



Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association and UKCP Universities Training College Conference 2018

in association with the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education (RCTE),
Department of Psychology, University of Roehampton

Love, Sex and Psychotherapy in a Post-Romantic Era

Saturday, 1st December 2018

9.00am to 4.30pm

Followed by the AGM

Registration 9.00am

**Whitelands College, University of Roehampton, Holybourne
Avenue, London, SW15 4JD**

Speakers:

**James Earl, Aspasia Ftenou, Helen Gilbert, Del Loewenthal, Tony
McSherry, Marian O'Connor, Eleni Parousi, Sally Parsloe, Lucia
Simon, Frank Tallis, Paola Valerio and Julie Walsh**

UPCA members £80.00; non-UPCA participants £95.00; UPCA student members £50.00;
non-UPCA student participants £60.00

(Lunch and refreshments included, refunds not available after 15th October 2018)

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Attendance 6hrs CPD



Annual Conference
1st December 2018

Love, Sex and Psychotherapy in a Post-Romantic Era

What are our views on the 'Strictly curse', Wanderlust, etc.? How do our 'romantic' values as psychotherapists and counsellors affect how we work with our clients/patients regarding their relationships? Do we embody values from a previous era that are inappropriate for the era we are in now which some term 'post-romantic'? For example, do we really privilege monogamous relationship? There again do those psychotherapists who advocate polygamy really want others to legitimise their own desire to have affairs? How wary should we be of accepting such prevailing theories as Freud's nuclear family romance and his 'ordinary unhappiness'? Are we value-free regarding romanticism/post-romanticism and should we be? Is 'to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part' still an ideal worth working towards or more an ideological imprisonment? This conference seeks to explore through case studies, personal experiences, theories of different modalities and recent research how our notions of romanticism and post-romanticism affect our therapeutic practices.

Prof Del Loewenthal
UPCA/UTC and Conference Chair



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**Love, Sex and Psychotherapy in a
Post-Romantic Era**

PROGRAMME

9.00am – 9.30am

Registration

9.30am - 9.50am

**Welcome and introduction to the conference:
'Post-Romanticism and the Person who is the
Psychotherapist - What's love got to do with it?'**
Del Loewenthal - Conference Chair, psychotherapist,
Emeritus Professor of Psychotherapy and Counselling
University of Roehampton, and Chair of SAFFAC

Morning Chair: Dr Alistair Ross, Director of
Psychodynamic Studies, Oxford University

9.50am - 10.20am

'Love sick: a historical and clinical perspective'
Frank Tallis, writer and clinical psychologist

10.20 am - 10:50am

**'Feeling for the Rules: doing it differently in the
consulting room and the classroom'**
Julie Walsh, psychoanalyst and Lecturer in Psychosocial and
Psychoanalytic Studies, University of Essex

10.50am - 11.20am

Coffee

11.20am – 11.40am

**Is Oedipus still blind: Or just Perverse?
Countertransference of Love and Hate in the
Consulting room**

Paola Valerio, Jungian analyst and Senior Lecturer in
Counselling Psychology, University of Roehampton

11.40am-12.00pm

The Romantic Myth of 'Making Love'

James Earl, relationship therapist and Assistant Professor,
The American International University, London

12.00pm – 12.20pm	<i>What makes it difficult for psychodynamic therapists to work with adolescent sexuality – a thematic exploration</i> <i>Lucia Simon, psychodynamic psychotherapist</i>
12.20pm – 12.40pm	<i>A phenomenology of love, thanks to Lacan, Miller and Jellybean</i> <i>Tony McSherry, psychotherapist, Southern Association for Psychotherapy and Counselling (SAFPAC)</i>
12.40pm - 1.40pm	Lunch Afternoon Chair: Dr Julia Cayne, Visiting Lecturer University of Roehampton and Vice Chair SAFPAC
1.40pm – 1.50pm	Where are we?
1.50pm - 2.10pm	Should love be unconditional? <i>Helen Gilbert, psychotherapeutic counsellor Southern Association for Psychotherapy and Counselling (SAFPAC)</i>
2.10pm – 2.30pm	<i>Working therapeutically with people who are ending romantic relationships</i> <i>Sally Parsloe, psychotherapist Southern Association for Psychotherapy and Counselling (SAFPAC)</i>
2.30pm – 2.50pm	Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and its impact on romantic relationships <i>Aspasia Ftenou, Trainee Counselling Psychologist, University of Manchester</i>
2.50pm - 3.10pm	Rituals of Perpetual Catharsis <i>Eleni Parousi, documentary photographer, editor and educator</i>
3.10pm - 3.40pm	'Polyamory- a romantic solution to Wanderlust?' <i>Marian O'Connor, Psychosexual and relationship therapist and Programme Head, Tavistock Relationships and</i>
3.40pm - 4.00pm	Tea
4.00pm - 4.30pm	Plenary panel discussion: Love, Sex and Psychotherapy in a Post-Romantic Era Del Loewenthal (Chair), Marian O'Connor, Frank Tallis, Julie Walsh
4.30pm - 5.30pm	UPCA and UTC AGMs



