself, batman for myself and a stallion for our relationship.

Discussing the sand play, presented as Figure 3, Rowena has the following to say about the princess initially, stating:



Figure 3: Rowena's sand tray

Row: *I think that's (the Princess) because thinking about difference it's been a bit of a fight. It's kind of like I've always been up sort of Joan of Arc-ish in a way. Sort of up for the challenge. And I used to be a real champion and fight for others, and I guess that's a rescuer in me, and there's a sort of standing back and saying this is about you know everybody's blocked, I don't want to. But it has been, certainly around the dyslexia, I guess I didn't realise how much of a struggle it was. And growing up in Africa, you know, being accepted as a white woman.*

Her statements about the princess whilst positioning her as the other, through her being white in Rhodesia, her being a woman within a patriarchy, and her having dyslexia at school, suggest she has also taken up the agency of the saviour, itself containing power. Of myself as

batman she says:

Well I think it was largely the stature. Cloaked, don't really know you. You know, what lies within. But I think being batman of course he's the superhero so it's not kind of threatening, yeah.

The words used here talk about the paradox she has projected onto myself, of the hero who is non-threatening whilst also taking on an aggressive position at the same time, as if the character of herself she has projected outwards is trying to balance itself. The paradox here holds distinct echoes of the hippo from Daniel's sand tray, as if both co-researchers are saying there is something threatening about the projected role I have adopted for this exercise. Talking about the relationship now, Rowena states:

Why the stallion? Why? It was just intuitive. And it struck me as something, it's kind of natural, moving, well I feel kind of natural in the relationship I suppose, it's moving, it's quite powerful, yeah, and just of the earth I think that is the other thing.

My perspective on her side of the tray is that whilst the white figure is herself in this instance, batman is a darker figure, a man dressed mainly in black. So it is important to notice the incongruence between Rowena stating her desire to fight for minorities, whilst in the tray she is threatening to decapitate my objectified self as the dark knight. The choice of the black stallion as the relationship is to do with my colour and is an obviously sexualised image, echoing the bear again from Daniel's sand tray. What is also interesting here is the switching of positions for the two co-researchers between the relationship being sexualised and my objectified self being sexualised, with the symbol

representing the threat swapping roles as well. This could be due to the gender difference between the co-researchers, but it could also be symptomatic of the flexible nature of the projections into the space between us, meaning that when one is seen as present in the absolute, the other sits in the space in between but does not disappear. Together though they speak highly of the ambivalent nature of the pull/push between the other and the signifier.

At this point, Rowena then makes an effort to reframe the tray, stating that the original box was perhaps a little too orderly. She moves the tray around so that my symbols (I am Donatello, she is a white horse, and the relationship is the box) are placed all together so that she can climb onto the black horse and jump my relationship.

Presented as Figure 4, even with the reframing of the sand play the princess with the sword is still



Figure 4: Rowena's reframed sand tray

waving it at Batman, the masculine protector of what is right in both scenarios, and the sexualised object projected upon myself is by the side of the princess. So whilst there is again the pull towards me, there is also an anger that is not expressed in her words, but is through the imagery of what I (as her object in Donatello) mean to her, echoing the fear that Daniel unconsciously expressed towards myself in his tray. I then become her signifier for real, not just as a projection, which reminds me of the anxiety of the narcissistic majority as presented by the likes of Seshadri-Crooks (2000) in her consideration of whiteness theory. Within this theme all these co-researchers were still unconsciously struggling with their signifier/signified difference, with the signifier often projected out onto myself in the tray, where even though they might express something positive towards me consciously, they would then unconsciously interact with it quite aggressively. One of the most surprising things in this exercise was that my co-researchers in all these instances presented aspects of our difference in the relationship space between us, be it about race or power; the black horse or the African hippopotamus. This is important as it denotes how important it is to be aware of my own impact on an investigation into difference, be it in this research project or elsewhere, and how this will sit unconsciously in the intersubjective space between myself and an other at any time. What this exercise also begins to show is that the othering of the other is in part driven by the non-recognition of the erotic pull towards the signifier.

This struggle for the other is a struggle to maintain their own sense of identity in the face of a projected signifier, myself. What I mean here is for Rowena my presence as her signifier in the tray gave her something to save and to fight against as a white princess wielding a sword, my own black identity having been both negated by her projection and reformatted as a sexualised black stallion. In these cases the other holds its otherness as an identity so tightly that it is fearful of letting it go. So, regarding identity what this does is to confirm the vision Fanon (2005) held that the colonised needed the coloniser as much as the coloniser needed them, and

that at times their identities can both become fixed in a dyad of mutuality built from fear and desire.

Discussion

To explore the attraction in more depth, in both cases there is an exotification of the subject presented in the tray. In Daniel's presentation he turns my objectified subject into a bear, unconsciously connecting this to his 'Bear Week' story of his search for connection. The exotic here therefore means that which is desired, and is an aspect of the relationship between subject and other which has often been explored, for example in the work of Said, who saw this as a form of othering and objectification of the other (Said, 2003). Where this study differs from his opinion is in the exotification of the subject, making the erotic that which sits in-between the pair, constantly pulling them into relationship.

