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Masculinity and Psychoanalysis: Karl Figlio in Conversation with Deborah Wright

Deborah L.S. Wright

In *Rethinking the Psychoanalysis of Masculinity: From Toxic to Seminal* (2024), Karl Figlio examines the concept of toxic masculinity and widespread anxiety about toxicity throughout daily life, in nature, society and relationships. Karl Figlio (KF) and Deborah Wright (DW) discuss themes and ideas arising from his book.

DW: It is very interesting to see the development in your work on masculinity from your book in 2000, *Psychoanalysis, Science and Masculinity*.

KF: Yes, since at least 2000. I was recently sorting through papers and noticed that I gave talks on this area prior to that.

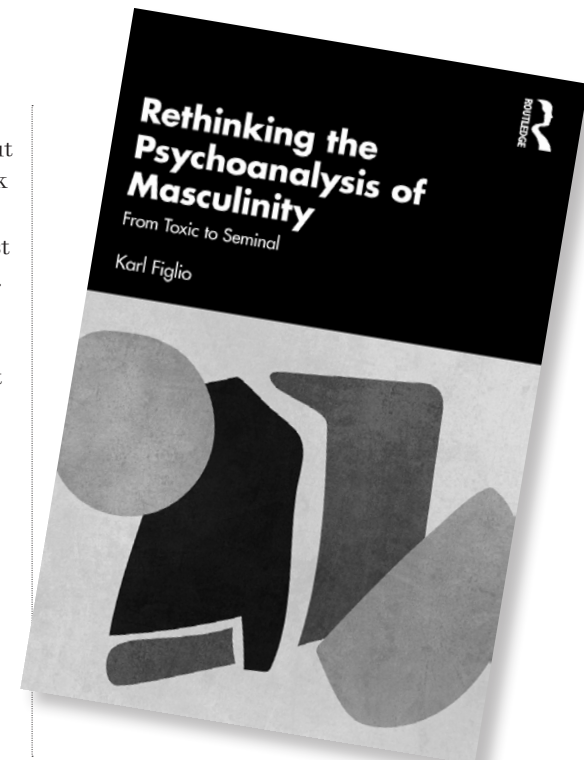
DW: How did you get interested in the history of science and how does that connect to psychoanalysis and your

research and developing concepts of Masculinity?

KF: When I was working as a scientist, I was interested in how it all fitted together. Towards the end of my PhD in the Department of Physiology at the University of Chicago, there was a new multidisciplinary committee with a programme in History of Science. It blew my mind. I pursued it with a US Department of Public Health Post Doc grant in 1969. I have always had a fascination about how lived experience creates our perceptions and knowledge. While teaching in the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine in Cambridge, it became clear to me that you cannot study the history of science without psychoanalysis. In the 2000 book I argue that masculinity can foster a driven way

of knowing that dries things up – that is anti-fertility. This new book (2024) is about fertility and anti-fertility. The middle book (2017) is about ‘reparation’ and that is where psychoanalysis really comes in. I just realised that sequence in this conversation. In the first book, I wanted to understand the drive to investigate. Getting to the ‘beginning of the beginning’ – that is what science is always trying to do. Making better the destruction of the intrusion into nature – that would be the reparation in the second book. In this third book (2024) I develop reparation in relation to masculinity and femininity.

DW: It is interesting, given the important contributions that you have made in these areas, that your name Figlio, apart from meaning ‘son’ in Italian, originates from the Latin ‘filius’



and is associated with ‘femmina’ (female) and fecondo (fertile) as well as referring to a child if the sex is unknown such in the case of an unborn child.

KF: I had not realised that! I knew it was ‘son’- but not the rest. It is very fitting!

DW: Say more about the difference between the ‘Penis’ and the ‘Phallus’.

KF: The penis is an organ, and you can see it – it is attached to the man, it is visualisable. You cannot see the phallus since it is an omnipotent fantasy – an illusion. The penis can be the phantasy ‘home’ of the phallus because you can see it full, then empty and full again. That is the magical power of the phallus – at least you can see it do those things, as if enacted in the penis. Ronald Britton wrote a very interesting paper about the ‘Athene/Antigone complex’: The interesting thing for the feminine is that Athene can be the phallus (born from Zeus’s head) and the sustainer of the phallus, in serving father (Antigone).

DW: How might you use the word ‘potency’ in relation to these themes?

KF: In a ‘phallic’ sense, ‘I can do it’; in a ‘seminal’ sense, ‘being reparative’. Phallic has no gender or sexuality; seminal is uniquely masculine. Semen can fructify or poison. The phallic level is a defence against the seminal and therefore the depressive position. Seminal ambivalence is more primal than phallic ambivalence

– semen gets into, in a profound sense, the interior, causing a catastrophe and making it better, hidden beneath phallic destruction and restoration.

DW: Can you have a projective identification that is positive?

KF: Yes, but we will have to revise what we mean by projective identification. When we give (projectively?) and the receiver receives gratefully, it evokes goodness in both. It brings the masculine into intimate relationship with the feminine in its loving – fertile – dimension, which is held in balance with its destructive denigration of the feminine (the depressive position). Both have been called projective identification.

DW: You mention climate crisis sceptics and contamination phantasies – do you think with the Covid vaccination something good injected inside has been muddled with poison, even poisonous little beings, as with the anxieties about a poisoning semen, being put into us by a destructive governmental/pharmaceutical industry?

KF: I hadn’t thought of that – that is an interesting idea! We were overwhelmed by Covid; in such circumstances, there is an intolerance of the process of investigation and a leap to the immediacy of phantasy. In my book, I explore a cluster of anti-feminine, masculine ideologies, in which toxic invasion of the feminine defends

against being sunk in depressive anxiety. These phantasies can be projected, feared and fought, as in your suggestion about a reaction against government and pharma.

DW: You mention *The Terminator* in your book. What do you think about the current looking at the habitability of other planets such as Mars and about potential future immortality? There is no need for fertility then!

KF: Yes, you bypass destructiveness. Once we have polluted earth, we move on to Mars. It is like the misogynist fantasy that the man pollutes the woman and then moves on to an undamaged one.

DW: There is a lot of interest in doing DNA testing to explore lineage beyond parents, giving wider clues to the self. Is it also bypassing the primal scene and the fertility that went into making the self and any destructive elements?

KF: It is important to think about these ambivalences. DNA analysis helps and also focuses down on a chemical reaction. It is akin to what I called getting to ‘the beginning of the beginning’. At the very beginning when natality (Hannah Arendt) happens, there is just a chemical reaction.

DW: We are now at the ‘end of the end’ of our conversation or perhaps the ‘end of the beginning’ for what you might look at next.

KF: Thank you for a very enjoyable

conversation and I look forward to the next one.

Karl Figlio taught history of science and medicine at Cambridge and was founding director (now Professor Emeritus) of the Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies (now Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies) University of Essex. He is a Clinical Associate, BPAS; a Senior Member, PPA, BPF; and in private practice.

Dr Deborah L. S. Wright is a BPC registrant, a Psychotherapist in private practice, an Artist, Academic, Senior Lecturer, and Programme Director of the Clinical Professional Doctorate Programmes in the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at The University of Essex.

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Psyche/soma

Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and the Treatment of Chronic Lower Back Pain

Andrew Keefe

Chronic lower back pain (CLBP) is a growing issue as society becomes more sedentary. NICE recommends exercise plus psychotherapy for the treatment of non-specific CLBP (an episode of lower back pain without an identified physical cause, lasting twelve weeks or more), especially where more traditional treatments have been tried unsuccessfully. This guidance reflects the fact that the causes of this condition may be a complex and often frustrating mix of the physiological and the emotional.

