Dr. Lita Crociani-Windland

Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Centre for Understanding Social Practices

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences,

University of the West of England,

Frenchay Campus,

Coldharbour Lane,

Bristol BS16 1QY

Telephone: 01173282954

E-mail: lita.crociani-windland@uwe.ac.uk

Title: Old age and difficult life transitions -- a psycho-social understanding

Abstract

This paper develops a psycho-social understanding of difficult and disabling life transitions, particularly in relation to old age. The paper brings together a biographical case study and theoretical analysis that draws on three sources: the work of Deleuze and Bergson in continental philosophy, Winnicott in psychoanalysis, and Turner in anthropology. By linking experience, theory and practice, I show how different, but related concepts, at different levels, may shed light on some puzzling behaviour common in old age. More broadly, I point to the value of such theoretical work for understanding and managing traumatic affect and life transitions.

Keywords: Old age; affect; transitional phenomena; ritual; repetition

Old age and difficult life transitions -- a psycho-social understanding

Lita Crociani-Windland, Ph.D.

Introduction

This article begins with what I have called an intimate case study. It is an account of one of

the most unsettling periods of time in my mother's life, which occurred about three months

before she died. At the time, I found myself moved and puzzled by a phenomenon known as

'sun-downing', namely the onset of confused states of mind at the end of the day. My

puzzlement spurred my wanting to observe this phenomenon closely and to try to understand

what might underlie it. Much more about it came into view when I was preparing a draft of a

paper charting links between some of the key concepts of transitional space and phenomena

developed by the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott and notions of potential space and liminality

found in the work of anthropologist Victor Turner. The links between these concepts have

been noted and explored to some extent in the field of performance and literary studies (see

among others Newman, 1997, p. 85; McCormick, 2006, p. 108) as well as consciousness

studies (see Whitehead, 2001; Apter, 2008). What this paper adds theoretically is a link to

the work of Deleuze and Bergson in philosophy. It also adds an example of the theory's

application. The process of writing itself has allowed further and deeper reflection on what I

had witnessed and then heard my mother articulate once she had gotten past the most critical

period. Hence, what started as an example within a theoretical article has become a far more

central springboard for the linking of experience and theory. The article shows the usefulness

of the aforementioned concepts and understandings for elucidating moments of transition in

old age and processes involved in the adjustment to disability. It is also hoped that these concepts may contribute to the practice of caring for people undergoing difficult transitions.

The article moves from the initial case study to an analysis of repetitive, at times seemingly impossible and bizarre requests, which I try to understand using Deleuzian concepts of affect and the virtual. Drawing mainly from Deleuze's key work, *Difference and Repetition* (1994), I also explore the concept of 'becoming' in relation to old age and to transitions in general. This is followed by a discussion of Winnicott's work, in which I identify some of the ways in which key features of transitional objects and phenomena map onto the case study and onto Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari's) work. I then connect the link Winnicott made between play as a transitional space in both childhood and adult cultural life to Turner's work on ritual, which identifies a similar continuum between play and cultural life. The value of cultural life as a therapeutic element completes the analysis. Fundamentally, this is a study of fluid dynamics of change and the ways that structure, in this case ritualised, repetitive behaviour, or the deployment of a transitional object and playful work of imagination, can become strategies to manage the fluidity and tensions of moments of transition.

Becoming old, becoming differently able -- an intimate case study

When my mother was coming to the end of her life, I found myself puzzling over her odd behaviours at the end of what must have felt like very long days of pain and effort to get through the basic functions of living. At the end of each day, her mind began to wander. Normally sharp as a pin and with an elephant's memory in spite of age, able to bear and express her pain and discomfort during the day, she began, when exhausted, to display

obsessive and ritualized behaviours. She wanted impossibly and repeatedly to have things

rubbed out (for instance the channel logo of the TV screen), or she felt something was

missing, even after the thing had been fetched; she asked for repetition of tasks already

completed or repeated her demands for odd, imaginary objects. In particular she asked for a

piece of cloth that she was sure was of a particular shape, size, colour and texture and was to

be found behind an antique mug that had come from her childhood home in Chile. She had

loved working with cloth all her life, and this imaginary piece of cloth seemed to me to have

the quality of a security blanket, a transitional object now imbued with the knowledge of

textiles she had acquired as an adult.