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Love, Sex and Psychotherapy in a Post-Romantic Era

PRESENTERS

James Earl - The Romantic Myth of 'Making Love'

The romantic myth holds that we may 'have sex' with people before we meet our long-term partner; but when we find someone we care for, sex deepens into 'making love'. The common experience, however, is the opposite: sex with someone you don't love can be highly erotic and communicative; whereas sex with a long-term love-partner often descends into just sex. On the basis of my clinical experience with couples, I will argue that sex is *not* the apex of a couple's expression of their love, nor the basis for intimacy, connection or communication. These are romantic cover-stories for sex, leading to an unhealthy sense of duty about sex, and very often to a deep sense of failure in the huge number of couples who experience loss of desire for their partner. Freeing sex from the demands of love can liberate each partner's individual erotic sensibilities, and lead to more satisfying relationships, monogamous or otherwise. These erotic sensibilities are based in each individual, not co-created in the couple, and are expressive of an individual's past, particularly past emotional pain. Our erotic preferences are therapeutic to us and can be shared.

James is a Relationship Therapist with a private practice in Hampton, working with couples and individuals predominantly on issues around desire. He has previously worked as a counsellor with Relate. He is also Assistant Professor of Humanities at Richmond, The American International University in London. His educational background includes a MSW (Master of Social Work) from The University of Sussex, a Post Graduate Diploma in Relationship Therapy from Relate, and BA (Hons) from Middlesex. In 2017 he addressed the 13th International Conference of the Social Sciences at the University of Vienna on 'Reconsidering Desire: The Multi-Disciplinary Imperative.'

Aspasia Ftenou - Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and its impact on romantic relationships

Whilst current literature reports that the Counselling Psychology trainees' experience personal and professional growth during their training, there is a noticeable paucity of research on how growth and training's relevant challenges affects trainee's romantic relationships. In this study I explored nine trainees' (7 women and 2 men) experiences of growth and of how their training may have impacted their romantic relationships. I intend to narratively analyse participant's

interviews according to the Lieblich's (1998) Categorical-Content Interpretive Model. While this research is in progress, initial analytical impressions suggest that trainees' evident personal and professional growth together with the training relevant demands had an impact on both their romantic relationships and their clinical practice. In order to provide research transparency and rigour, as a Counselling Psychologist, I also elucidate my personal and methodological reflexivity. Clinical implications arise, from a humanistic perspective, in order to develop awareness on the impact of growth and training challenges in order to safeguard trainee's relationships and emotional well-being.

Aspasia is a Doctoral Trainee in Counselling Psychology at the University of Manchester. She is currently on her 3rd year on the course. Her thesis research is about how the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology has any impact on therapists' romantic relationships and if there is any personal growth. She has a background of BSc Psychology and MSc Health Psychology. She has a Graduate Membership at the British Psychological Society. Currently she is practicing at NHS Forensic Medium Secure Unit and she is the Counselling Coordinator at the Brain Charity in Liverpool as part-time role.

Helen Gilbert - Should love be unconditional?

This paper questions the idea that within families love should always be unconditional and raises the issue of family estrangement in the context of psychotherapy. It will look at whether there has been a generational shift towards individualism and consider how this affects the notion of love. Does the author respond to her clients from a belief that love should be unconditional or from a vicarious wish to be free from her own difficult family members? Is the therapeutic space available for the taboo of unconditional family love to be fully explored? The author will explore her experience as a psychological therapist working with people estranged from family in order to examine her own biases. Family relationships, as well as romantic relationships, are impacted by the culture we live in, and therapeutic relationships are affected by the therapist's unconscious and conscious biases. In response to the question posed the author concludes that love between adults is always conditional even if this is a truth we cannot fully accept. Although conditions on love may be seen as healthy in a romantic relationship, the bonds between family are generally held up as sacrosanct and unbreakable. This makes the choice to walk away from family difficult for wider society, therapists and estranged individuals to bear.