By 'psychotherapy' NICE of course means CBT. I am a personal trainer and Pilates teacher specialising in CLBP, as well as a psychodynamic psychotherapist trained in EMDR. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) is a therapy method using eye movements and other forms of bilateral stimulation to process trauma, including physical manifestations of trauma, such as chronic

pain. I often combine EMDR with Pilates because it reduces and prevents chronic lower back pain by addressing the underlying physical causes and relaxes body and mind. However, I still find a role for psychodynamic thinking and practice. So how can psychotherapy relieve what is experienced by so many as pain in the body?

Hart (1947) claims that physical pain is repressed anxiety or guilt, suggesting that this type of pain is preferred as more bearable than emotional suffering. The idea that chronic pain is repressed emotion is still common today, though with anger often taking the place of anxiety. What are the implications of this for psychotherapy with people living with CLBP?

Psychologist and EMDR Therapist Mark Grant (2018) specialises in chronic pain and regards the lack of someone to confide in and not feeling safe as a child

to be risk factors for the development of chronic pain in adulthood. Clients I work with who live with CLBP frequently describe unsafe, abusive childhoods where there was an absence of protective, nurturing caregivers and emotional expression was discouraged. Unbearable, uncontained distress may be expressed in the body as chronic pain, an important point to bear in mind at assessment.

Encounters with medical professionals can feel like a repetition of being left with uncontained emotion as a child: sources estimate that in 85% of cases of CLBP, there is no apparent physical cause (Deyo & Weinstein, 2001). (This is disputed: Stuart McGill [2015], one of the leading experts on the spine, believes the psychological causes of CLBP are overstated and that the problem is poor diagnostic technique by clinicians examining the patients concerned.)

A GP or physiotherapist might tell a patient that chronic pain can result from anxiety, stress or depression, or that the brain's pain system has just become oversensitive over time. What people often hear when this is said is: 'Your pain isn't real – it's all in your mind,' or: 'You're making this up'. This pain, which the adult sufferer feels is being dismissed, is, following Hart (1947), the same uncontained distress the child was

discouraged from expressing. The defences which keep the original distress out of the conscious mind and trapped in the body as pain perhaps influence how the GP's explanation is heard, and the patient can experience a repetition of the original, parental response: 'This is too much / you are too much / keep your distress away from me.' The patient is, once again, alone with the pain.

Patients may present for psychotherapy after a series of unsuccessful clinical encounters where they felt their pain was dismissed, creating understandable cynicism and resistance to treatment, which can manifest in the transference. The therapist may suspect the chronic pain is repressed emotional distress, but how to talk about this without becoming the clinician who doesn't believe in their pain, or the parent who can't handle their emotional distress?

Starting with the pain and working backwards is more effective than making interpretations. A client may be more willing to become curious about the emotional dimension if the therapist first accepts the physical reality of the pain. And it is real: even without physical damage, the pain system in the brain and the nervous system engenders pain in the body in the same way. Pain is a signal that something is wrong. That could be a

structural issue in the lumbar spine or an issue with one's emotional experience of life. I invite clients to listen to their pain, to focus on the painful area of the body, slow their breathing, close their eyes and let their mind wander, to free associate to their pain. Often this leads to thinking about a difficult relationship, the recovery of a troubling memory, or to feelings of grief, anger, or worry.

Once identified, these issues can then be worked through and contained, leading, over time to reduced physical pain, as repressed emotions are felt and thought about. This is slow, frustrating work: negative transference and resistance manifest long before one unravels the pain's message. Interpretations made too early bounce off the patient's defences. The patient often experiences frustration with the recovery process, or with unhelpful professionals and treatments. Feelings of loss, regret and sadness at life opportunities missed because of pain can come flooding in. However, the conversion of physical pain back into emotion after a lifetime of repression can be a transformative experience if the therapist can bear the distress, make sense of it and give it back detoxified, as Bion (1962) described.

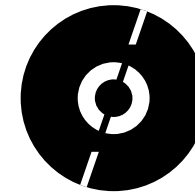
Exercise and psychotherapy are recommended because pain has two aspects: 'Pain-itself' (nociceptive pain, the actual physical sensation of pain) and

the experience of pain, the emotional suffering it causes. Psychotherapy can reduce emotional suffering, making pain-itself more bearable, but does not address possible underlying physical causes (postural issues, muscle imbalances). I encourage psychotherapists to learn about the anatomy of the spine and the neurology of chronic pain as it enhances our ability to assist patients with this condition. Affirming the physical reality of the pain while exploring its emotional meaning can be a relieving and containing experience, healing a painful split between mind and body and leading to greater integration.

Andrew Keefe is a psychodynamic psychotherapist, EMDR therapist, personal trainer (Level 4, Lower Back Pain Specialist) and Pilates teacher in private practice in Holborn and Bow, working with mind and body to relieve trauma and trauma-related chronic lower back pain.

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We welcome your ideas for articles, reviews and letters to the Editor. In particular we are looking for reviews of cultural events, books and films with psychoanalytic interest. If you would like to propose a topic for a longer article (up to 2,000 words), please contact Helen Morgan at helen.morgan@bpc.org.uk.

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Editorial

Swan Song

Helen Morgan

This is a poignant editorial for me to write, as it is to be my last. As part of this rather strange process of retirement I am currently engaged in, at the end of December I will be stepping down as editor-in-chief of *New Associations* after more than five years in the role.

New Associations was the creation of Malcolm Allen, the first CEO of the BPC. The first edition came out in the Autumn of 2009 at the time when the profession was gearing up for statutory registration and there was much trepidation and anxiety about the future. It was felt that we needed a forum for speaking to each other across the modalities and across the member institutions – not about the clinical and theoretical matters, which are the concern of the profession’s journals, but as a way of looking outwards and expressing the depth, originality and

creativity that psychoanalytic thinking can bring to the social, political and cultural world we inhabit.

When the Conservative/Lib-Dem coalition government came into power the following May, any further expansion by the then Health Professions Council (HPC) was abruptly halted and the BPC, like our sister professional bodies, had to undertake a hasty U-turn and take on the full weight of regulation. Since then, the BPC, alongside the UKCP and the BACP, has been the voluntary regulator for our profession and this has, rightly, taken much focus and energy over the years. But, from the start, the BPC has always had two purposes, the second being a commitment to the promotion and support of our profession. Since its inception, *New Associations* has been a significant part of the BPC’s toolbox for fulfilling this important function.

The offer *New Associations* makes to

registrants and academic members is rooted in a different facet of an ethical demand than that covered by our regulatory committees. ‘Ethical’ because we cannot isolate the individual patient or ourselves from our social context and we need ways to think about the complex dynamics of power inequality, oppression, poverty and alienation that weave their way into the consulting room. I also argue we have a social responsibility to turn our attention, and the slow depths of psychoanalytic thinking, to the wider social and political world in which we live and work.

I have always been interested in how a psychoanalytic perspective might contribute to the thorny concerns of our day. I worry that we can too easily hide in our consulting rooms addressing ourselves to the troubles of one individual at a time – as if they aren’t always connected to those of society. Having always regarded *New Associations* as a significant prompt to keep looking outwards, when I stepped down as chair of the BPC in 2018 and was asked to become editor-in-chief and form an editorial board to develop the project, I had little hesitation in accepting the role. The 2019 summer edition was the first produced by this newly formed editorial board.

New Associations is an odd publication which we struggle to even name. It’s certainly not a newsletter. Nor is it a journal. We settle on the term ‘magazine’, although it looks more like a newspaper than something you might pick up at the hairdressers. I rather like its oddness. Its look, like its format and its content, is unique.