This kind of usually late day/early evening confusion is a known and not uncommon

phenomenon in the elderly, more common in Alzheimer sufferers, though not exclusive to

them. Known as 'sun-downing', little is understood about its medical causes. What I knew

was that she was conflicted between wanting to live and be cared for, and wanting the pain

caused by multiple, deteriorating conditions to end. She was very distressed by the

discomfort and boredom that had resulted from having lost her capacity to sew, paint, draw,

and, in general, to use her hands. Even a book was too difficult to hold, and her only way of

passing the time was now a multitude of poor quality programmes on Italian television. As

she was becoming confused at the end of each day, I tried to observe closely, so I could not

only do what she wanted, but also help to name her efforts, in the hope that I could offer her

some solace. A Deleuzian idea, to be outlined in more detail later, actually helped me make

sense not only of what I observed as behaviours, but also of what was communicated in

affect. In Deleuzian terms, the problem/Idea that seemed to surface at the end of the day was

that something unwanted was around and something wanted was missing. Whatever

physiologically and psychologically complex forces and processes were, in those moments,

affecting and overwhelming her body and mind, these thoughts were what she seemed to be expressing and trying to manage via her odd, ritualized, and obsessive demands or actions. Usually, she asked family members to give her some thing; her demands for actions, on the contrary, had to do with getting rid of something.

Although I can only give my interpretation of what I observed, I think this odd time and space served to help her negotiate various tensions of attachment and the need for a gradual letting go. One thing that confirmed my interpretation was that this phenomenon did not last to the end of her days, but was replaced after about a month by a more conscious and imaginative capacity to play with memories and recollections at the end of the day. She was able to express to me that this was a way of getting through what was happening. At this time, she articulated extremely clearly how she had learned from her father, my grandfather, this use of imagination, a use that plays partly consciously and partly in a free associative way with elements of attachment to people, places, favourite things and activities. At around sixty years of age, her father, and many others, had been severely burned while helping to put out a fire that was followed by a massive explosion. This catastrophic event left 56 firemen dead and 350 people injured. He was one of the most severely injured and spent 18 months in hospital, undergoing skin graft operations without anaesthesia because the severity of his burns was already stretching to the limits his kidneys' capacity to deal with toxins. As a young adult, my mother had accompanied him throughout the 18 months of his recovery and his adjustment to an impaired and disfigured condition. I met him for the first and only time when we went to Chile; I was then 4 and we stayed for almost a year. Though my time with him was limited, I have never forgotten him. He was disfigured and disabled. He had lost sight in one eye and had lost hearing from the impact of the explosion; he had extensive burn scarring on his face and body, and his hands had frozen in a half grasp, but this is not what I

remember most or most vividly. I remember him as lively and strong, able to manage my childhood ebullience in a firm, but gentle way. I vividly remember a favourite trick that he performed to my insistent repeated requests. He had been a successful sportsman and had won medals for swimming, water polo and rowing (probably the main reason his body survived the injuries). What was left of his physical strength was in his arm muscles, which he could flex under his shirt to pretend he had a mouse running up his arm. I was delighted by it, and he was visibly delighted by my delight. Once my mother's physical changes had again gradually settled, memories of her father's ordeal and strength sustained her in getting through her own difficulties. At this point, she started to tell me how her own father had at times been quite confused, angry and demanding, but also how he had created an imaginary chest in which he would store some memories and not others. It was clear from her account that he was playing with memories and attachments, readjusting them to survive and make a transition to the new reality of himself, his forced inactivity in hospital, and, to some lesser extent, to life beyond hospitalization.

Fluidity, affect and structure -- a Deleuzian analysis

In a previous professional capacity in which I was caring for disabled people, I had observed many instances of ritualized behaviour as a reaction to pressures and discomfort. In extreme cases, this behaviour was even accompanied by what is commonly known, though perhaps wrongly named as 'elective mutism', i.e. the loss of a capacity for speech. Though the person had developed and used the capacity in the past, she had now withdrawn from communication, which perhaps functioned as an attempt to control at least some remaining connection to external reality. I had come across several young people who had become

obsessed with moving a piece of cloth or string in rhythmical ways, a response that often became more rapid and intense when demands were made on them. I was thus already familiar with the fact that ritualised behaviour could function as a response to stress. What I had not quite understood was what the behaviour might actually mean and what processes might be involved. Why is it deployed as a response to stress? How does it help? What does it signify? In my grandfather's and my mother's cases, ritualised behaviours helped them manage their physical traumas, first by managing the chaos of the body and then by the use of transitional objects and spaces. In both cases the process seems to have been one of finding some structure to contain very fluid and hard to pin down intensity of experience, in other words, affect.

Affect, in Deleuzian terms, is a capacity to affect and be affected. In a translator's note to *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1999, p. xvi), Massumi summarises it thus:

> It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection*...is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies).

