

Response to Review, 'Our Boys Go In'

Kirsty Hall

The Sun always did go in for simplification. My association to the Falklands War is my experience in a Careers Office where all the staff except myself and the youth worker sat eating lunch and waving Union Jacks. I remarked, 'Don't you realise people will get killed as result of this?' This broke no ice with the staff, who carried on cheering 'their boys'. I would have needed a much more brutal weapon than mild reproof to have any effect.

Perhaps one moral of the tale is that unless you storm the battlements of tradition-encrusted object relations psychoanalysis, nobody will listen. Another is that the simpler the argument, the more people might understand what you are getting at. The lack of footnotes and the chatty writing style are aimed at those who practice psychoanalysis and yet have barely heard of Freud, let alone Foucault, Butler and the rest. It aims to throw as many entrenched positions into disarray as possible, and the result is indeed often chaos—for which I offer no apology! I am more interested in trying to prise open closed minds with material where questions are begged.

This leads me to the vexed question of meaning. A close reading of chapter seven, 'The meaning of fantasy and anxiety' will reveal that I am unable to come to any clear conclusions: I am thoroughly muddled, even chaotic. However, I distrust those who have worked out the meaning of life. They are often either simpletons or demagogues. The rest of us find meaning problematic.

One or two quibbles with Fedja's more detailed comments. On page 42 I agree with his proposition that meaning is hardly ever fixed. It indeed slips and slides everywhere. A person's name is one of the only instances I can think of where there is at least a partial exception. On the previous page I state, 'Otherness necessarily starts with making a distinction between two or more states. At the same time it enables most of us, through our desiring, to take up a place and "fix" ourselves in the world.' The word 'fix' is in inverted commas to indicate that I view this attempt at fixity with a degree of irony.

Finally, now I've stormed the barricades of object relations psychoanalysis, why not follow up my book with one of your own Fedja? Pick up the arguments that are littered around and make them do more work and/or work better. Allons-y! (as Lacan probably did not say.)