

Birth, Violence and the Millennium

JoAnn Culbert-Koehn

Beverly Hills, CA, USA

Keywords: Jung, Bion, catastrophic anxiety

Abstract: The article begins with the premise that the intensity of projection on the idea of the millennium represents at least in part the psychological need for renewal and birth of a new consciousness. The author proposes that one of the tasks that links us together as analysts is our ability to observe and facilitate the birth of new consciousness in ourselves and our patients. She believes it is the capacity to witness, to endure, and to metabolize the process of psychological birth and its accompanying violence that will affect the depth and success of psychoanalytic work now and into the twenty-first century. The article focuses in depth on a potential step forward in the lives of three patients, one male and two female, with particular attention to the imagery and feelings of painful violence that sometimes accompany these potentially positive changes. The concepts of C. G. Jung and Wilfred Bion are used to help look at the anti-change forces in detail. Both dream material and descriptions of transference-countertransference interactions are included. The presentation moves from the consultation room to the eruption of violent feelings in Analytic Societies and the society at large. The conclusion utilizes Donald Meltzer's ideas on conservative, rebellious and revolutionary states of mind.

Zusammenfassung: *Geburt, Gewalt und die Jahrtausendwende.* Der Artikel beginnt mit der Annahme, daß die Intensität der Projektionen auf die Vorstellung des Jahrtausendwechsels letztendlich zum Teil das Bedürfnis für eine psychologische Erneuerung und für die Geburt einer neuen Bewußtheit zum Ausdruck bringt. Die Autorin nimmt an, daß eine der Aufgaben, die die Analytiker untereinander verbindet, die Fähigkeit ist, die Geburt einer neuen Bewußtheit in uns selbst und in unseren Patienten zu erkennen und zu fördern. Sie glaubt, daß die Fähigkeit, den Prozeß der psychologischen Geburt und der damit verbundenen Gewaltkräfte wahrzunehmen, auszutragen und zu unterstützen für die Erkenntniskraft und den Erfolg der psychoanalytischen Arbeit heute und im 21. Jahrhundert von großer Bedeutung ist. Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Tiefendynamik der Ermöglichung eines entscheidenden Fortschrittes im Leben von drei Patienten, eines Mannes und zweier Frauen, wobei den Bildern und Gefühlen schmerzhafter Gewalt eine besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt, die diese Ermöglichungen positiver Veränderungen begleiten. Die Konzepte von C. G. Jung und Wilfred Bion sind Hilfsmittel, um die gegen eine Veränderung gerichteten Kräfte im Detail zu beobachten. Traummaterial und Beschreibungen der Übertragungs-Gegenübertragungs-Interaktionen werden dabei berücksichtigt. Dann werden ausgehend von den Beobachtungen im Praxisraum auch der Ausbruch gewaltmäßiger Gefühle in analytischen Gesellschaften und in der Gesellschaft als ganzer in den Blick genommen.

Correspondence to: JoAnn Culbert-Koehn, L.C.S.W., 9730 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 114, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, Phone/Fax (310) 450-5670

Hieraus werden Schlußfolgerungen unter Verwendung von Donald Meltzers Ideen von konservativen, aufrüherischen und revolutionären Geistesverfassungen gezogen.

*

The artist Edward Munch asks:

“Why was I born when I never asked to be? It was my rage at this injustice and my continual thinking about it that influenced my art. My art gave me a reason to live.”