Affect in this definition refers to a level of experience which is non-verbal, intense, indeterminate and somatic rather than a personal feeling or emotion that can be verbalised. Part of my mother's confusion seemed to me to be tied up with an intense level of somatic events that were affecting her emotions and cognition, events that were beyond anything she had experienced before. What emerged as odd requests, imaginary objects, and repetitions

can be seen as signs of tensions that made odd objects and behaviours emerge in as yet hard to digest and hard to verbalise forms. Repeated obsessive behaviour or demands could be understood as an attempt to give structure to the intense and fluid nature of her experiences, an impetus to order the chaos of a body affected by profound system change.

When I free associated to the objects and actions that my mother obsessed about, I discovered that most of them were connected in various ways. What is free association if not a non-hierarchical, networked connectivity, in other words, what Deleuze and Guattari (1999) would call a rhizome? It seems to me that she was trying to swim in a virtual non-time-ordered affective realm. Repetition creates some points of anchorage in an otherwise excessively fluid and intense experience. In Deleuze's, as well as in Bergson's philosophies, both virtuality and repetition are foundational aspects of reality. Thus, I turn to their work to explore these phenomena in more detail.

Duration and the virtual, difference and repetition

> We operate with things that do not exist...divisible time spans, divisible spaces...In truth
> we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces, just as we
> perceive motion only as isolated points and then infer it without ever actually seeing it.
>   Nietzsche *The Gay Science*

Was my mother's 'sun-downing' experience just about confusion? Was it illusion or reality? At a superficial level, it was indeed about a confused state of mind, but could she have been in touch with real processes that tell us more about life than we care to know or are able to think about? According to the Nietzsche quote above, much of what we take as real is in fact

illusory; the trouble is that the continuum he refers to is overwhelming, un-encompassable and beyond representation. The work of much continental philosophy, but in particular the work of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and other more recent 'Deleuzians', such as Brian Massumi (2002), grapples with these issues and thus sheds light on them. For these authors, Bergson's work is the starting point for thinking of an embodied ontology that nonetheless acknowledges a duality. The duality in this case is not between mind and body, but is a duality of process. Bergson's work (2001, 1977) outlined an ontology that formulates not only a difference in kind between time and space, but a similar difference in kind within time itself. As I explained in Crociani-Windland (2011) time has:

> a homogeneous, quantitative aspect, which is identified with extension, that is space and spatialised time (i.e. clock time), and a heterogeneous, qualitative one, identified with intension, that is the indivisible continuity of self-differentiating duration-process, flux, change. The latter is what he refers to as the basis of pure duration, i.e. the virtual (Bergson, 2001; Deleuze, 1991). Bergson (2001) gave many examples of this duality as embedded in our modes of perceiving reality. One of the examples of a qualitative aspect that recurs in his writing is music. A tune is an audible pattern, rather than just a sequence of individual notes. (Crociani-Windland, 2011, p. 24)

Thus, he saw time as becoming spatialised in our everyday use and conception, while he saw time as pure duration to be of a far more fluid nature. What he called the virtual is a fluid realm; it is intensive rather than extensive. In Deleuze's (1994) further formulation, the virtual is real, but not actual; it is a realm of forces in tension. The tension among them gives rise to what is signalled as the 'problem/Idea', which gives rise to endless phenomena of continuous change and adjustment. Identity is a dynamic notion in his formulation; for things to stay the same, everything has to change all the time.

My mother's 'sun-downing' behaviour was moving, upsetting and perplexing. As already stated, my interpretation of some of her behaviour was that she had to get rid of something, while, at the same time, she needed something from members of the family, present and past, again and again. She was consciously conflicted between not wanting to leave loved ones and wanting her suffering and boredom to stop. When more lucid, during the day, she could verbalise this. At an even more fundamental level, her body was undergoing major changes and much of her confusion may have been caused by the extreme actual tensions affecting her bodily organisations. The seemingly absurd combinations of objects and actions for which, at the end of each day, she determinedly and repeatedly asked, can be seen in Deleuzian terms as signs. These are not symbols; rather, they appear as the visible effect of the virtual tensions that give rise to them. Deleuze speaks of signs as puzzling, often contradictory aspects of reality; if we are to go beyond appearances and understand the specificity of a problem, we must always engage with them. The virtual is a realm of pure differences, according to Deleuze (1991, 1994) and Bergson (1913, 1935). We endure partly because time is not just of a linear nature. Duration and the virtual do not separate time into a spatialised now and then, but in fact contain and give access to the past in our present, to the elements that have been generative of our actuality both now and then, including our continuous tendency/necessity to change in response to internal and external factors -- including, in other words, our continuous becoming (i.e. difference) as well as our death. 'In my beginning is my end' to quote T. S. Eliot (*Four Quartets,*Part II: East Coker). 'Death is...the last form of the problematic...' (Deleuze 1994, p. 137), but while we live we also endure because we repeat. In this formulation identity is a dynamic notion, whereby our overall pattern of being endures by responding to change with change; it is in a continuous process of readjustment of all elements to maintain its overall coherence; in order to stay the

same, it has to engage with difference and reproduce the same pattern with different elements.