“It was felt that we needed a forum for speaking to each other across the modalities and across the member institutions”

Over the years I have been privileged to work alongside many colleagues who have joined the board, each of whom has brought a different perspective and focus which I have greatly appreciated. Intriguing discussions can develop around possible themes, articles and potential writers for future editions. The

magazine is published tri-annually so there is a long lead-in time and, whilst we can't be immediately topical, we can consider the longer-term dynamics of our society and who might be best placed to help us think about them. We don't always agree, but we find a way to respectfully hold differences and debates. Indeed, it often seems that the disagreements and compromises we make as a group function as a kind of microcosm of the splits permeating the social world. Mostly those we approach to contribute an article agree to do so if they can, which I take as a tribute to the magazine's reputation of integrity and quality.

Each of the potential authors lined up for an edition is assigned a member of the editorial board to help work with them individually. This can be light work when experienced writers produce an early draft which reads well, is within the word count and holds a coherent, relevant argument. We are also keen to involve those new to writing who feel they have something to say. For the assigned editor this may require more active

involvement in the early stages, but it can be a real pleasure to watch as a piece evolves till it is fit for publication.

“I have gained a great deal from my time as editor of *New Associations* and feel privileged and grateful to have worked with all the fellow editors and authors over the years”

I have gained a great deal from my time as editor of *New Associations* and feel privileged and grateful to have worked with all the fellow editors and authors over the years.

I have no space to name them all here, but many thanks to all board members, past and present, who have contributed to this important and unique project. Thanks also to Niamh Downes who took over from Richard English at the BPC and who manages the practicalities of publishing. She has been an invaluable support in making sure the whole thing works.

I am delighted to be handing over the editorial role to two extremely able and long-term members of the editorial board, Noreen Giffney and Emmanuelle Smith. Noreen has been a member of the board since 2021 and Emmanuelle joined us as reviews editor in January 2023. I have come to value the integrity, skill and thoughtfulness of them both. The fact that we will have two co-editors is an interesting development and a good one I think. I have complete confidence in Emmanuelle and Noreen's ability to hold the ethos of the project and take the magazine into the next stage of its development. I wish them and all current and future board members the very best.

Do you need a proofreader specialising in psychoanalytic writing?

As proofreader for *New Associations* and freelance editor in the field of psychoanalysis, I have significant experience in editing everything from magazine articles to books (Dilys Daws, *Quietly Subversive*) and papers for journals (*Journal of Child Psychotherapy/Infant Observation*).

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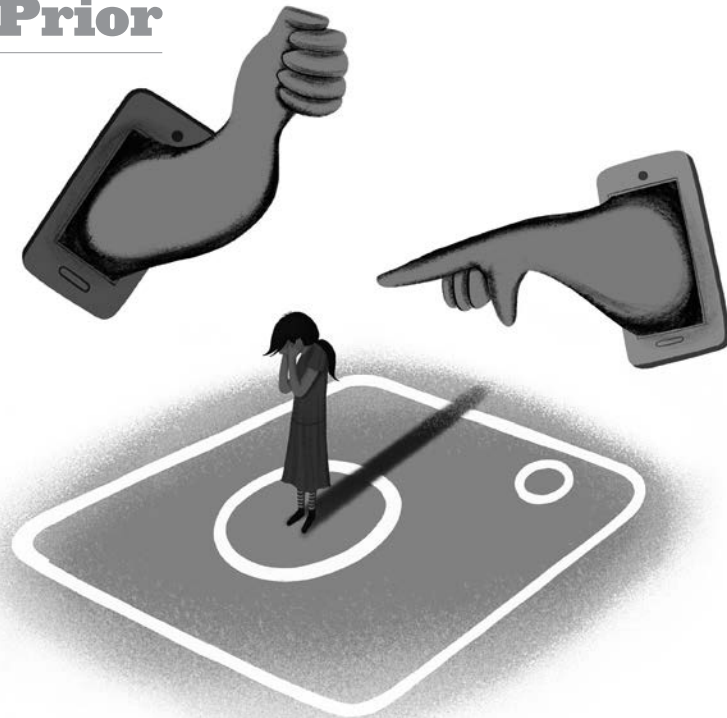
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Children

What would Fairbairn Think of Facebook? Smartphones, Social Media and the Internal Worlds of Teens

Lydia Prior



In 2021, former Facebook employee Frances Haugen leaked a number of internal documents showing that the company was consistently putting profits before ethics and the wellbeing of its users – despite its own research showing clearly the damage caused by its products (Wakefield, 2021). This damage included significant risk to the mental health of teenagers, and particularly girls using the social media platform Instagram. This app which, unlike Facebook, was intended from the beginning for use on smartphones rather than web browsers invites users to post photographs which their ‘followers’ like or comment on. As do Facebook and TikTok, it has an algorithm which shows users content from other accounts based on what they have previously viewed or reacted to. This supposedly benign tool to help users explore their interests is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. For example, a girl who follows a fitness account may soon be offered images of ever-thinner, impossibly toned models, advice on weight loss and pro-anorexia content. A teen searching for help with depression can end up being shown posts about self-harm and suicide.

The release of the Facebook Files led to Haugen addressing Parliament on the subject of internet safety for children. However, the rate at which we are giving children access to these platforms has yet to slow down. Statistics from the

UK regulator Ofcom (2024) show that a quarter of UK three and four year olds own a smartphone, while half of children under 13 are on social media. By the age of 11, 9 in 10 children in the UK have their own phone. Although most social media apps have a minimum age of 13, there are currently no checks which make this an effective barrier. The time that children spend online has increased dramatically, from 12.5 hours per week on average in 2014 to upwards of six hours a day for many now. The question of what happens to children’s minds when they spend much of their time on a smartphone is more urgent than ever. And from a psychoanalytic perspective, how are we to think of these devices and platforms in the psyche?

In his book *The Anxious Generation*, American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt offers some troubling answers to the first question. He draws on extensive evidence to show the ways in which the mental health of young people has deteriorated since 2010 and to argue that the dramatic rise in the use of smartphones and access to social media by this group in that period is a major cause of this crisis. In his view, childhood for most has moved from being ‘play-based’ to ‘phone-based’. While Haidt focuses on the impact on children’s social and physical development, we might also think of an impoverishment of fantasy or the capacity

to daydream. Meanwhile, Haidt argues parents have become over-protective in relation to real world experiences and under-protective in relation to online dangers, a split whereby danger is kept 'out there' and parents maintain an omnipotent illusion that they can keep their children perfectly safe.

“If...virtual relationships supplant real life connections, how might we think about what is going on in their internal world?”

If a young person is spending considerably more time interacting with their phone than with their family, and virtual relationships supplant real life connections, how might we think about what is going on in their internal world? The Facebook Files include a presentation on teens' engagement with Instagram (a platform much more popular with girls than boys). One slide highlights the immaturity of the teenage brain. Another slide shows an image of a young woman's face surrounded by a loop connecting

three points: emotion, novelty and reward. The young woman wears a serene expression, but first-person accounts by teens of bullying and pressure to conform on social media tell a different story.

This addictive, destructive loop brings to mind Fairbairn's (1952) endopsychic structure where frustration results in the object being split into exciting and rejecting internal objects, with corresponding libidinal and antilibidinal subsidiary egos. Fairbairn's theory can be dense and obscure. But later authors have elucidated and expanded on his work, highlighting the value of his model in understanding internal objects and troubled relationships with external objects, originating in, as Ogden puts it, 'the pathological tie of the infant to the unreachable mother' (2010, p. 108). The rejecting object and antilibidinal ego (originally termed 'internal saboteur' by Fairbairn) are tied in a powerful bond where the latter cannot give up on trying to convince or alter the former. The addictive quality of social media, where the user is at best chasing 'likes' (never quite enough) or at worst fielding abusive comments, seems to me an externalisation of this dynamic. The profound split in the psyche prevents the subject from seeing that the exciting object – tantalising, promising that love and fulfilment are just around the corner – and the rejecting object are one and the same. What is being warded off is a depressive acceptance that both love and loveability (or likes

and likeability) have their limits. So a teenage girl may post a picture of herself on Instagram in the hope that sufficient positive reactions will alleviate her sense of inadequacy, unable to grasp that this feeling is itself generated by a constant feed of content expertly designed to evoke it. Or even if she does consciously grasp it, as many older teens do, this may not be enough to sever the tie. Celani highlights the peculiar intensity of the relations between these internal objects which 'suffuses them with a level of arousal and need that overwhelms and extinguishes the normal "experiencing" self' (2001, p. 401). Anyone who has used social media will recognise its power to trigger arousal and need, and anyone who is familiar with teens will recognise that they are in general less well equipped than adults to regulate these feelings.