Over the last sixteen years Helen has worked and studied to develop effective ways to support individuals and groups experiencing psychological distress and social disconnection. She is a UKCP accredited psychotherapeutic counsellor experienced in working with individuals and groups in private practice, voluntary sector organisations and primary care. Her experience of carrying out research in academic and charity sectors has informed her practice and allowed her to find ways of showing the impact of the work she does.

Del Loewenthal - 'Post-Romanticism and the Person who is the Psychotherapist - What's love got to do with it?'

What are our views on the 'Strictly curse', wanderlust, etc.? How do our 'romantic' values as psychotherapists and counsellors affect how we work with our clients/patients regarding their relationships? Do we embody values from a previous era that are inappropriate for the era we are in now which some term 'post-romantic'? For example, do we really privilege monogamous relationship? There again do those psychotherapists who advocate polygamy really want others to legitimise their own desire to have affairs? How wary should we be of accepting such

prevailing theories as Freud's nuclear family romance and his 'ordinary unhappiness'? Are we value-free regarding romanticism/post-romanticism and should we be? Is 'to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part' still an ideal worth working towards or more an ideological imprisonment?

Del is Emeritus Professor of Psychotherapy and Counselling, Chair of UTC, and Founder of the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at the University of Roehampton, UK. He is an existential–analytic psychotherapist, photographer and chartered psychologist, with a particular interest in phenomenology. His books include: Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling after Post-Modernism: The selected works of Del Loewenthal (2017, Routledge); with Gillian Proctor, Why Not CBT: Against and For CBT 2nd Edition (2018, PCCS Books); and with Evrinomy Avdi, Developments in Qualitative Psychotherapy Research (2019, Routledge). He is also founding editor of the European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling (Routledge). He is also Chair of the Southern Association for Psychotherapy and Counselling (SAFPAC), has a private practice in Wimbledon and Brighton, and provides clinical supervision to London teaching hospitals.

Tony McSherry - A phenomenology of love, thanks to Lacan, Miller and Jellybean.

Lacan notoriously spoke of there being no such thing as a sexual relation. Jacques-Alain Miller, a prominent Lacanian, spoke of how we love the one who seems to know who we are, adding that love is like a maze of misunderstandings with no exit. This paper sketches a phenomenological response to these views, in that it begins with experience. A terrible fragility seems to reside at the heart of love, which we perhaps try to insure against through social contracts and images. Love seems to exclude others while also inviting an envious look. Love seems both public and private. We seem to look for something in love that appears to be like a mirage, an unreal thing that is real, with real effects; that observing a small dog can illuminate. Love's failure provokes rage. Being a therapist for someone who is broken-hearted can be like exploring a joyless unending wasteland. Our own experiences of love will affect how we work in such a landscape, and this appears crucial for psychotherapy. If forgiveness happens at all, it seems to involve a painful relinquishing of self-images, allowing something healing to show its face.

Tony works as a psychotherapist in the NHS and private practice. He has an interest in phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalysis, and staying alive. He recently completed a PhD at the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at Roehampton University.

Marian O'Connor - Polyamory – a solution to wonderlust?

This paper will ask whether we expect too much from intimate relationships in 21st century Western societies. Is it possible to expect from one person the security, friendship, reliability, comfort, adventure and sexual excitement we need or demand? The prevalence of affairs and our rising divorce rates suggest that traditional, monogamous relationships are not able to fulfill these demands. The paper will go on to explore whether the solution could lie in polyamory - the practice of engaging in multiple sexual and/or emotional relationships with the consent of all the people involved. In theory, polyamory could end the anxiety caused by lies and deceit over affairs and the heartbreak of discovery. Finally the paper will examine how psychotherapists might find ways of exploring with clients, without sounding disapproving or dismissive, what intimacy, commitment and polyamory might mean for them in the light of their

individual family backgrounds and history. For some, polyamory might offer a path to happiness and fulfillment but for others it might suggest an unresolved terror of intimacy and commitment.