Repetition for Deleuze (1994) accompanies difference as a primary principle. Repetition "is not an objective fact but an act - a form of behavior towards that which cannot be repeated" (Williams 2003, p. 33), in other words, difference. Could it be that my mother's obsessive repetition and strange imaginary objects were signs of important formative aspects of who my mother is/was? Not only the imaginary cloth, but even her wish to rub out the TV channel logo starts to make sense. Her only remaining cultural activity, watching TV, was marred by the increasing commercialization of Italian television, which she profoundly hated.

Let me try to explain further what is meant by this framework: in this last paragraph I found myself writing 'is', then corrected it as 'was' and when I stopped to think about it, it is not a mistake to use both. She both was my mother, as she is no longer alive, and still is my mother. I do not think this is just a sign of my missing her or denying her death; it is an acknowledgement that she continues to be formative of me in a virtual sense, something that will never change. I am continuously making and re-making both myself and what she contributed; this can never be fully expressed or encompassed in a total way and will continue to affect future generations of our family. We repeat, but never the same. Repetition is always repetition with difference. This article is partly a repetition of those events, but I also change them by working with them. In going through these events again, I discover new connections.

According to Deleuze (1994), the new arises only from repetition. Repetition is the product of a passive synthesis. It is thus, in other words, not conscious, and it occurs because within

it lies the seed of both endurance and difference. The notion of passive synthesis is vital to understanding this. In her confused state, my mother was in fact producing behaviours and objects that constituted a passive synthesis of her past and present, her problems/Ideas. In that sense they were not confused; they were synthetic. They were not symbols, but signs: products of what affected her and in turn had the power to affect those around her, before any of us could work out what was going on. In Deleuze's schema, sensing precedes representation (Williams, 2003, p. 15). 'Put simply, his view is that we have intimations of significance prior to well defined concepts and to knowledge, not the opposite' (ibid, p. 32). In other words, we sense significance before we can know why it is significant or how, and thus we begin a process of thought and representation that is an active synthesis of past and present, as described above (Williams, 2003, p. 89).

Becoming old/becoming child

I titled my case study becoming old and differently able, but I also wanted to title it becoming old/becoming child. It is common for older people to be thought of as children. There are some obvious parallels in terms of dependency, incontinence, memory loss, as if the slate was wiped clean back to one's earliest years. It is interesting that when people get older they often go back to the memories of childhood, treasuring these memories more than the achievements of their adult life; it is as if they were trying to re-member themselves. I use re-member with a hyphen in the sense of re-composing, re-figuring. Deleuze and Guattari's (1999, ch. 10) notion of becoming, based on affective receptivity and resonance, may give us a different view of this as well: they speak of becoming-child as the finding of youthfulness at any age. As cells die and stop regenerating at the same speed as they had in younger years, as the body gets stiffer and sclerotic, our internal world seems drawn to a becoming-child. One could understand this again as an altered relation between structure and fluidity. In some

people it happens rather literally: more recent memories are erased and sometimes people even recover minute details of childhood experience that had not been available to them in their midlife. The first phase of my mother's experience was reminiscent of the incoherence of the experience of an infant; this phase was followed by one in which she found again the youthfulness of play and of using imagination as well as fantasy as escape. This can of course be considered to be a pathological regression, but it seems to me to be a more productive experience than what is usually associated with pathological regression. The frameworks I explored and found myself drawn to allowed for something more creative to come into view. All transformations in Deleuze and Guattari's (1999, ch.10) views are first of all a becoming-woman/child. We go back and we repeat, in order to go forward.