One of Haidt's proposed solutions is that children should not be given a smartphone until they reach 16, but for most adolescents well below this age the genie is already out of the bottle. Parents and those working with children and young people can be alive to the risks and aware of the imitation and identification that their own use of smartphones invites. And in its privileging of the real-world, real-time relationship, psychoanalysis itself can be seen as a form of resistance to the power of the Tech Giants. The consulting room offers a space for an embodied encounter with the other, where, ideally, frustration can be made bearable and

given meaning rather than fleetingly discharged at the click of a button.

Lydia Prior is a psychodynamic psychotherapist in private practice in east London.

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Graffiti

Look at Me: A Psychoanalytic Reflection on Graffiti

Freddie Martin

It's often said in the popular press ... that graffiti writers, they are referred to as vandals generally ... that they are mindless. That ladies and gentleman in my experience is the last thing they are'. (*London Wildlife*, 2018).

Hip hop, born out of the USA in the 1970s, has gone on to influence so many aspects of our lives, mostly through what are called, 'The Four Elements'. These four elements are MCing, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti. When I write of graffiti, I am referring to the artistic and cultural movement. Not cave drawings, mindless vandalism, or Banksy, who falls into the category of 'street art'. It is purposeful, considered, and stylistic. It has its own set of rules, its own etymology, and a societal structure based on respect and history.

“Tox, Dowta, Snag... These names are more than names – they are an insight into the internal world of the individual”

Graffiti is usually picked up in adolescence. It is a time when we look for an identity, a home, and respect and acceptance from our peers. Graffiti begins with picking a pseudonym, a tag, to be written in as many places as possible. These names are chosen consciously because of how they sound and look



or what they represent. If you are in London, you will have walked past tags by 10foot, Zomby, Oust, Tox, Dowta, Snag, and many more. These names are more than names – they are an insight into the internal world of the individual. Zomby and Tox suggest an infectiousness, a desire to spread danger. Oust suggests a need to get rid of something or one's self. Dowta and Snag suggest a confusion, a stuckness. 10foot suggests an exception, standing above others while also referring to the space in train lines. These are only one interpretation. Why might an individual would want to be known by these names?

Othen-Price (2006) suggests choosing a tag represents an experimentation with identity, and that the act is a projection of aggressive and violent parts. I would agree there are aggressive aspects, but would suggest that they are a reaction to more difficult feelings, such as shame or humiliation. I think we can see this at play in the names chosen. Taking Oust as an example, there seems to be a victim/perpetrator dynamic, the aggressive, 'I am getting rid of' is mirrored by the painful 'I am being gotten rid of'. For 10foot, the aggressive 'I am big' is mirrored by the painful 'I am insignificant', and for Phond,

'I am liked' mirrors 'I am unlikeable'.

We could apply the same thinking to 'crew' names. These are names selected by a group of graffiti artists to represent themselves and occasionally cross into the area of criminal behaviour mostly associated with 'gangs'. Commonly represented by two or three letter acronyms, these crews become attached to the individual, for example, Snag SRW or Kemo SMT. They provide a sense of belonging and acceptance for an individual engaged in socially unacceptable practices. Some crews have particular reputations, which when attached to the individual, display a sense of character, realistic or otherwise: DDS (Diabolical Dubstars), LB (Lost Boyz), SRW (Still Running Wild), DFN (Dirty Finger Nails). While suggesting a 'home' for individuals, the crew names often suggest a sense of deprivation. There is a vulnerability here, deeply resented and repressed but these feelings of being 'lost' or 'wild' become more manageable when individuals can be 'lost' or 'wild' together.

The names are written in as many places as possible, and in different styles. From the simple signature, a 'tag', to 'throw ups' which are quick, simple, filled letters and 'pieces' which can be hugely complex and take hours to complete. They are painted or etched on walls or anything that allows

for the mark to take hold. But there is one surface that surpasses all others: trains. As Snag, SRW expresses it, 'I only paint walls cos I can't paint trains as much as I want to. It's just trying to hold off the urge, walls are my methadone'.

Graffiti artists in 1970s' New York looked for fame. The subway provided an opportunity for their names to travel. Painting trains successfully in the modern era takes huge commitment. Artists will spend hours, days, scoping yards or stations to break into. What time does security patrol? How long until the driver is out of sight? Where are the cameras? What alarms are there? Is there another train coming through? Where can I be electrocuted? All this, and more, for the sake of a few minutes to paint a name on a train that will most likely be cleaned before entering service. So why would an individual risk their life and freedom for so little reward? In other criminal pursuits the reward is often concrete. In graffiti, it is to say 'look what I can do'. It is two fingers up to society, the British Transport Police, and Land Sheriffs; a game of risk in which the two sides play an unending game of cat and mouse. It is proof to peers of one's skill, talent, and bravery. In a recent exhibition Kemo SMT explains, 'I'm a vandal and I'm a pervert, two parts of me which struggle to co-exist in a

world of egos. I'm driven by adrenaline and what makes me feel alive, love it or hate it, the work is a side effect of those compulsions'. Here we see the compulsive, perverse, and voyeuristic elements that drive an individual to watch, to break in, to leave a mark, to hide. There is a part of the individual that desperately wishes to be seen but is fearful of being seen too clearly. What is being projected here? Othen-Price (2006) suggests that it is the anxiety-inducing, aggressive, and violent parts of the self. I also witness vulnerability and fear.

In this, I see similarities in Glasser's (1996) core complex, in which an individual seeks a state of oneness with another, only to then experience this oneness as a complete loss of self, consequently retreating to a safe distance of isolation. I suggest the state of oneness occurs when painting illegally – trains or otherwise – when heightened arousal keeps the individual in the here and now: the sound of electricity, the smell of metal and spray paint, the silence of discretion. The act of painting is holistic – from the pressure placed on the cap through one's finger to the movement of the body to create accurately weighted and directed lines. The artist is absorbed into this moment, and they need to be, because a step wrong could result in

arrest or death. They are in the heart of the city and as the heart beats their artwork pumps through the veins of the metropolis. All being well, a photo is taken by the artist or a spotter who is placed in a position to see the pieces rolling through the city. The photograph is evidence of one's achievements but it also serves as evidence for the police, should they be found. Writers go to great lengths to hide this evidence. This again reminds me of the core complex: close but not too close, seen but not exposed. Maintaining this excruciating balance appears to underpin the behaviours of those who practise graffiti, as they risk their freedom and lives in the pursuit of their art and being seen.

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Education

Helping to Rejuvenate Psychoanalysis with a Blog from the Undergraduate Classroom

Max Cavitch

At the University of Pennsylvania, I edit a blog called *Psyche on Campus* devoted to teaching and learning psychoanalysis at the undergraduate level. Launched in 2019, it's become one of the most popular psychoanalytic blogs on the Web, with over 20,000 readers worldwide. It was the winner of the American Psychoanalytic Association's 2022 'Award for Excellence in Journalism', and for the fourth straight year (2021-2024) it's been named one of FeedSpot's 'Best Psychoanalysis Blogs and Websites'. Why all the attention? Because the blog's readers – clinicians, academics, administrators, and students in the US, the UK, and around the world – recognise that it's time for psychoanalysis and higher education to make common cause. Each of the blog's posts (which appear, on average, bi-monthly) contributes to that argument by showing, in different ways, how and why that can happen.