Chagall begins his autobiography as follows:

“The first thing I ever saw was a trough. Simple, square, half hollow, half oval. A market trough. Once inside, I filled it completely. I don’t remember – perhaps my mother told me – but at the very moment I was born a great fire broke out, in a little cottage, behind a prison, near the high road, on the outskirts of Vitebsk. The town was on fire, the quarter where the poor Jews lived. They carried the bed and the mattress, the mother and the babe at her feet, to a safe place at the other end of town. But first of all, I was born dead. I did not want to live. Imagine a white bubble that does not want to live. As if it had been stuffed with Chagall pictures. They pricked that bubble with needles, they plunged it into a pail of water. At last it emitted a feeble whimper. But the main thing was, I was born dead. I hope the psychologists have the grace not to draw improper conclusions from that!” (Chagall 1979, p. 28)

What do these pain-filled descriptions of birth have to do with the issue we are addressing – psychological catastrophe and the beginning of a new century? What I hope to demonstrate here is that the intensity of projection on the idea of the millennium represents, at least in part, the psychological need for renewal and the birth of new consciousness. I am proposing that one of the tasks that links us together – Jungian or Freudian – is to hopefully observe and facilitate the ongoing birth of new consciousness in ourselves and in our patients. I believe it is our capacity to witness, to ensure and to metabolize the process of psychological birth and its accompanying violence that will affect the depth and success of our work now and into the twenty-first century. I find the work of C. G. Jung, Wilfred Bion, Frances Tustin and Donald Meltzer most helpful in approaching this area of thought.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *millennium* as a span of a thousand years, and goes on to describe it as “a hoped for period of joy, serenity, prosperity and justice,” and finally, “a thousand-year period of holiness during which Christ is to reign on earth.” In Revelation (20: 1–3) we read:

“Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in his hand and an enormous chain. He overpowered the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to make sure he would not deceive the nations again until the thousand years had passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short while.” (Jerusalem Bible)

Whether our analytic heritage is Jungian or Freudian, it seems unlikely that any depth psychologist would advocate for imprisoning the primeval psyche or sealing it over. Our work is about integrating what has been relegated to the unconscious.

My formal training is as a Jungian analyst. Jung, whose father was a Christian minister, saw the integration of the primitive psyche within the individual as the task of our time. He saw the purpose of human life as the creation of consciousness. Near the end of his life he wrote,

“Man’s task is . . . to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious. Neither should he persist in his unconsciousness, nor remain identical with the unconscious elements in his being, thus evading his destiny, which is to create more and more consciousness. As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.” (Jung 1989, p. 326)

The idea that this integrative process is neither comfortable nor smooth was impressed upon me during my Jungian training. Jung uses alchemical images to describe psychic transformation. The death of old conscious attitudes and the birth of new consciousness was described as involving death, putrefaction, fiery calcination, crucifixion and dismemberment. These processes assume an adult ego that can withstand the pain and fire of change. While Jung’s ideas still inform my work and provide a meaningful and deep context for psychological growth, I turned, following training, to Melanie Klein and the post-Kleinian writers to gain insight into the particulars of psychological catastrophe that I was witnessing on a day-to-day basis in my consulting room.

Frances Tustin, building on her analyst Wilfred Bion’s concept of *psychological catastrophe*, states that “psychological catastrophe is the result of a premature or mismanaged psychological birth.” (Tustin 1988, p. 182) She states that when we work with adults whose egos are not intact due to pre- or post-natal trauma, we see developmental phases that seem to be “telescoped.” Tustin writes, “Later stages seem to have been experienced precociously and out of phase, alongside current and earlier stages in a confused and disordered fashion.” (Tustin 1988, p. 182)

Patients with this kind of beginning communicate to the analyst, usually via projective identification, a sense of catastrophe when faced with any potential change, including changes in the analytic structure, such as breaks. There will often be internal and external psychic violence at such times. I will now present case material to illustrate the conjunction of potential psychic birth with psychic violence, and then I will explore how we might best navigate this psychic territory in our consulting rooms, in our analytic institutes and in the world at large.

I will be using process notes from three patients – Lisa, Greg, and Ellen. All of these patients are in their late forties, have had several years of analysis, and have re-experienced their birth in the transference as catastrophic. The catastrophic birth experience repeats at each analytic break, life transition, or movement towards individuation. I have learned much from these three patients about the violence of change.