I shall end this Deleuzian exploration by linking it to psychoanalysis. For the most part, Deleuze and Guattari have been characterized as working against psychoanalysis, due to the critique of some of its premises, particularly, but not exclusively, in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). However, Deleuze took the unconscious quite seriously and in my view (see also Abouh-rihan, 2011) tried to refine and expand, correct and redefine the concept so that it would not remain confined strictly to the internal world. He was a critic of this version of the unconscious, but not because he refuted its premises in absolute terms; rather, it seems to me that he took these premises on board and built from them and beyond them. Guattari, Deleuze's closest collaborator, was trained and analysed by Lacan (Massumi, 1992) and inspired by Winnicott (Genosko, in Guattari, 2000, pp. 113-14). Deleuze's work, with and without Guattari's collaboration (1983, 1999) counters and overturns certain cherished Freudian ideas, namely, desire and repression.

In Deleuze and Guattari's (1999) view, the fluidity of becoming, which underlies deep change, is not of a sexualized nature. They speak of it in terms of receptivity; it is profoundly relational; it is what I refer to as 'becoming old/becoming child'. Though there is little scope to expand on it here, this a-sexual aspect of analysis recurs in Winnicott and Turner, whose work, discussed below, also emphasizes flow and connectivity rather than differentiation.

Deleuze reverses the relationship between repetition and repression: 'We do not repeat because we repress, we repress because we repeat' (Deleuze, 1994, p. 105). Repression happens because our tendencies, or, as I put it earlier, our pattern of identity, repeat themselves in a passive, i.e. involuntary synthesis of who we are. We remake ourselves out of continuously changing circumstances, which, by necessity, involves also forgetting, leaving something behind. As nothing is ever really totally erased, it is perhaps more accurate to say that we go through a process of foregrounding some aspects of ourselves, while others recede to the background. What is needed to adjust to and manage the change are objects that help us to relate the virtual and the actual, the past, the present and the potential of the future in a synthesis that opens the way to the new. This is even more important when part of the new is not something we cherish and long for. It may be learning to live with problems, pain, illness or loss of capacity, and, of course, eventually the letting go required by dying.

Transitional objects and phenomena -- Winnicott

Winnicott (1951) speaks of transitional phenomena as follows:

> The transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion which is at the basis of the initiation of experience . . . This intermediate area of

experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work. (p. 242)

Winnicott occupied a 'fringe' position in relation to the psychoanalytic milieu of his time: in it, but not of it. It could be said that he lived in the space that he came to theorize. Rudnytsky (2011, ch. 4) links this positioning and the central themes to be discussed here to Winnicott's personal history and, from there, to his professional life. The notion of transitional or potential space developed from his work with children and his observations of how part of children's normal development involves a particular use of objects. We are all familiar with the importance of the pacifier, the progressively disintegrating security blanket, cloth, rag, teddy bear or doll to which children can be passionately attached at a certain stage of life. What Winnicott was able to do was to understand the transitional role of these objects. The transitional object in Winnicott's view is the first not-me object (Davis and Wallbridge, 1981, p. 69), the first symbol and the first possession. It symbolises both attachment and separation and in that sense constitutes a third element that symbolises a third space. In this space, opposites can coexist, and the carer may be physically absent but psychologically present (Winnicott, 1958). This third space, or space between, is also the space of play. Playing allows the child to bring into relation internal and external milieus, fantasy and reality. Winnicott describes transitional or potential space (1971, pp. 98-101) as an intermediate space between the individual and the environment and between inner and outer reality.

Winnicott did not see transitional phenomena in purely developmental terms that would only relate to a particular time in human life. Winnicott made a larger claim: this space is where both creative play and cultural experience continue to be located. Transitional space is a place of maximally intense experience of a non-orgiastic kind (Winnicott, 1971, p. 101). In Winnicott's analysis, the transitional space of childhood is the foundation of adult social and cultural life (Winnicott, 1965, p. 150, p. 184).

In my direct experience with children and young people I have found Winnicott's position better able to account for the nature of childhood and for human nature in general than either the Freudian or the Kleinian traditions, which focus largely on sexuality. My interest has been in moments of transition in the life course: I taught children making the transition between home and school, as well as disabled youngsters between 16 and 25 years of age who were making the transition from childhood to adulthood. Working with times of transition has perhaps given me a better appreciation of the kind of theories to which I am drawn. Life itself is never static, change is ever-present, but we usually only see change once enough of it has occurred to be undeniably noticeable. We discount non-rational behaviour as being unproductive; yet, as the case study of my mother demonstrates, much of the useful labour involved in managing difficult and confusing moments may be hidden to us if we do not have the necessary concepts to understand them.