After all, both psychoanalysis and higher education are in crisis. Fewer and fewer people can afford either time-intensive psychotherapy or a college degree. The professoriate keeps being winnowed by adjunctification, while the ranks of psychoanalysts dwindle due to superannuation and an insufficiency of new analytic candidates. A mental health crisis plagues our campuses, yet more and more patients are forced into cheap, short-term treatment with CBT and psychotropics. And professionals in both fields continue to lose prestige and income, even as their work-loads grow impossibly heavy.

Such precariousness should make overcoming mutual resistances a priority. Indeed, many individual analysts, in both the US and the UK, argue that *university-centered* analytic institutes should become the rule rather than the exception (e.g. Wallerstein 2009). Such institutes could be created as separate

schools or divisions within universities, preserving institute-style training cohorts and clinical focus while expanding the scope of psychoanalytic research, teaching, and treatment through engagement with other schools and divisions.

“A mental health crisis plagues our campuses, yet more and more patients are forced into cheap, short-term treatment with CBT and psychotropics”

Unfortunately, there's been much less discussion in our universities about

the ways in which making a home for psychoanalysis could enhance pedagogy, promote interdisciplinary research, and improve psychological wellbeing on campus. *Psyche on Campus* seeks to help correct that deficiency. For although few academic administrators would concede the point, many of our current educational maladies stem from the refusal to recognise the scene of education as 'a complex ecology, divided by – and linked to others through – unconscious desire' (Johnson, 2014, p. 2). Thus, out of more than 4,000 colleges and universities in the US and the UK, little more than a dozen currently maintain formal psychoanalytic studies programmes. *Psyche on Campus* is spreading the word that such programmes are not only viable but essential to higher-education reform and renewal.

I have the good fortune to teach in one such programme: the University of Pennsylvania's undergraduate

Psychoanalytic Studies Minor, created in 2015 by a diverse group of Penn faculty members and analytic clinicians from Penn's psychiatry department and our local training institute, the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. Most of our courses are team-taught by a tenured faculty member and a practising psychoanalyst – giving our students a better education not only in different academic approaches to psychoanalysis but also to different clinical orientations. Many of the posts published at *Psyche on Campus* illustrate the many pedagogical and interdisciplinary possibilities opened up by such courses.

“to feed and stimulate public conversation about the interrelatedness and the potential for mutual enhancement of ...education and mental healthcare”

As teachers, we get to know our students not by treating them like patients, but by fostering intellectual-affective atmospheres of curiosity and debate about the entire learning experience, from the contents of the syllabus and our shared ‘desire for knowledge’ (Freud, 1953, p. 194) to our unconscious defences and the transferential/countertransferential dynamics of the classroom’s ‘complex ecology’. We draw attention to the meaningfulness of these dynamics whenever it seems appropriate. As in the consulting room, this can on occasion be uncomfortable; but it’s also the basis for enhanced understanding, unanticipated insights, and heightened self-discovery.

Only one of our students (thus far) has become a practising psychoanalyst. But expanding the currently minimal place of psychoanalysis in undergraduate education is essential to reaching the bright young minds who will help rejuvenate and perpetuate the profession. And no matter what the rest of our students go on to do, they carry a better understanding of the human condition and a stronger potential for empathising with others (and themselves) into their other university courses, their campus life generally, and their subsequent careers. It’s plain to see that expanding the place of psychoanalysis in higher education has

broadly salutary effects – and that these benefits extend well beyond the campus setting.

Several of our undergraduate students have written blog-posts to this effect. For example, Harris Avgousti writes in ‘Psychoanalysis and the Pre-Med’ about his experience ‘shadowing’ an oncologist at the university hospital and about ‘how crucial it can be to pay close and informed attention to the psychodynamic relationship between physician and patient’. Ryan Collin writes about ‘Discovering Psychoanalysis as a Business School Student’ and successfully overcoming the initial resistance he faced from his Wharton advisors when he decided to Minor in Psychoanalytic Studies. And a student-authored post explains how studying psychoanalysis helped her better understand and cope with that year’s surge of police brutality in her home-country, Hong Kong. Despite legitimate fear of reprisals, she felt her insights were important enough to put herself at personal risk to share them, though we agreed she’d sign her post – ‘How Psychoanalysis Helped Me Rethink Police Brutality’ – with her initials only. Prominent clinicians and educators, too – including David L. Eng, Stephen Frosh, Emma Lieber, Anneleen Masschelein, Francois Rabie, David Ramirez, and

Yael Segalovitz – have helped *Psyche on Campus* become a leading international forum.

Psyche on Campus also regularly announces relevant research, prize, and fellowship opportunities for undergraduates and maintains an ever-growing, international ‘Syllabus Archive’. Chiefly, though, its purpose is to feed and stimulate public conversation about the interrelatedness and the potential for mutual enhancement of two of our greatest public goods: education and mental healthcare. Each and every post does important work by 1) helping further to demystify psychoanalysis for wary students and teachers; 2) informing clinicians who don’t have university affiliations themselves about advances in non-clinical psychoanalytic education; and 3) reassuring older generations of readers about the enduring interest in psychoanalysis among many of today’s young students. Ultimately, we hope that forms of public outreach and education, including *Psyche on Campus*, will help persuade institutional leaders and donors that psychoanalysis should finally be welcomed into the university as a discipline in its own right, with its own departmental infrastructure and faculty – and that this should proceed in tandem with the creation of many more

university-centered analytic institutes. Psychoanalysis and the university need to be (re)united, if either is to continue to flourish in these challenging and dangerous times.

Max Cavitch is Associate Professor of English and Co-director of Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He has written for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society. His book, Psychoanalysis and the University: Resistance and Renewal from Freud to the Present, will be published by Routledge in March 2025. To propose a post, contribute a syllabus to the 'Archive', or share a relevant announcement: cavitch@upenn.edu

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**BRITISH/
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International

Narratives from Within: the Collective Memory and the Analytic Process in Times of State Terrorism in Argentina

Karin Fleischer

Wars and violence are part of our collective history since very early times. However, I believe that each form of collective terror has elements that influence and lead to diverse psychological and social consequences. Coming from a country with an interrupted democratic history, I have felt the need to distinguish and to understand the particular effects of violence when it is exerted by the State towards its own population.

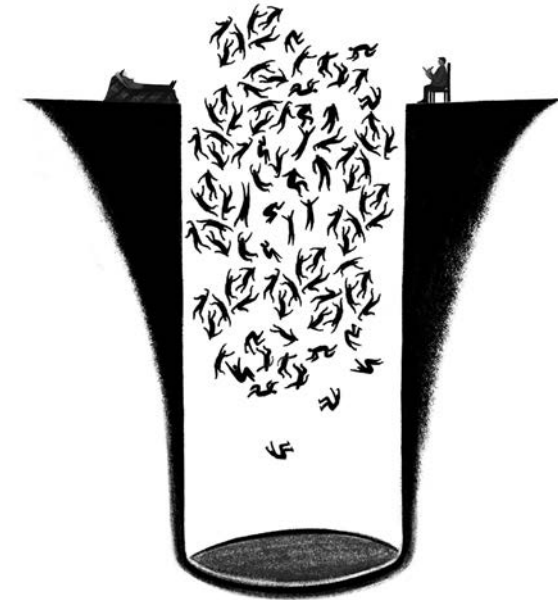
On March 24th 1976, with tanks in the streets of the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the military took over the democratic government by force. I was eleven years old; the coup d'état had taken place, the threat was no longer an echo in the voices of the adults, and our reality changed completely. At home, the playfulness of the previous times

was shrouded in a very dark cloud; the world such as I knew it then, ceased to exist; music was transformed into endless communiqués from the military junta that were repeated incessantly on all radios.