Marian is Programme Head of the Diploma in Psychosexual Therapy at Tavistock Relationships. She is a UKCP and COSRT accredited psychosexual and relationship therapist with nearly thirty years' clinical experience working with individuals and couples. She frequently writes for or advises the media on psychosexual and relationship issues, most recently (2018) in the Huffington Post, Telegraph and Mental Health Today. She is co-author of the chapter 'Psychodynamic Aspects of Psychosexual Therapy' for the ESSM syllabus of clinical sexology and recently contributed a chapter 'Let's talk about Sex' in 'Engaging Couples: New Directions in Therapeutic Work with Families' (Routledge, 2018).

Eleni Parousi - Rituals of Perpetual Catharsis

Rituals of Perpetual Catharsis considers the therapeutic potential of BDSM as a way to deal with the emotional effects related to experiences of sexual abuse. The photographic series is part of the project *Way of The Kink*, which investigates some of the least known aspects of the alternative sexuality practice widely known as BDSM (Bondage & Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism & Masochism): the community, the psychology behind it, the personal self-growth experienced by practitioners and its particular philosophy of consent. Following a narrative inquiry research approach, the project has collected a series of anonymous testimonies, which speak of the everyday realities of the survivors in living with the trauma: their journeys of struggle and self-restoration. The talk will present a brief interpretation of the testimonies, highlighting some of the common experiences and a selected filmed testimony by a survivor.

Eleni is a documentary photographer, an editor and a educator. In 2010 she founded the educational arts collective Cardboard Cameras, which brought together narrative art, philosophical dialogue and stop motion animation in schools across the UK. She has worked as a curator for the Open City Documentary Festival, a producer for Vertumuns documentary productions and publishing editor for Asbo magazine's Bosnian editions. Eleni's work focuses on matters of culture, identity, gender, sexuality and the self. In the last year she has been working on a series of trans-generational narratives in collaboration with her family. Her latest project, way of the kink, seeks to explore BDSM as a practice which naturally inspires self-knowledge and enhances intimacy.

Sally Parsloe - Working therapeutically with people who are ending romantic relationships

The presentation considers the notion of the Romantic and Post-Romantic Era as experienced by the individual, approaching Romance as fantasy or illusion created when a person seeks to emulate or re-play the 'Freudian family romance', possibly in the unconscious hope of a different outcome or to redress wounds inflicted in the old scenario. A brief description of work with one client highlights the complexity of what people do with Romance, which, like Fairy Tales, may enable toxic emotions to be acted out. The presentation looks at what is engendered when Romantic fantasy crumbles, the mechanisms people use as defences, and what that might look like in the therapeutic room: anger, denial, projection, vengeance, replacement fantasy, and asks questions as to how the work might be approached by the therapist in order to help the client understand and use something of the meaning of their Romantic entanglement.

Sally is an individual and couple therapist in private practice. She is also a Family Mediator and Family Law Solicitor. She has worked in the NHS, and with the agencies Refuge, Mediation in Divorce and The Children And Family Court Advisory and Support Service.

Lucia Simon - What makes it difficult for psychodynamic therapists to work with adolescent sexuality – a thematic exploration.

This research explores the difficulties psychodynamic therapists encounter in working with adolescent sexuality. Participants worked with adolescents aged eleven to eighteen in schools, universities, community-based services and private practice. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, transcribed and analysed using Thematic Analysis. While the data collected was highly subjective there was one overarching theme: working with adolescent sexuality provokes anxiety in the therapist. This anxiety is different to that experienced working with adult sexuality and was felt to different degrees by participants. The discussion examined how this anxiety, and the defences it mobilised, manifested in the counter transference, and how that impacted on the capacity of the therapist to think reflectively. The context of the therapy was found to either aid containment or hinder it, particularly in school settings where therapy is less private, safeguarding issues are at the fore, and anxieties about sexuality are more likely to be projected into the therapist. Trainings rarely explored working with adolescent sexuality, so participants relied on supervision and gaining a sense of experience. However, talking and thinking about this aspect of the work was not always easy as it could provoke feelings of embarrassment, shame and fear. These findings suggested that training courses could engage more with this aspect of the work, and the BACP could focus more explicitly on it in their core competences training. The study also highlights further opportunities for research into the impact of different contexts and of differently gendered and sexually orientated therapeutic dyads.

Lucia is a psychodynamic therapist, working in a variety of settings: a community-based affordable counselling service in South Oxfordshire, a Drama College with students aged 16-24, Oxford University Counselling Service with undergraduate and postgraduate students, and private practice. She is particularly interested in the place of the sexual self in work with adolescent clients, and has recently completed a Masters research dissertation looking at the therapist's response to this aspect of the work.