I return now to the case of my mother and to the little bit of imaginary cloth associated with the object in the room that was the oldest of her possessions visible to her from her bed. My mother's description of the cloth's texture was probably the most easily readable of all the things she asked for. I was able to read it because of my knowledge of transitional objects, though the concept was hard for me to find at first. What I am now unpacking theoretically

did start to make some sense to me at the time, which helped me to cope with what would be more commonly described as "losing her mind." It helped me to be patient and accept rather than dismiss her experience. She was working really hard in a way that is not usually understood or valued, because this work does not occur on a conscious level. After a few weeks, the 'sun-downing' disappeared and she was able to make more conscious use of her remarkable powers of imagination to continue the adjustment process and make more sense of her experiences. She was aided in this process by having observed and appreciated her father's coping strategies in extreme circumstances. In each of their cases, what was being deployed can also be understood using Winnicott's concepts of transitional objects and transitional phenomena.

The first stage was succeeded by a far more conscious ability to play with reminiscences. She reminisced about her father's imaginary trunk, concocted as a device that had allowed him to take some people, places and experiences with him, while leaving others behind: an imaginary container or transitional space that enabled him to begin building anew. She began to use the same idea, going back and forth through people, places and experiences in a poignant combination of remembering and forgetting, taking with and leaving behind. This is how she used the time at the end of the day, speaking out loud some of her musings to me and my partner. It became a break from the numbing effect of television and a more creative alternative. This was, for her, a different form of artistic expression. Instead of textiles or paints, she used her own life as the material to work with and on. This is what Winnicott thought was in fact fundamental to health and to therapy: the ability to play, which Winnicott linked to cultural life through a continuum of ritual, art, theatre, sport and any creative activity.

Transitional or potential space at a social level -- Turner's liminality and the therapeutic value of cultural experience

Repetition is a fundamental aspect of ritual and this final section turns, however briefly, to the work of anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983), in order to indicate how some of the processes analysed thus far find resonance at a cultural level of analysis. Turner enables us to understand another important aspect of my mother's experience, namely the loss of variety and of good quality cultural activities.

What Winnicott identified as transitional phenomena closely corresponds to some of the features Turner identified in the middle phase of rites of passage. Developing the work of Arnold Van Gennep (1908), Turner used the term 'liminality' to characterise the middle phase. He (1969) spoke of it as an anti-structural, 'betwixt –and between', neutral and independent domain of creative activity, which helps the person undergoing the ritual to move out of structure and back again in a new role, or in a transformed way. Turner spoke of 'communitas' as a feature of liminality and defined it as 'essentially "an unmediated relationship between historical, idiosyncratic, concrete individuals" (Turner, 1982, p. 45); it refers to a 'nontransactional order or quality of human relationship' (ibid, p. 46). The quality of liminal space is described as intensely relational and, in its anti-structural dynamic, it is able to engender strong bonds of a non-hierarchical nature. Winnicott extended his analysis from children's play to adults' cultural life; Turner made a similar journey, but in reverse. From the analysis of features of the liminal stage of rites of passage, Turner, in his book *From Ritual to Theatre -- The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982), defined this space as profoundly linked to play and 'flow'. For all of these authors, flow and fluidity indicate a capacity for connectivity and intensity of experience. In Deleuze, all this is fundamental to

'becoming', which is about affective communication at a molecular level and could be about smell or the smallest movement that does not need to be mediated by language. This connectivity can happen between people or in relation to objects and activities. Playing is serious business for both Winnicott and Turner, and it is fundamentally linked to cultural experience and expressions. Theatre indeed uses the word play to indicate a performance, and sport uses the word play in relation to its activities, as in playing football, tennis and so on. Their model can best be understood as a topological one, which enables us to discern continuities underneath different manifestations of cultural phenomena. The foundations of cultural life are laid in dynamics first experienced and practiced in playing.

In situations of transition, it appears that all societies create phenomena that are fundamentally fluid and also linked to play in a broad sense; such phenomena are relational and marked by intense connectivity; they are multivocal and able to contain contradictions and oppositions; they separate _and_ unite; they transcend categories while potentially reinforcing or transforming them. In my own work on Italian festivals (Crociani-Windland, 2011), it became clear that the history of the communities and their particular structures of identity were inscribed in competitive and theatre events. The festivals paradoxically helped to maintain cohesion and continuity, while also helping to manage the change the communities had to undergo in order to survive.

To return to the case study, the value of cultural life to the quality of life of individuals and societies ought not to be underestimated. Cultural life is another level that has transformative potential; it helps us to live with 'problems'. As I was finishing this article, London was hosting the Paralympics' games. The media highlighted the games' origin in the work of Dr. Ludwig Guttman, for whom the therapeutic value of culture and sports in overcoming

disability was clear. The body is not separate from the mind; the individual needs social relatedness and cultural engagement, particularly in difficult times. Even in her most confused moments, my mother's frustration with the decaying quality and increased commercialisation of Italian television was clear. She so badly wanted to wipe out the logo, that constant reminder of branding and its market capitalism logic. Clearly there is more that could be said here, another article maybe, yet I do not think my mother would have forgiven me had I left out her critique of the way we presently undervalue the psychosocial importance of play, arts and cultural life.