There is also here an exploration of the subtle aggressive imagery pushing the other away from the subject. For example, Rowena's image of the princess with a cutlass in her hand constantly directing her aggression at Batman echoes the defensive positioning of Daniel's symbols in the corner of the sand tray opposite my own. The other here is not a passive creature, as per Kristeva's earlier metaphoric statement. In both cases there is an anger and assertiveness hidden under the surface which if utilised would bring them more into relationship with the subject. In the interviews themselves, both co-researchers presented as very nice, kindly people, so their aggressive, territorial imagery contrasts greatly against their outward personas. An exploration of this reveals elements of inauthenticity in both co-researchers when faced with the subject, as if the dynamic (Thou) hidden in the unconscious holds within it the fire of authenticity.

This study then provides evidence of just how debilitating the impact of othering actually is. For both Daniel and Rowena, although their experiences as the other were different, they both had to endure othering due to sexual orientation, gender or colour. The processes of othering then acts as a traumatic glue which binds them to their

objectified subjects. Othering is therefore a process which acts as an avoidance of relationship with the subject, for example in this case the othering of the subject allows the other to remain safe whilst also in a loose connection with the subject. When the subject in this project becomes an It, any idea of relationship, where the other is not in deficit and learns from the subject, is denied. For the other here, it maintains the objectification of the subject out of a fear of relationship with its own (Thou). What this means is that for any relationship to return home, any sense of power and authority must also return with it. The exotification of the subject is therefore an unconscious pull for the other towards knowing more about itself, and it too has projections which need to return home.

The importance of all these points, and the results within this research should not be understated. Often in research there is an objective, and mostly conscious, understanding of the experience of the other, work which has gone a long way to recognising the difficulties endured by the other. The door that my work opens is into a room where the unconscious, and relational, experience of being the other is acknowledged and explored. A phenomenological approach to this research was essential to this, as it allowed a more relational understanding to emerge out of the material. Also, the creative use of the sand tray was also essential as this encouraged a gentle exploration of some very deep, and very difficult unconscious material held by the other. These means of working ultimately offered me a window into understanding the unconscious experience of being the other, and the unconscious understanding of just why my parents, and many others, choose to endure the trials and tribulations of being outsiders in relationship to the majority. Further work by play therapists is therefore encouraged to understand this creative process, for example, the ideas presented within this paper, where the other is unconsciously drawn to the majority yet is also fearful of this same engagement. Future research might also include the idea that the other is drawn to the majority to learn more about itself, or how the other's fixing of its own identity then reinforces the fear of the majority and vice versa.

Finally, it is also important that we, as play therapists, consider how to use our modality of working to assist clients from minority or refugee populations to understand their experiences of being the other. Given the present political shifts to the right across the West, fuelled at least in part by the movement of refugees from war torn areas across the world, we have a role to play in offering an important perspective on the experiences as other, which have become so plentiful of late. As presented here, creative work of this type offers a less-invasive means of working with unconscious material, thereby allowing practitioners to see beyond the politically constructed forms of difference presented here, and engage with a client's sense of otherness on a deeper level. It will become therefore hugely important that we use these skills to influence the wider political discourse around difference, as these experiences need to be uncovered, heard, and acknowledged, for the benefit of us all.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory*, 8(2), pp.149–168.
- Beauvoir, S. de (2010). *The Second Sex*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Benjamin, J. (1998). *Shadow of the Other*. Routledge.
- Braud, W., & Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. USA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Buber, M. (2010). *I and Thou*. USA: Martino Publishing Limited.
- Fanon, F. (1959). *A Dying Colonialism*. London: Penguin Limited.
- Fanon, F. (2005). Black Skin, White Masks. In M. Silverman (Ed) *Frantz Fanon's 'Black Skin, White Masks' (Texts in Culture)*. UK: Manchester University Press.

Von Franz, M.-L. (1980). *Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology*. UK: Open Court Publications.

Frosh, S. (2002). *The Other. American Imago*, 59(4), pp.389–407. Available at: http://muse.jhu.edu/content/crossref/journals/american_imago/v059/59.4frosh.html [Accessed September 17, 2013].

Hegel, G. (1976). *Phenomenology of Spirit*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Homeyer, L.E., & Sweeney, D.S. (2011). *Sandplay Therapy: A Practical Manual*. London: Routledge.

Jung, C.G. (1968). *Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice*, New York: Vintage Books.

Kristeva, J. (1994). *Strangers to Ourselves*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Labovitz Boik, B., & Anna Goodwin, E. (2000). *Sandplay Therapy: A Step-by-Step Manual for Psychotherapists of Diverse Orientations*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. California: Sage Publications.

Perera, S.B. (1986). *The Scapegoat Complex: Toward a Mythology of Shadow and Guilt*. Toronto: Inner City Books.

Said, E. (2003). *Freud and the Non-European*. London and New York: Verso.

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Limited.

Seshadri-Crooks, K. (2000). *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*. London: Routledge.

Sorrell, J.M., & Redmond, G.M. (1995). Interviews in qualitative nursing research: differing approaches for ethnographic and phenomenological studies. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 21(6), pp.1117–22. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7665776>.

Stevens, A. (1990). *On Jung*. UK: Penguin Limited.

Turner, B.A. (2005). *The Handbook of Sandplay Therapy*. USA: Tenemos Press.

Weil, A.M., & Piaget, J. (1951). The development in children of the idea of the homeland and of relations to other countries. *International Social Sciences Journal*, 3, pp.561–578.

Winnicott, D.W. (1969). The Use of an Object. *International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, 50, pp.711–716.