Lisa has been blocked writing her dissertation for many months. In this session she lies on the couch and shows me a letter from one of the teachers at her graduate school that describes her as making important contributions in class, being very connected to her inner process, and being very articulate. Since Lisa has ended previous sessions feeling she has not gotten to her deepest feelings, I say to her that it seems like she feels pleased with the letter, but I wonder if it is hard to square the teacher’s perception with how she reports she is feeling inside.

Lisa says emphatically, "I'm in bad shape. I feel pressure and anxiety all the time, like I'm coming apart. I feel crushed and pressured. I have anxiety all over my body, and jumpiness. All the anxiety I pushed back into my muscles about the paper these last months is coming up now. It emanates up and down my spine and down my legs, out my arms. It moves all over my body. I feel like I'm dying, falling apart, disintegrating."

The description of these feelings is interspersed with details of what teacher she is going to see, her resistance and agony about the dissertation, and her ambivalence about going on a trip with her husband during the holiday break. She feels so anxious about going that she doesn't feel she could have a good time. She says the body symptoms have made her feel like she has ovarian cancer. She is so anxious that she has called her gynecologist and scheduled an examination.

Based on my somatic reaction to Lisa's material in this session as well as observations over many months, I tell her that when she talks about the symptoms she is having and the feelings of coming apart, it reminds me of a woman undergoing intensely painful transition labor who may wonder why she ever got herself into this place and is afraid to push the baby out, fearing it will either be defective or dead. I add that Lisa's talking about pressure and being crushed also makes me think about her own birth.

Lisa says she had a lot of feeling when I mentioned a defective baby, that nothing from her could possibly be okay. She says she's afraid her own destructiveness will cause the baby to be defective or dead. She fears what she calls "some kind of punishment or retribution for my own envy and jealousy of my mother's and sister's babies."

I respond, "I wonder if, in addition to your mother and sister, you fear retribution for your envy of me?"

Lisa pauses and then says, "Not just you, but Barbara and Allison and Cynthia – all the sisters and mothers who can make babies." She continues, "You're an analyst and I'm not, and you write papers and have children."

At this point I have been feeling connected to Lisa but suddenly feel a disconnection. I say to her that I wonder where she is, and she says she feels blank. I say I wonder if the envy that has come up has separated us and whether she is placing me in the "have-everything" camp with no envious feelings and nothing lacking in my life, while she is in the "have-nothing" camp.

Possibly avoiding a painful direct encounter, Lisa says, "It's not just you. I get myself into a place where I feel isolated from everyone." Then she goes on, "You know, I think if I had been able to get pregnant, it would have been hell. I'd have thought the baby was a sibling taking up space in my body and that the baby was getting something better than I got. I would be worried whether the baby would be okay or deformed. I think I really wanted my sister dead, and I hated my mother and my mother and dad together." Then she adds, "Birthing myself out of my mother [which she associates with birthing her unwritten dissertation] is a minefield of attack, of destruction and killing."

I say, "You are telling me about the experience of birth being very violent," and here the hour ends.

We can see how Lisa begins this session with a thin attempt at manic defense and moves quickly into a feeling of panic and despair ("I'm in bad shape"). She

then describes in detail the way in which feelings related to trying to birth her dissertation are lodged in her body and recreate, I think, her own birth trauma (“I have anxiety all over my body. It emanates up and down my spine and down my legs. I feel crushed and pressured”). She goes on to report her experience of the primitive agonies so well described by Winnicott (1975) and Tustin (1988) – “I feel like I’m dying, falling apart, disintegrating.” There is a reference to the upcoming break, which she feels too upset to enjoy, overcome with primitive agony. I don’t comment, and she then moves back toward hypochondria (her fear of ovarian cancer). For Lisa, visits to the gynecologist often precede analytic breaks.