The military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s in some Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) implanted violence and terror as a way of life, generating paralysis and silence as a response – dismantling and disarticulating the social bond. In Argentina the genocide extended from that moment in 1976 until the recovery of democracy in 1983. Those were years in which the terror and horror that inhabited the basements of clandestine centres and concentration camps was hidden with sterile silences and with phrases such as ‘they must have done something’ or ‘we Argentines are human and right’. Meanwhile, the bodies of the disappeared were thrown into the

river from airplanes in the darkness of the night. Political activists were persecuted by the military, as well as anyone who might think differently or engage in any cultural or social activity.

This form of collective violence, also called ‘state terrorism’, is characterised by the false treatment of reality, while gradually establishing a process of alienation that affects the entire population. When there is a war, which is visible, everybody knows there is one – the fear, the terror, the pain and the losses are a shared suffering. When the State is involved in genocide, which is concealed, those who know of its existence have to learn to remain silent and silence the pain and suffering. The tension between the terror felt and the duty of having to live a ‘normal life’ leaves profound consequences, which may take several decades to come to light – both individually and collectively.



“When the State is involved in genocide, which is concealed, those who know of its existence have to learn to remain silent and silence the pain and suffering”

The Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar, had said in 1981: ‘When disappearance and torture are manipulated by those

who speak like us, have our same names and our same schools, share our customs and gestures, come from the same soil and the same history, the abyss that opens in our own conscience and in our heart is infinitely deeper than any word that pretends to describe it' (Cortazar, 1981, p.2).

Throughout the years following the Dictatorship, many accounts or discursive modes have emerged concerning this recent history in Argentina. These usually fall within a forgetfulness policy framework or a policy of memory, either by blaming or exalting the victim, or identifying them with the figures of hero or martyr, thus losing sight of the individual's unique position in the face of the damage that has occurred (Fleischer, 2022). As opposed to these ways of making history, there have emerged other forms of narrative that I call 'narratives from within', which, seeking to break with certain ideals, try to go back to the facts, not to reproduce them, but to listen and bear witness to what they have failed to explain.

Several autobiographical books as well as films, plays and photographic essays created by children of the Disappeared show evidence of these inner narratives, which seem to outline a quest to establish a more dynamic, rather than nostalgic, link with those years of horror. Trying to find her own voice, to speak about the unspeakable, Victoria Montenegro, whose mother was raped and killed by the man who had robbed and raised her as her

own, writes: 'How can it be said that we were raised with love, with the heart? What place does the heart have in a crime against humanity? ... 'I do not know how to associate, maybe you know how to write this. I don't know how to say what we lived through' (Montenegro, 2020, p.47).

“when patient and analyst can face this horror together, a deep container is created, in which a relational wound may be repaired”

When, more than thirty years after the return of democracy, I received in my consulting room a patient whose parents had been disappeared by this cruel Dictatorship, the ground opened underneath and a well of memories began to surface for both of us. Several authors (Gutiérrez & Lewkowicz, 2004; Vinar, 2005) agree upon the fact that there is no special psychotherapy for the tortured or their families, but what there could be is, hopefully, a sensitivity and willingness on the part of the therapist to follow an itinerary of horror while maintaining

hope and the capacity for imagination (Fleischer, 2022). Marcelo Vinar states that 'only the skill of a poet or a patient in transference can achieve this, by using metaphor the best way possible to express the emotional intensity and incandescence of the experience where words fail so often' (Vinar, 2005, p. 315).

In my work with victims of childhood trauma due to state terrorism, I discovered the necessity of adapting the analytic technique as well as implementing new approaches – not only focused on verbal language. In previous work, I have described the importance of acknowledging the objective level of the horrific events, since any analysis based solely on an interpretation of subjective reality regardless of the nature of the occurred trauma may prove to be counterproductive (Fleischer, 2022). I believe that when patient and analyst can face this horror together, a deep container is created, in which a relational wound may be repaired, while at the same time restoring the overwhelming trauma intrusion to the category of a memory capable of being elaborated and symbolized. This poses an ethical challenge to analysts in terms of how to come to terms with the consequences of collective trauma in their life, as well as how to keep this collective memory alive, which I see as an ethical social responsibility when we have been marked by these inhuman acts. As León Gieco, the Argentinian musician says in his song The Memory:

The old loves that are no longer here,
The illusion of those who lost,
All the promises that leave,
And those who fell in every war.
Everything is stored in the memory
Dream of life and history.

Karin Fleischer is a clinical psychologist and Jungian analyst, supervisor and founding member of SUAPA – the Uruguayan Argentine Society of Analytical Psychology. Her published work includes articles, article reviews and book chapters on the topics of early, complex, and collective trauma, introducing an embodiment perspective to Jungian clinical work. Email: karinflei@hotmail.com

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International

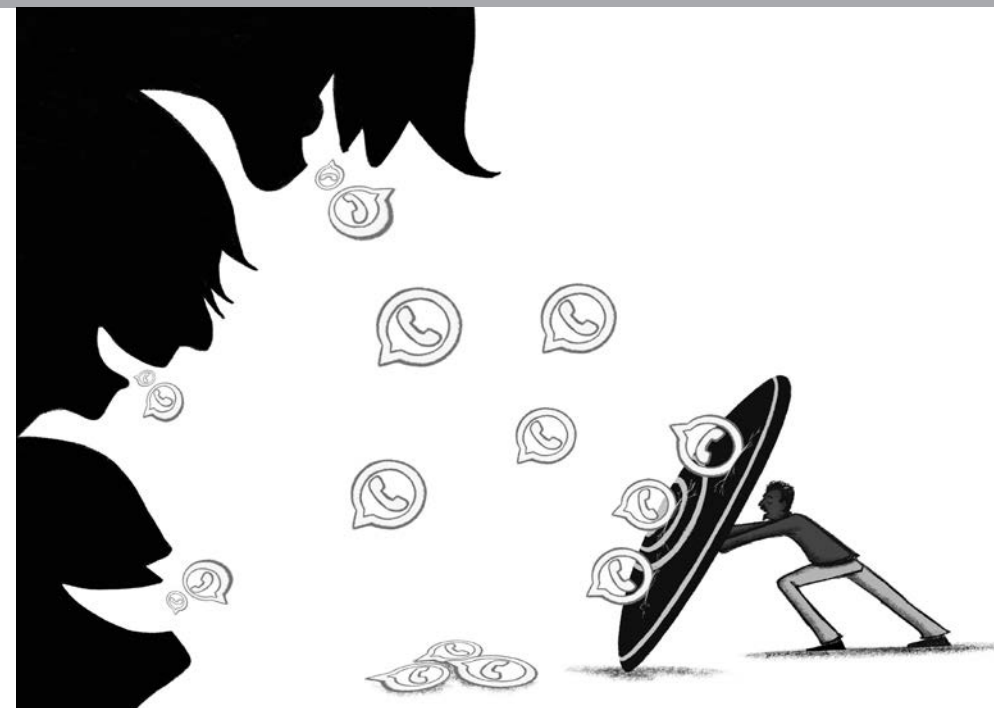
On Being Othered: A Reflection on Hindu-Muslim Friendships in India

Usman Zafar

On the 22nd of January 2024, the Ram Mandir was inaugurated in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. This temple was built on the ruins of a mosque of historical significance. The site had been a point of contestation between Hindus and Muslims for many years since India's independence and became a symbolic battle between the two communities. Unfortunately, the symbolism turned concrete and the mosque was illegally demolished in 1992 by the Bharatiya Janata Party as part of a controversial Hindutva movement. The demolition led to Hindu-Muslim riots in many parts of the country, which resulted in the loss of many lives and changed the political course of the country. Thirty years later, this inauguration, following a long and controversial legal battle,

was seen as a symbolic victory by the Hindus over the Muslims. This follows an increasingly hostile and Islamophobic environment in India over the past 10 years, that has included bloodshed, mob lynchings, and communal attacks on the Muslim community instigated by the media and government. These attacks, of course, trickle down to our interpersonal relationships and interactions between the two communities.