Conclusion

This biographical and theoretical exploration has taken us from experience to three different perspectives on the process of transition. The focus has been on difficult and disabling transitions, which is something none of these frameworks has specifically touched on. What I hope to have demonstrated is that these frameworks nonetheless have something to offer beyond the specific disciplines within which they were elaborated. In essence it seems to me that they all address important issues that arise for people who are managing change and tensions, and that they each have identified similar key aspects of that process. Winnicott's notion of a third space, though arising at a particular stage of development within childhood, persists as a reality; social and cultural life can be conceptualized as a transformation of this playful space in adult life. For Turner, the liminal or potential space of ritual is likewise 'betwixt and between'. In his book *From Ritual to Theatre -- The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982), as the title indicates, he tracks a continuity from play through to broader cultural activities. Whether we turn to Winnicott and Turner, or to the Deleuzian framework of Virtual and Actual, both real aspects of our reality, we find a linking of external and internal,

subjective and objective, dream and reality, and a sense that this link persists in different stages of life. The Deleuzian framework is, in my view, the broadest framework with which to understand unconscious processes as embodied and linked to social and environmental influence. The logic of all these understandings is a both/and non-linear logic. Maximum intensity of a non-sexual nature is part of the picture for all of them. This is about a relational intensity, easy to spot at a football match, festival or good theatre production, clear to anyone who has tried to interrupt the concentration of children playing. But perhaps it is not so obvious when that intensity is coming from one's body and demanding major readjustments of one's habits and sense of self.

The emergence of ritualised behaviour and repetition, the deployment of imagination in managing a dramatically shifting reality and identity, can be viewed in the light of shifting relationships between structure and fluidity. The more fluidity of experience, the more ritual and repetition may be needed. These are, however, not to be thought of as conscious moves, but as natural responses to intensive differences, tensions at a virtual level, and tensions between virtual and actual conditions of existence. Transitional objects and phenomena facilitate adjustment to a new condition and identity. My mother and grandfather used an imaginary chest to move from one reality to another. Though this could be the start of a different story, I actually have the trunk both of them used to move from Italy to South America and back; I used it to move to England from Italy. This quintessential symbol of migration, present in all migration museums, is, like all objects for Deleuze, both an actual and a virtual object for our family.

A reflexive afterthought -- dream themes and issues

The comparison between Winnicott's and Turner's thinking in relation to cultural events began as a small theoretical part of a research project on festivals in central Italy. Having finished the project, I became more interested in what I saw as further potential for exploration and presented a paper on Winnicott within the setting of the Learning Community Forum hosted by the Centre for Psycho-Social Studies at the University of the West of England. As I then prepared to write a very early draft of this article I had a dream that seemed strongly linked to the themes I wanted to explore. I therefore offer the dream as another way of sharing reflections on some of the issues arising from the material I have discussed.

The dream:

> *I am in the basement of a mansion, which is to become an educational establishment for children of all ages, and I am discussing with a colleague which rooms will be used as classrooms for which age-groups. The conversation refers to an already decided preference for infants and preschool children to be given the basement rooms and cellars. I argue strongly against putting these children in the cellar. There is a feeling that early childhood and childhood in general is being given a hidden 'out of sight, out of mind' position.*

> *The dream then moves to the garden, where I am looking at a small pond. I see a particular fish and I think it is small because it is in a small pond. My thought is that it needs to be moved to a bigger pond. But I then realize that there is a pond that, while small, connects to a system of ponds and underground waterways that link*

them, and I realize that that is where the fish should be to have sufficient room to

develop.

On waking I found myself thinking about the dream and its relation to my previous day's

pondering over Winnicott's ideas and their position within academic and psychoanalytic

debates. There is something in the dream about the a-sexual nature of play dynamics and

childhood and my insistence not to hide them away in the cellar that makes me wonder about

the reluctance of academic and professional circles to take on 'non-sexy' themes. Does the

commonsense nature of some of Winnicott's insights make them not worth having because

they are capable of being understood without too much struggle? They are more like friendly

children than hard to woo potential partners. (This, of course, is not so true with regard to

Deleuze, whose difficulty repels many, making him at the same time rather elite).