The possibility of Lisa’s envy turned against herself emerges as a defense against expressing envy towards me as a break approaches. I comment on her possible envy of me, and there is a disconnection. Lisa says she feels blank. She has gone mindless or fragmented her mind, either to circumvent attacking me or to avoid having her own mind and her own painful feelings. She then combines prenatal, pre-oedipal, and oedipal jealousies, concluding, “Birthing myself out of my mother is a minefield of attack, of destruction and killing.” There is certainly more one could comment on here, but I want to proceed with another patient.

I want to describe part of an hour, including a dream which conveys the agonizing rawness of psychic change and rebirth. Greg suffered a difficult, toxic prenatal experience, a caesarian birth, and maternal abandonment following the birth.

One Thursday Greg comes in and says he is really upset and is feeling abandoned – by God and his parents. He says, “I feel abandoned when I leave Bakersfield to drive to L.A. and when I leave you in L.A. to drive home. I feel panic and shame.” He says he felt panic when he left Lancaster to go to his job in San Francisco. Then he says, “I’m separating from another job now in a cosmic way [meaning big]. I feel extremely raw.” He mentions he has brought his “turtle dream” from some weeks ago and wants us to look at it again. He tells me the dream as follows:

I am in a swimming pool with Rachel [his wife]. I suddenly spy a dim figure far below. I feel some sense of panic. Then I realize it’s a huge sea turtle, and we’re at an aquarium. The sea turtle comes to the surface. We get it out of the water and take it to a pen. Rachel peels the shell off. I’m horrified and say, “Do you need to do that?” I’m afraid the animal is so exposed it will die. Rachel ignores me. Suddenly the turtle’s muscles go through an incredible molting process. They swell, exfoliate and drop off, leaving a core smaller animal which acts like a sea lion cub, though not just like one.

The dream continues:

Now a man comes out with a shell on his head. He meets with Rachel in a small closed room. I’m outside and envy him. Now I’m off at a wildlife preserve with a biologist woman of my age. She’s like Jane Goodall. We discuss being on a parallel path – we met over the same event that we got to in different ways. She’s very unconventional and is passionate about not being normal. I feel defensive about her implication that I would follow her around. Finally we’re at a large table and someone pushes a hot beverage in front of me. I block it because I’m afraid it will spill on me. Before this I ate some chili. It’s clear I’m going to be fed, and I am hungry.

Greg says it is amazing how this dream describes the analysis, but what is upsetting is that at the time he had the dream it had a lot of beauty about it. He felt

encouraged then, but feels now that he was naive about the sense of rawness and loss of defenses that the dream implies.

I comment, "The living experience of the dream is excruciating," and he agrees.

Greg says he had another turtle dream in which he's holding a turtle with a shell that has battle scars. There is some kind of renewal, a new animal in an old shell. He says this dream was also very encouraging to him, but again he just feels despair and hopelessness now. He says he feels some relief in talking to me, but when the hour is over it will be very hard to leave and face his anxiety alone. He says he feels bitter and enraged.

I say, "It's hard to bear the pain of the analysis. You are enraged and disappointed that the birth of a new self is so fraught with violent feelings." Greg agrees that this is true, and the hour concludes.

Similar to the previous hour with Lisa, this session contains feelings of panic, envy, rage and shame, leading to isolation. A potential step forward (leaving his job) stirs up in Greg feelings of panic and rawness. Here the tension and terror are not somaticized, but the feelings are symbolized in his dream, which is at once beautiful and horrifying to him. There is reference to a link between feelings and musculature – the turtle's muscles swell, exfoliate, and drop off – but again, Greg is able to dream this.

This hour brings up many questions. Is the intense rawness, the peeling away of the shell, a reference to his caesarian birth, as well as to his current experience in the transference? Can Greg tolerate the pain of the analysis? As he says so poignantly, the dream images have a certain beauty, but the living experience of trying to birth a more authentic self is excruciating. In the dream he envies the man with the shell on his head, which was Greg's former state. He encounters a Jane Goodall-like woman, perhaps the analyst, who is at home in the wildlife preserve and who is unconventional and passionate in relation to her more primitive self. He is afraid the drink will be too hot and spill on him. Is this perhaps a reference to his experience of the toxic womb, which can indeed feel fiery to the fetus, as well as to his current fears in the transference? The dream ends on a hopeful note ("It's clear I'm going to be fed, and I'm hungry"). Again, there is much more to comment on that time allows.