A continent away, in London, on the eve of this inauguration, my partner and I went about our evening preparing dinner in our flat, trying very hard to bottle up the anxiety of feeling alone, hollow, scared and defeated by the royally planned orchestra due to be performed the following day in India. As the emotions rose within us, we were lost for words to



process the difficult feelings.

Just at that time, I received some videos from my friends on a WhatsApp group. As I clicked play, I saw my friends driving around Delhi, playing loud jingoistic tunes, not devotional music in celebration of the temple but instead distasteful and perverse chants attacking Muslims. This is a new genre of music called Hindutva pop, essentially aimed at dehumanising Muslims and other minorities in India and calling for a Hindutva nation state. I have little doubt that these songs should, in any modern democracy, be classified as hate

speech. This is an interesting example of how riots have historically been instigated by playing loud music and hate speech outside mosques and Muslim dominated neighbourhoods across India. My friends decided to have a modern take on this age-old way of instigation.

This was not the first time I was subjected to such a surprising attack. But since we were at the cusp of the Hindutva homecoming, I was impassioned to speak up. As the only Muslim in a group of seven where the others were all upper-caste Hindu men, I found myself in

the minority. My friends would loosely belong to what is colloquially known as the 'educated middle class' who distance themselves from the communal hate spreading across the country. They are secular and tolerant on paper, and some despise the policies and practices of the right-wing government. They stand by their liberal ideals in theory, but in practice one often finds them on the opposite side.

“Difficult emotions can often get encompassed in the external reality and are acted out as prejudiced attacks”

Friendships, like all intimate relationships, can be a complex reflection of one's inner world and external realities. Enmeshed with desire, envy and aggression and an absence of physical intimacy accorded to romantic relationships, friendships are unique and challenging. Difficult emotions can often get encompassed in the external reality and are acted out as prejudiced attacks and micro-aggressions towards the friend who is othered. In my

experience, a regressive fantasy about Muslims being the cause of all problems is acted out through micro-aggressions which often take the form of unsolicited remarks about food choices, with some 'pure vegetarian' friends expressing disgust about festivals involving animal sacrifice. These can come as apparent jokes or comments but are often laced with prejudice. This brings to mind Fakhry Davids' theory of internal racism: 'If the crude stereotyping is too ego-dystonic, the task is lodged in extreme, intolerant figures – bigoted parents, right wing groups and so on – who explicitly articulate racist positions we abhor. Such projection affords us distance from the racism within, freeing us to be more humane in relation to the other of social stereotyping' (Davids, 2011)

In this complex, intercultural friendship, as the Muslim friend, I became the receiver of hostile projections. In this instance, my complaints were firmly dismissed, and I was blamed for speaking up and spoiling the fun. I was met with evidence of pure intentions, undermining the impact of my friends' actions. When this complex defensive organisation comes up, the task of thinking is often thrown at the Muslim friend as a bag filled with stones which has to be borne. Upon confrontation, there is often a very conscious disapproval of the situation at hand and an inability to let the guilt emerge which brings with it debilitating anxiety. Evading responsibility helps to

avoid this anxiety, allowing for a sense of omnipotence by projecting the feelings of hostility, envy and hate into the other. This can be seen as a fundamental similarity between the white liberal and the Hindu liberal in India. It is the goodness of the liberal Hindu that is murky and difficult to manoeuvre, similar to the white liberal's sense of goodness that 'includes a conscious rejection of the splits and projections' (Morgan, 2021). There is a complete disavowal of actions and a strong sense of fragility emerges as a defence which has to be maintained. The victim then becomes the oppressor who is accusing the liberal friend of something unimaginable.

The lack of thinking together in friendships could result in an unequal relationship. These persistent attacks, perhaps, add up as minor instances of trauma (Khan, 1963) which accumulate over time and begin to threaten one's identity and idea of the self. Owing to the reality of our times, secularism in India has been a point of contention due to a myriad of reasons including our colonial history and the rise of Hindutva. The Muslim friend can easily be pushed into the out-group. How, then, does one navigate friendships in a polarised environment? The answer is rarely clear. As a minority, one has little choice but to think and navigate differences.

Within this unequal and complex dyad of friendships between Hindus and

Muslims, it is perhaps important to have honest interactions. Although it is difficult to muster courage and recover from the humiliation at the same time, speaking the truth might be an important step towards having deeper friendships. What might be more challenging is for the friend to have the capacity to listen, acknowledge, register and reflect upon their actions and words. What seems to be an ordinary demand is becoming a rare quality in a polarised environment. Consequently, friendships become concrete, brittle and therefore unexciting. This can lead to friendships falling apart over political differences. As Nietzsche suggested, if 'friendship is to serve truth rather than comfort or illusion, it is necessarily agonistic'. This gives hope for understanding, that friends are valuable for their differences.

Usman Zafar is training as a psychodynamic psychotherapist with a focus on intercultural psychotherapy at the Tavistock Clinic.

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International

Through the Kleinian Lens: Psychic Encounters of a (Becoming) Psychotherapist and a Person

Manali Arora

My journey into psychoanalysis did not commence with the didactic absorption of theories but unfolded instead through a deeply personal evolution that metamorphosed my way of being and perceiving. As I traversed the chasms of self-discovery and professional development, I chanced upon Ambedkar University, Delhi, one of the very few institutes in India that offers a psychology graduate programme that is psychoanalytically oriented. In a country where the psychoanalytic community is still emerging amidst a rich tapestry of the cultural and social landscape, the space of the institute facilitated my becoming – not merely as a psychotherapist but, more fundamentally, as a person who thinks psychoanalytically.

My master's programme in Psychology (Psychosocial Clinical Studies) has laid the foundation for my psychoanalytic thinking, but it is important to note that this is not an accredited psychoanalytic psychotherapy training programme. In India, institutions such as the Indian Psychoanalytical Society (IPS) and the Psychoanalytic Therapy and Research Centre (PTRC) are recognised bodies that offer psychoanalytic training under the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA). My master's degree provided me with significant theoretical and experiential knowledge in psychoanalysis, which helped me align my practice with psychoanalytic frameworks, while I continued my supervision and analysis with psychoanalysts in India. I am also affiliated with the IPS.

My master's programme began during

the third wave of Covid, a time of profound uncertainty and confusion – the intensity of which I felt even more greatly internally. The experiential nature of the programme evoked an ineffable anxiety and curiosity, which brought everyone together. I watched my classmates share their experiences of loss and precariousness during the pandemic with such ingenuity and vulnerability, leaving me with a sense of awe but also, a larger sense of lack. Entering the lectures with expectations of absorbing didactic theories, I often felt the tension building up inside me. It was as if I had a pebble in my mouth and words rolled out to filter the vulnerability and honesty of my experiences.

I remember breaking down after the first lecture as I listened to others speak – the first breakdown that is remembered and

not repeated. It was perhaps the first time, listening to others articulate their difficulties of 'feeling stuck', 'scared' and 'disoriented,' that I could pick the words and name the feelings of difficulties, which for me was the struggle of being a caregiver to an elder male sibling who has suffered from a manic-depressive disorder throughout most of his life.

“In the cultural context where women are assumed to be ‘natural caregivers’, it was not merely an expectation but a duty to fulfil”

Growing up in a small rural town in India in a low-income family, I witnessed an already stratified society – segregated based on class, caste, and religion – made worse when rife with inequality in terms of what constituted a 'good woman'. In the cultural context where women are assumed to be 'natural caregivers', it was

not merely an expectation but a duty to fulfil as part of the role assigned to me before my body met the cradle. The ascribed role led to a detachment from my emotional realities of frustration and suffocation — a state that mirrored my initial schizoid positioning, characterised by hyperfocus and hyper-responsibility, to name a few. However, the isolation that the pandemic catalysed magnified the split in ways that it was arduous now not to look away from. It was like staring at the sun without squinting.

