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Recent research in the fields of attachment and trauma is once more pointing to the contribution of early relational failures to extreme psychic suffering. 'Disorganised' patterns of attachment, identified in children whose caregivers are simultaneously a source of fear and a source of comfort, have been linked to the development of both dissociative and so called 'borderline' disorders in adult life. The conference was to bring together speakers able to extend our thinking and bring insights from attachment theory and psychoanalysis to the current debate about the links between the traumatic disorganisation of attachment relationships and more severe mental and emotional distress - dissociative states, borderline experiences and psychosis - as they emerge in clinical practice. The papers in this volume have in common a committed insistence upon placing human relationship at the centre of their accounts of extreme psychological suffering, both as the source of injury and, most hopefully, as the potential agent of repair. In this respect, they contribute fittingly in his centenary year to the continuation and extension of John Bowlby's pioneering work for the understanding, treatment and relief of such suffering.

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