The final hour I want to present is from the treatment of my patient Ellen. This patient also had a traumatic birth, and there is certainly terror and fear of change in this hour, but perhaps slightly less feeling of catastrophe since more of the terror has been metabolized.

Ellen enters the room, sits down, lowers her head and says, "I have a headache and am incredibly anxious." I ask, "Does anything come to mind about the anxiety? Details? Thoughts?"

Ellen tells me, "I don't want to think yet. The feeling I'm having is maybe terror. It's so big. I can't believe how big it is. I just need to feel it, give it space. I feel safe enough with you here to do this."

Ellen is silent now, looking down at the floor. Then she continues, "I think this feeling might be related to the dream I told you about yesterday."

I wonder, "The London dream?"

She says "Yes, I'm in London calling home. My mother is preoccupied with her own life and can't hear me. I can't get the help I need."

Then Ellen continues, “You know, I think this dream is my fear of the winter break – my traveling and also about doing my own work and not being at the lecture you were at on Saturday.”

I comment, “It seems like there’s something you can’t get through to me about.”

Ellen agrees. “It’s all this terror. I don’t think you are getting it, helping me enough, fast enough. Remember yesterday when I asked if there was some way I can grow faster, and you teased me, saying that maybe I could give up sleep? I laughed, but I can’t give up sleep. I feel panicky about surviving when I feel so terrorized.” Then Ellen continues, “I had a dream about the Christmas break I haven’t managed to tell yet. I had it after dinner with my mother, but now it seems like it’s my terror about separating from you for the holiday.”

In the dream it’s Christmastime. Me, mom and some family members are in a hotel complex. I have to leave early maybe Christmas Eve. I go back to my room and my mother has left a beautiful Christmas tree, tall with a red ribbon and beautiful animal ornaments. I’m touched. I look around and see other trees all around the complex. I have doubts and regrets about not staying with the family at Christmas, but I think I must go.

Then Ellen adds: “There’s a third dream that fits with these. I told it to you last week, but I don’t think we got very far. The dream about the train station, it still upsets me.”

I’m in a railway station trying to get home. I’ve let someone pick up my suitcase to help, and now I can’t find that person or the track the homebound train is running on. I’m very upset but trying to cope. I’m looking for someone who speaks enough English to help. I’m upset about trusting and getting into this situation.

I respond to Ellen, “Yes, the dreams are linked – different feelings about separation, the complex viewed from different vertices. In the London dream you experience me as preoccupied, you can’t get through. In the Christmas dream, I leave you this gift. There’s this nice Christmas, but you want to have your own celebration separate from me, and this surprises you. In the railway station you seem to get panicky. You want to come home, but you can’t find parts of yourself – maybe an end-of-the-break feeling.”

Ellen asks, “What is it I can’t find?”, and I wonder, “Could it be your old state of mind, the one that didn’t want to leave home?”

Ellen begins to sob now. “Everything you are saying is right, but you are still not understanding how far apart these states of mind are. One part of me wants to be separate from you and from the group, doing my own work, and another part of me just wants to be sitting on Mom’s lap – your lap – to be at the conference where you are, listening to the speaker, the expert.”

I say, “I wonder if it’s hard to accept that these two states of mind are really both you. You want to go off and explore the world, and you want to be sitting at the conference next to me.”

Ellen responds, “When you say it, this sounds easy, but it’s not for me. I identify with one part of my mind, and the other part feels like it disappears but then comes back and hits me. I want to do this better. But how?”

I comment, “We’re having this conversation, where both parts exist. But maybe you feel I’m not hearing how violent and intense these feelings are.”

