

#11. Nancy McWilliams, PhD:

This conference began with attention to hate and love. I want to talk about love, the falling-in-love process by which we come to this profession. Psychoanalysis—the subject matter of psychoanalysis, the unconscious—is an equal-opportunity love object. It began as a radical movement: messy, fractious, passionate. I fell in love with it as a college junior studying political theory. *Civilization and Its Discontents* got me hooked.

I read more Freud, followed by Theodor Reik, who was depicting sex differences with a respectfulness toward women that was rare in the sixties. Eager to know someone who had been close to Freud, I met with Reik and asked his advice about my anticipated career in clinical psychology. He told me I must be analyzed. I obediently went to his clinic and was referred to a senior analyst. My analysis was deeply transformative. I later trained at Reik's institute, NPAP.

When passionate movements get institutionalized, they confront organizational dynamics that tilt toward stasis, rigidity, hierarchy. This process is not peculiar to psychoanalysis. The graduate program where I teach began in the 1970s in an atmosphere of enthusiasm about the new PsyD degree. Our first students were intimately involved in structuring their training. Later, students came and went; the faculty remained. When current students seek changes, we find ourselves telling them, "We tried that in 1987 and it didn't work." We think we know best, and perhaps we do. But consider what happens to morale, to students' sense of being collaborative grown-ups, when this inflexibility sets in.

In groups, there are always insider/outsider dynamics, a theme that runs through this conference. In my psychoanalytic affiliations I have been both insider and outsider. For a long time I *felt* like an insider (Freud's protégé had sent me to his institute, which seemed unassailably kosher), while unknowingly being in many ways an outsider. But because I never brought my love to the American Psychoanalytic Association, and never suffered the pain of a rejected lover, I never bore a grudge. By the time I learned I wasn't welcome in some psychoanalytic circles, I had a solid sense of myself as an analyst and viewed the excluders as a curious cult. When Bryant Welch initially suggested suing the American, I objected: "Why do we need their institutes? We can start our own!" He responded, "You must live in the New York area." He was right: I had more options than many who fell in love with psychoanalysis in those years.

Insiders tend to believe that people who have bad experiences with their group are personally culpable. We pathologize those who don't fit in. Yet our most creative potential colleagues may be independent thinkers, critics, even rebels. In our institutional functioning, our professional skills can be problematic: We're good at confronting our patients when they use realities to resist admitting their dynamics ("The alarm didn't go off . . ."),

but I've noticed that psychoanalysts tend to analyze dynamics to resist acknowledging realities.

Years ago, our institute in New Jersey began having trouble with our parent institute in New York. Having agreed to give us one-third of the money they collected for both institutes, they started keeping it all. We objected. They interpreted our oedipal dynamics. We said this was about money. They said we were object-relational and in rebellion against their Freudianism. We said it was about money. They said we were splitting and acting out narcissistic rage. Eventually, in a flurry of interpretation (some of which was doubtless right but beside the point), we seceded.

Language may reveal the prejudices of in-groups. I usually find myself bristling when training practices are framed as issues of "standards," a term that can mask differences in educational philosophy that are not necessarily differences in value. Insiders typically equate their own policies with "high standards" and devalue others' conventions. There are different kinds of professional families, structures of training, target patient populations, psychoanalytic pedagogies. Most educational differences are trade-offs, not matters of better and worse. We need to respect the myriad ways in which people come to love and use psychoanalysis.

Political scientists have described how regulatory bodies come to serve the needs of the regulators, not the fields they are set up to oversee. They police others but are helpless to police themselves. This problem involves the dynamics of hierarchy. In hierarchical systems, those on top tend to think they're open, generous, fair, and sensitive, but things may look very different from the bottom. More egalitarian systems, conversely, are untidy, but they are alive, and they foster maturity. At NPAP, one becomes a training analyst upon graduation. A side-effect of this vote of confidence in the program is that recent graduates feel little pressure to be pros and consequently no shame in continuing in supervision. They can experience themselves as adults capable of identifying and pursuing what they need to keep growing.

People subject to infantilizing strictures are apt to behave like children. Authorities who infantilize are rarely intentional or mean-spirited; they simply identify with their peers and not with those beneath them in the hierarchy. A good example of in-group dynamics is the fact that although this conference was sincerely intended to be inclusive, candidates had to ask to be represented here.

When people fall in love with our field and trust us with that love, they make themselves very vulnerable. Above all, they need safety. Psychoanalytic education is intimate, exposing, and inherently disappointing to the idealizing lover. Because it is so powerful, it can do great harm. As a mother, I had to learn that despite my conviction that I

knew what to teach my children, ultimately, they had to teach me what they needed.

Candidates need us to be open and fallible, so that they can identify with our real professional selves. They respond more to how we act than to what we say. In recent years, our literature has increasingly appreciated the analyst's *not knowing*. The turning point in my own treatment involved my analyst's admitting a mistake. Like therapy, analytic education thrives on fallibility. One unintended negative consequence of the TA system is that training analysts cannot talk openly about their cases, thus depriving candidates of knowledge about how they struggle and blunder along. Readers of my diagnosis book often volunteer that it contains "one story I just love." It's usually the anecdote about how, in a grandiose rescue operation, I lent my car to a self-destructive patient, who drove it into a tree. I guess they figure that if the author could have done something that stupid, their own stupidity is bearable.

Organizations rarely reform themselves. They get overturned, or they weaken and die. But I'm holding out hope that psychoanalysis can be different, that we can let ourselves be influenced by the next generation. That we can show them our failings and limitations and be loved for who we are rather than for who both they and we wish we were. Without the next generation, we will all starve for what we fell in love with so long ago.