

# FREUD CONFERENCE 2009

## Vermeer, Orpheus and 'The Blues' A journey into creativity

Saturday 23rd May 8.30am – 5.30pm

The Treacy Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville, Melbourne

### ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

**Dr. Michael Parsons** is a Training Analyst of the British Psychoanalytical Society and Member of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He took his first degree in Philosophy and Classical Literature & History at Oxford University, then trained as a doctor at the Middlesex Hospital in London. After two years postgraduate work in pathology, he trained in psychiatry at the Maudsley hospital, London and gained Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Alongside his psychiatric training, Michael trained at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London and qualified as a psychoanalyst in 1982. Since then he has worked in full time private psychoanalytic practice in London. In 1990 he was appointed a Training Analyst of the British Society. Amongst the many significant posts he has occupied at the Institute of Psychoanalysis are membership of the Ethics Committee and the Chairmanship of the Education Committee. He has strong links with psychoanalysis in Europe and America and is internationally known as a teacher and lecturer. In 2004 he was Visiting Professor at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute.

Michael is the author of *The Dove that Returns, The Dove that Vanishes: Paradox and Creativity in Psychoanalysis, 2000*, Routledge, and co-editor of *Before I was I: Psychoanalysis and the Imagination. Collected papers of Enid Balint, 1993*, Free Association. He has also published extensively in the International Psychoanalytic Journals.

**Dr Mark Howard** is a member of the Australian Psychoanalytical Society who works in private practice in Sydney, and trains and teaches analytic candidates. In addition to his medical and analytic training he has a background in the Humanities, mainly philosophy. Mark's clinical areas of interest include psychosis, symbol formation, the history of ideas, and analytic conversations with the creative arts. He has presented at several national conferences and provided outreach public lectures with the Sydney Branch of the APAS.

### MORNING SESSIONS

#### Dr Michael Parsons

#### 09.00 – 10.30 Keeping death alive

Are there psychoanalytic ideas about what it means to be fully and creatively alive? I discuss this question in the light of Winnicott's account of living by compliance or by creative apperception, and a critical examination of two of Freud's papers, 'The Uncanny' and 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through'.

A necessary aspect of independent, creative aliveness is the capacity to be interested in what disturbs our usual thought processes. Clinical examples show the truth of this for therapists in the clinical situation, and it applies to life in general as well. Being fully alive involves a particular use of memory so as to move actively up and down one's life experience between past and present, and

also the ability to extend this imaginatively into the future, including the experience of one's own death which is the ultimately and inescapably 'uncanny'.

### **11.00 – 12.30 Why did Orpheus look back?**

Following on from my previous paper I discuss how freedom of internal movement reveals the present as a point of encounter between past and future. The past is bounded by the primal scene and the future by death, which represent the beginning and end of time. The present is thus also an encounter between time and timelessness. To tell a dream in an analytic session is to bring the timelessness of the unconscious into a time-bound framework. A clinical example shows how a sense of this crossover between time and timelessness helped a patient use his dream experience to develop a greater sense of aliveness.

Vermeer's painting of 'The Kitchen Maid' pouring milk represents visually the intersection of time and timelessness. A case presented in a clinical seminar produced a disorienting sense of timelessness in the seminar group. The seminar leader then needed to help the discussion stay poised at a crossing-point between timelessness and time.

A discussion of the myth of Orpheus considers Orpheus' compulsion to look back at Eurydice as a failure of aliveness because he could not dream Eurydice at the intersection between the timelessness of the underworld and the linear temporality of everyday existence. I compare this with a clinical case.

## **AFTERNOON SESSIONS**

**Dr Mark Howard**

### **14.00 – 16.45pm (with A/T break) Diddley Bo: Music, poetry and the analytic experience**

The diddley bo is a single stringed instrument that began many Blues guitarists' journey into music. I use the diddley bo to explore music as a symbol, and its meaning for us. I link music with reverie, and early bodily experiences, brushed by Aboriginal Dot paintings. I relate mourning and music to each other, and I use a simple form of Bion's Grid to help us visualise these ideas.

I also draw on two poetic traditions to explore meaning in contemporary music. Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' introduces ideas about Goodness, envy and narcissism. The American post-slavery legend of 'Stagger Lee' offers a way to think about Identity. The states of mind represented in these poetic traditions can help us to understand popular music and Rock, and persistent social apprehensions towards them.

Along the way we can enjoy quite a range of music to help us think about these ideas. The paper ends with a raw Blues song played by Eddie 'One String' Jones. Eddie's song vividly brings to life analytic material resonant with clinical work, and helps us to look again at what music holds for us.

**16.45 – 17.30** Panel discussion with both speakers

**Registration Enquiries and Form**

**Phone: (03) 9513 9080**

**Conference enquiries:** [christine.hill@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:christine.hill@med.monash.edu.au)

**Mobile: 0411 556 205**