Now Ellen sobs more deeply. "There's an eruption inside me, a fierce energy that wants to explore, adventure, give lectures myself. It's so new and very powerful. Having these two sets of feelings is very painful. Both desires can't be satisfied at the same time. It still feels like one view or the other will be killed off. It's not at all clear that both views can coexist." With that, the session ends.

Among the issues in this hour is how the new emerging life energy, which is curious and adventurous, can be held together with the more frightened, vulnerable, stay-at-home parts of the personality. Certainly this is an issue for many women going out into the world as the millennium approaches. Can the newborn attitudes coexist with more traditional energies, or will there be a destructive inner war?

Discussion

Clinically there are a number of issues that come to mind when I think of what I have learned from these three patients:

1. The analyst must have a firm sense of his or her own psychic reality and a relationship with the primitive psyche, particularly to prenatal and neonatal consciousness and to traumatic states. If these states of mind are not real to the analyst, they will surely not be real to the patient, and mindlessness and/or somatization may occur.
2. I think it is safe to say that all patients need us to observe what is blocking the process of change. Probably all patients need help metabolizing certain feeling states. What is unique about the patients I have described are their highly adapted false self organizations, beginning at birth if not prenatally. They all learned to be astute caretakers of others in the beginning of their lives. The cost is a resentment at taking care of others and feelings of alienation, deadness and encapsulation in later life related to very early feelings of terror from severe separation trauma, including birth. Often in such patients there is a difficult prenatal experience, a difficult birth, and a mother unavailable to bond after birth and help the infant metabolize painful feelings.
3. The analyst will need to be sensitive and open to feelings of rawness and the terror of being outside the womb, feeling expelled. Michael Paul (1988) has written that many such patients have experienced birth as a ripoff. Change is viewed similarly. Patients with such early trauma cling to the analyst in subtle but intense ways – what Mitrani (1996) has described as pseudo-adhesive identification, an adhering to the analyst's interpretations in a way that blocks separation, integration and change. When separation and change do occur in the analytic relationship, such as at times of breaks, the patient will often communicate to the analyst a sense of impending catastrophe. It is important that the analyst be able to receive the sense of catastrophic anxiety – to metabolize it, understand it, and communicate that understanding to the patient. The analyst's understanding that turbulence is inevitable in change and his or her faith that, over time, the terror can be metabolized and borne may facilitate psychic growth in the analysand.
4. Another experience of violence that will have to be borne is the internal rivalry between different factions of the personality vying to dominate or exist as new attitudes are birthed. The patient may need to borrow on the analyst's

ego strength in navigating and mediating the new psychic territory. I believe an accepting attitude toward feelings of turbulence and jealousy is also important in understanding and reducing psychic violence in our analytic institutes and our society at large. I think it is likely that few among us relish leaving the safe womb of our familiar ideas. Yet change and the resultant painful turbulence seem inevitable. It seems to me that only when we can accept our terror of change, our fear of learning, our rawness and our irritability or even rage when we are asked or forced to change familiar attitudes, can we then be more compassionate with both ourselves and others, less blaming and less violent. Blaming seems to be related to our inability to metabolize the psychic pain of shame, particularly the shame of being small and helpless.

Conclusion

When I think about the images of birth and psychic violence that I have put forth and link them to group life – life in our analytic institutes and in the larger society – the work of Donald Meltzer, the British psychoanalyst, comes to mind, particularly his essay on “Permanent Revolution of the Generations.” I think his ideas may be of help to us as psychoanalysts – Jungian, Freudian or Adlerian – as we approach the twenty-first century, particularly if we see the gateway to the new century as symbolizing the opportunity for change.

In my reading, Meltzer (1990) suggests an urge to permanent revolution, which he differentiates from rebellion. Actually, he describes three states of mind: the rebellious state of mind, the conservative state of mind, and the revolutionary spirit. In a well developed personality, these states of mind coexist.