Frank Tallis - Love sick: a historical and clinical perspective.

Love sickness has been recognized by doctors from classical times to the 18th century. It is arguably one of the most durable of all psychiatric diagnoses. Even when love is healthy it is associated with symptoms associated with mental illness, most notably mood swings and obsession. When love 'goes wrong' the psychological consequences can be highly distressing: infatuation, jealousy, heartbreak, inappropriate attachment, sex addiction, stalking, murder and suicide. Almost every scientific attempt to investigate romantic love has acknowledged commonalities with mental illness. These findings are supported by brain scanning studies and are consistent with evolutionary psychology. To what extent should contemporary psychotherapists revisit the concept of love sickness? Given that the conditions of longing and desire are associated with a range of unhappy outcomes, is there a place for ancient wisdom in the modern consulting room? Medieval Islamic doctors endorsed methods of treatment that resemble cognitive therapy and it is certainly the case that romanticism, as a belief system, creates unrealistic expectations. Can romantic beliefs be usefully re-constructed as dysfunctional assumptions? Using illustrative case material, an attempt will be made to explore the assumptive world of romanticism with a view to informing therapeutic practice.

Frank is a writer and clinical psychologist. He has held lecturing posts at the IoP and King's and published on a wide range of topics from hypothyroidism to EMDR. He wrote the first OCD self-help manual available in the UK and was instrumental in starting the charity OCD Action. He has also written a series of psychoanalytic detective novels set in Freud's Vienna (currently being filmed for TV). Two of his books explore conditions of longing and desire: Lovesick (which examines the relationship between romantic love and mental illness) and The Incurable Romantic (a clinical memoir with cases).

Paola Valerio - Is Oedipus still blind: Or just Perverse? Countertransference of Love and Hate in the Consulting room

If Oedipus' blindness is not something internally maintained but a product of parental neglect, seduction and 'murderousness' that destroys the relationship both within and between generations, therapists need to become aware of how they interpret their patients' murderous, aggressive and erotic wishes without taking into account their own participation and contribution. Thus we focus on working with our own erotic and perverse feelings; for the capacity to make love or hate in the consulting room still remains one of the most difficult areas for trainees and experienced therapists alike. Yet the emphasis is still on the analysand's longings and a tendency to infantilize and therefore sanitise the real sexual tensions that arise. We will share clinical material that suggests that perhaps we are the ones who find it hard to give up our special place in the encounter and invite participants to do so also.

Paola is a BPC UKCP IAAAP reg. Jungian Analyst in private practice in London. She is Senior Lecturer in Counselling Psychology, University of Roehampton. She has twenty years clinical experience in the NHS supervising Psychotherapists and Psychologists and also in leadership roles working with sexual and domestic abuse policy and reviews). She has been a visiting Lecturer and Supervisor in Psychotherapy at Regents College, Surrey and Kent Universities and at the Tavistock/East London University, Metanoia and numerous professional trainings. She has published several journal papers and chapters in analytic books and taught and presented widely in the NHS and at conferences and is the editor of Countertransference in Therapeutic Practice a Myriad of Mirrors. Routledge (2018).

Julie Walsh - 'Feeling for the Rules: doing it differently in the consulting room and the classroom'

This paper starts from the simple premise that any analysis of changing relationship trends, requires simultaneous analysis of changing practices of sex and gender. Using my dual vantage point as a therapist and a university teacher to explore this terrain, I pose a series of questions concerning how our knowledge of sex is made-up. If the old rules are changing, how, I ask, are the new rules sanctioned -- through what modes of discourse (therapeutic, academic, activist?), by which figures of authority, and to what personal and political ends? Helped by a documentary vignette, I re-construct the figure of the female therapist as the Lover/Mother, someone whose principled commitment to desire is matched by an expert performance of care-work and 'emotion management' that poses (at the level of fantasy at least) a challenge for conventional romantic norms.

Julie is a Lecturer in Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, and a psychoanalyst in private practice. She is the author of Narcissism and Its Discontents (Palgrave, 2015), and co-editor of Narcissism, Melancholia and the Subject of Community (Palgrave, 2018), and Shame and Modern Writing (Routledge, 2018). Julie is a member of the Site for Contemporary Psychoanalysis, and of the College of Psychoanalysts UK