The dream contained interesting biographical references that mingled together my past

professional involvement with young children and young people with learning difficulties,

both marginal groups within society, like the old and confused. I understand this in relation to

the image of connecting ponds. Each pond in itself need not be very big to allow for the

health of the fish. The ponds were neither separate nor merged, yet the system created by

their being both connected and separate spaces allowed for sufficient breadth, depth and

diversity. This image reminded me of the value of connecting Winnicott's contribution to

that of others, giving each theorist a space in which I would outline the main ideas relevant to

this exploration. The system of ponds is a network, or in Deleuzian terms a rhizomic

formation (Deleuze and Guattari 1999), which gives enough room for things to develop,

without creating a hierarchy of, for example, bigger and smaller, less and more important.

The connecting ponds speak of the possibilities offered by a trans-disciplinary approach

aimed at in-depth understanding of psycho-social processes that are not just necessarily about

one stage of life or another, but about processes of transition that we all have to go through, processes that link body and environment and psychic life. As I come to the end of this article, it has also struck me that the ponds can be seen in terms of the intergenerational connections embedded in what I have discussed, the separate yet connected lives of my grandfather, my mother and me, and the wisdom, tricks and playfulness we have each deployed to keep strong in the face of change. Clearly this article needs to be a thank you to them.

About the Author

Lita Crociani-Windland is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology, has been a Fellow of the Centre for Psycho-Social Studies, which is now part of the Centre for Understanding Social Practices at the University of the West of England in Bristol, UK. Her interests span Psycho-Social Studies, Group Relations and continental philosophy, with a particular focus on affective dynamics. Recent publications include 'Politics and affect' (2012, with Paul Hoggett) published in *Subjectivity* and *Festivals, Affect and Identity* (2011, Anthem Press).

References

Abouh-rihan, F. (2011) *Deleuze and Guattari: a Psychoanalytic Itinerary*. London: Continuum Press.

Apter, M. J. (2008) Reversal theory, Victor Turner and the experience of ritual. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15 (10-11): 184-203.

Benjamin, J. (2004) Beyond doer and done to: an intersubjective view of thirdness. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, LXXIII: 5-46.

Bergson, H. (1913, 2001) *Time and Free Will*. Trans. F.L. Pogson. Reprint Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc. .

Bergson, H. (1935, 1977) *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion.* Trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter. Reprint Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press.

Crociani-Windland, L. (2011) *Festivals, Affect and Identity.* London: Anthem Press.

Davis, M. and Wallbridge, D. (1981, 1983) *Boundary and Space: An Introduction to the Work of D. W. Winnicott.* London: Karnac. Reprint Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1983) *Anti-Oedipus.* London: Continuum.

Deleuze, F. (1994) *Difference and Repetition.* London: The Athlone Press.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1999) *A Thousand Plateaus.* London: The Athlone Press.

Eliot, T.S. (1943, 1974)*Four Quartets,* Part II: East Coker. Reprint London: Faber and Faber 2001.

Genosko, G. (2000) (ed.) The life and work of Felix Guattari -- From transversality to ecosophy. In Guattari, F. *The Three Ecologies*. London: Athlone Press.

Higdon, J. (2004) *From Counselling Skills to Counsellor.* Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Massumi, B. (1992) *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the Virtual. Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

McCormick, B. (2006) Remembering the game: debating the *Legend's* women. In Collette, C. (ed.) *Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception* -- Chaucer Studies XXXVI. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Newman, G. (1997) *Locating the Romantic Subject: Novalis with Winnicott* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Nietzsche F. (1974) The Gay Science. Trans. W. Kaufman. New York: Random House

Rudnytsky, P. (2011) *Rescuing Psychoanalysis from Freud and other Essays in Revision.* London: Karnac.

Schechner, R. (1994) *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge.

Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Turner, V. (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play.* New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications.

Van Gennep, A. (1908) *The Rites of Passage.* Trans. M. B. Vizedom and G.L.Caffee. Reprint London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1960.

Whitehead, C. (2001) Social mirrors and shared experiential worlds. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8 (4): 3–36.

Williams, J. (2003) *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition- A critical introduction and guide.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Winnicott, D. W. (1951) Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In Winnicott (1975) *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis.* London: Hogarth Press.

Winnicott, D.W. (1958) The capacity to be alone. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal*. 39: 416-420.

Winnicott, D. W. (1965) *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development.* London: Hogarth Press.

Winnicott, D. W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge.

Winnicott, D. W. (1989) The fate of the transitional object. In: *Psycho-Analytic Explorations.* Karnac, pp. 53-8.