Meltzer tells us that the rebellious state of mind is characterized by “contempt for the past, . . . resentment of authority, idealization of novelty and a disbelief in (or impatience with) the importance of experience . . . It is dominated by [feelings of persecution] and prone to violent means and the expectation of violent retaliation.” (Meltzer 1990, p. 154)

The conservative state of mind, Meltzer believes, is dominated by latency mechanisms in which there is a retreat from the reality of generational struggle. In the conservative state of mind there is a longing for stability at any price, which “inclines it to sacrifice growth and development just as it sacrifices sexual passion to comfort.” (Meltzer 1990, p. 154)

Meltzer then describes the revolutionary spirit. What I am putting forth is the necessity for psychoanalysts to be in touch with their own inner revolutionary spirit as well as being conscious of the rebellious and conservative trends within. The revolutionary spirit accepts the necessity of change and the incumbent loneliness and separation of generations. Meltzer writes:

“From idealization of the eternal we have passed by way of the Freudian [and, I would add, Jungian] hope of dynamic equilibrium . . . to the recognition that everything must either grow in complexity . . . or waste away.” (Meltzer 1990, p. 153)

Meltzer describes the characteristics of the revolutionary spirit as follows:

1. “The revolutionary spirit arises the moment that introjective identification with the combined object is accepted as imposing a life of separateness under their

- aegis.” (Meltzer 1990, p. 155) In other words, there needs to be an internal mommy and daddy capable of creating, on which the ego relies.
2. The revolutionary spirit has an awareness of timing and change. In Meltzer’s words, “The revolutionary spirit need not rush its fences as there are always other things to be done during waiting . . .” (Meltzer 1990, p. 155)
 3. The revolutionary spirit has an expansive view of the reality of the psyche. The revolutionary spirit, according to Meltzer, “is prone to work as hard as it can . . . and to look forward with delight to the coming of the new generation to which it will be able to hand over responsibility . . .” (Meltzer 1990, p. 155)
 4. The revolutionary spirit is not possessive – the unconscious is vast, and there is plenty to observe and study. Meltzer says that the revolutionary spirit “knows that everything it accomplishes will be swept away into history and seem feeble in retrospect . . .” (Meltzer 1990, p. 156)
 5. The revolutionary spirit is not inflated. It reminds us of Bion’s (1970) idea in *Attention and Interpretation*, that, at the end of an analysis, the awareness of what is unknown in the unconscious has actually increased in proportion to what is known.

Having a psyche in which the revolutionary spirit flourishes is obviously an achievement. It can only be reached if the more conservative and rebellious parts of the personality can be made conscious, as well as one’s envious and rivalrous feelings towards the generation of elders ahead and the younger generation growing. I challenge each of us as psychoanalysts to nourish this spirit – for the benefit of our psychic aliveness, for the growth and development of our patients’ psyches, and for the health of our analytic institutes and our society at large. I feel it is contact with a mature and seasoned revolutionary spirit that will keep psychoanalysis alive and relevant now and into the twenty-first century. To the extent that we are conscious of the rebellious and conservative parts which tend to dominate this revolutionary spirit, violence will be reduced and the birth of new consciousness furthered.

References

- Bion W (1970) *Attention and Interpretation*. Tavistock, London
- Chagall M (1979) *Chagall by Chagall*. Harry Abrams, New York
- Jung CG (1989) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Vintage Books, New York
- Meltzer D (1990) *Sexual States of Mind*. Clunie Press, Perthshire, Scotland
- Mitrani J (1996) *A Framework for the Imaginary*. Jason Aronson, Northvale, New Jersey
- Paul M (1988) *A Mental Atlas of the Process of Psychological Birth*. In: Grotstein J (ed) *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?* Karnac Books, London
- Tustin F (1988). *Psychological Birth and Psychological Catastrophe*. In: Grotstein J (ed) *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe?* Karnac Books, London
- Winnicott D (1975) *Through Pediatrics to Psychoanalysis*. Basic Books, New York