

## **CFP: Psychoanalysis in Our Time 2016 – Psychoanalysis and Sublimation**

Nordic Summer University, Orevesi, Finland, 24<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July 2016

Psychoanalysis in Our Time is an international research initiative funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The work is interdisciplinary and we welcome clinicians, film scholars, literary scholars as well as filmmakers and fine artists. Our first edited collection, *Psychoanalysis and the Unrepresentable: from Culture to the Clinic* (which is based on our Copenhagen symposium) is due for publication with Routledge before the end of the year, and there are further publications planned. Please see our website for further details:

<https://psychoanalysisinourtime.wordpress.com>

Now into our third year, and following the great success of our session at the National Maritime Museum in Gdansk, Poland earlier this year, the Psychoanalysis in Our Time research circle is very pleased to announce the call for papers for our joint Summer Session with the Nordic Summer University, to take place in Orevesi, Finland, from 24<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July 2016. The topic for this session will be “Psychoanalysis and Sublimation”.

Our invited keynote speakers for the Summer Session will be Robert Pfaller (Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Theory, University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz, Austria) and Elizabeth Povinelli (Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University).

You can find details of the full event here: <http://nordic.university/5-2/summer-session-2016/>

Please note that if you are prepared to share a room, the prices are very reasonable indeed and include full board and lodging as well as sessions and keynotes.

We are looking for a range of proposal for papers on the subject of Psychoanalysis and Sublimation – which could deal with cinema, literature, politics as well as the clinical. Please send an abstract (max. 300 words) and a short biographical statement to Dr Agnieszka Piotrowska ([agnieszka.piotrowska@beds.ac.uk](mailto:agnieszka.piotrowska@beds.ac.uk)) or Dr Ben Tyrer ([ben.tyrer@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:ben.tyrer@kcl.ac.uk)).

**The deadline for submission is 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016.**

Further details:

This session deals with the notion of “sublimation”, politics and creativity.

Freud first seems to mention the idea of sublimation in the “Three Essays on Sexuality”, and gave the concept a fuller expression in his subsequent article on Leonardo da Vinci, where he suggests that the artist sublimated his (seen then as pathological) homosexual drives into his creative work. Freud saw sublimation to be related to repression but involving a positive action. Even if, as Laplanche and Pontalis claim, the concept of sublimation remained underdeveloped in Freud’s own thought it certainly occupies a central place within the framework of psychoanalysis.

Any creative activity, including filmmaking, theatre, art, writing, as well as intellectual inquiry as such, could be interpreted as sublimation of sexual drives as well as an arena for a re-working of trauma. Freud establishes sublimation as a “mature defense mechanism” in which underlying wishes, desires and anxieties are channeled in a socially acceptable way (Bateman & Holmes 1995: 92). It offers an alternative to potentially destructive and painful repetition of forgotten trauma or repressed desire. And Melanie Klein suggested that sublimation was an attempt to restore the “good object” which had been shattered by the aggressive instincts.

Julia Kristeva characterises sublimation in terms of the dynamic of meaning-making and suggests that modern literature is a privileged site for this practice, and, further, that the very formation of the subject in and through language is a process of sublimation, as the transposition of the semiotic into the symbolic.

Simon Critchley (2007) in his discussion of Lacan’s notion of sublimation in *Seminar VII* makes two points: the first one is in relation to one’s desire which is sublimated instead of repressed. The second point is to do with beauty, which is inherent in sublimation of desire – at least in *Seminar VII*: “the moral goal of psychoanalysis consists in putting the subject in relation to its unconscious desire. This is why sublimation is so important, for it is the realization of such desire” (Critchley 2007: 73). In the context of *Seminar VII* we can say that the one who sublimates her trauma through an act which is both beautiful and ethical, is Antigone.

Lacan also claimed that sublimation raises the object to the dignity of the Thing.

Lacan in *Seminar XI* comes back to the idea of sublimation but in rather more prosaic terms. First, he reminds us of Freud’s position: Sublimation in a creative activity which satisfies libidinal drive through that activity. It is a substitute but it gathers the energy of the drive and channels it into something different than sexual activity. It is therefore satisfying for the subject and can be of benefit to culture and society: “Freud tells us repeatedly that sublimation is also satisfaction of the drive, whereas it is *zielgehemmt*, inhibited as to its aim – it does not attain it. Sublimation is nonetheless satisfaction of the drive, without repression. In other words – for the moment, I am not fucking, I am talking to you. Well! I can have exactly the same satisfaction as if I were fucking. That’s what it means” (Lacan, 1977: 165-66).

The session invites papers from all disciplines: clinicians, artists, performers, film, literature and cultural scholars. Why is it that some people can sublimate their

traumas and repressed desires into creative activities whereas others cannot? Both Freud and Lacan suggest that sublimation has a social as well as cultural function – what sort of possibilities does the concept offer for political aims and actions?

We welcome submissions for 20 minute papers and would invite different approaches to this subject from, for example, neuroscientists alongside historians, philosophers and natural scientists with an interest in psychoanalysis.