As Klein (1946) says, denial of psychic reality is the unconscious equivalent of annihilation by the destructive impulse, not only of the bad object but also a part of the ego. This weakened ego then becomes incapable of also taking back into itself the parts that it projected onto the external world. So even the intellectual flights to the mind, which constituted a false sense of goodness and compulsive achievements, were felt to be a consequence not of one's own doing (e.g. hard work) but a ramification of the outside (e.g. luck). Neither could I project nor introject the goodness; I lived it in a ubiquitous hostility.

The psychoanalytic institute here became the vitalising force which provided the space to become a container

of not only that which was projected (all achievements) but also what was projected to introject. It made possible the projection and introjection also of the good parts (e.g. hard work, capacity to be) by virtue of being the good object itself and helping bring the ego closer to cohesion. By facilitating a digestive capacity, I no longer had to split and expel but could simply be in a space that allowed working through the ambivalence rather than evasion of mourning.

The collective influences of the curriculum, faculty, and peer interactions at the institute played a crucial role in facilitating my shift towards a more depressive position. It was in this depressive mode that I began to engage more deeply with the complexities and nuances of psychic life — both my own and eventually that of my patients. This transition was crucial for enabling a capacity for reverie in my clinical practice, allowing for a more nuanced and empathetic engagement with patients.

The process was not linear, with a transition from one position to another. The training period marked multiple moments and states of disintegration. However, as Klein says (1946), gratification by the external good object again and again in the moments of

disintegration helps break through these schizoid states. The fears and the hostility that were denied and shunned as 'not me' parts began to disrobe with the words the space of the institute provided, and the subsequent states of disintegration that would ensue – the institute held me with them.

“The transformation that psychoanalytic training engendered helped me claim my own and my patients’ situatedness”

This oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, which has been emblematic of my own internal struggles and triumphs as a candidate, mirrors the inevitable anxieties and the reparative aspirations I faced while constructing a home within the institution and within the broader psychoanalytic community. The integration of this

personal and professional evolution that the institute facilitated allowed me to recognise how my caregiving experiences contributed to my initial psychoanalytic stance and helped me reconceptualize these experiences psychoanalytically within the unique socio-cultural milieu of India, helping me move towards a position where the realities of my female patients can be seen as lived experiences rather than mere societal norms.

The transformation that psychoanalytic training engendered helped me claim my own and my patients' situatedness within a specific cultural context, not just in terms of professional identity but also in how one relates to self and others in a deeply psychoanalytic way.

Manali Arora is a psychotherapist and researcher in India. Her work addresses underexplored areas in the Indian psychoanalytic landscape, particularly sibling relationships and work with marginalized communities. She is a fellow at the Psychoanalytic Fellowship program by the Washington Baltimore Centre for Psychoanalysis and a member of ICP+P. Email: manaliarora487@gmail.com

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International

“Don’t Live...I Love You”: Exploring Marriage as an Object Laced with Maternal Envy

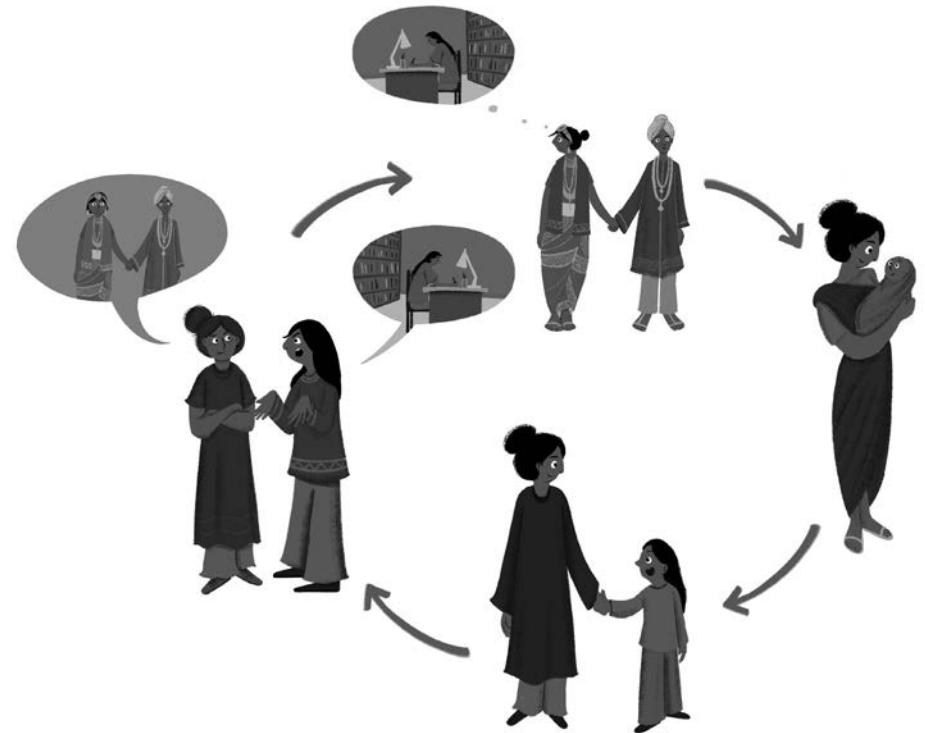
Reva Puri

My mother told me I need to stop clinging to my lifestyle, because when I get married I need to change my working hours, my diet, my social life and everything else. That if I want to be happy, I need to keep my future in-laws and husband happy... but I’m already happy... It feels like she wants me to suffer exactly the way she did in her marriage. Shouldn’t she stand up for me and ensure that I don’t have to live the life she does?’ asks my female patient, aged 29, whom I will call Mannat. She is confused by the dynamics unfolding between her and her mother as she is told to prepare herself for losing or changing parts of her life to ‘get herself ready for marriage’, despite it not being a part of her foreseeable future. This is the story

of many young women in India who enter psychotherapy, overwhelmed by the abruptly hostile shift in their mother’s tenderness and affection towards them as they grow older.

“It feels like she wants me to suffer exactly the way she did in her marriage”

As the educational, financial and occupational opportunities in urban India increase, so does the preferred age for tying the marital knot. These resources, especially time, become a cultural good



breast for daughters to suckle on, where a nourishing feed manifests as claiming her need to be recognised as a person rooted firmly in her own subjectivity, with longings, dreams, and desires. This generational shift is in sharp contrast to the ‘self’ traditionally allowed to women, where she is recognised as a person only in relation to others (Kakar, 2012). Her sense of self has paradoxically rested on the extent to which she can empty herself of her instincts rather than how creatively

or spontaneously she can achieve them. Social prestige and reverence for women has been measured by their ‘will to renounce’ their needs in order to nourish and provide pleasure to others (Haq, 2017). Marriage has historically been an event to crystallize this self-abandoning way of relating, rupturing the girl-child’s scarce but important infantile access to pleasure. In the absence of eyes that recognise and facilitate a woman’s striving for personal fulfilment, she has evacuated

and split off this crucial aspect of her subjectivity to fit the ‘ideal good woman’ constructed by the patriarchal polis. Further, the culture at large has depended on mothers’ identification with their daughters to raise them as similar psychic subjects who are prepared and willing to renounce themselves and wear the pain of this sacrifice as a rare symbol of culturally acceptable glory.

When the cultural inevitability of marriage, loss, and renunciation are held as constants, this identification helps the mother tenderly hold the girl-child’s wounds as she would her own, protecting her as much as she can from the shame, alienation and misrecognition projected onto women. She feels able to let her daughter feed from her good breast as long as she can, to cope with the lack of direct psychic nourishment offered by the culture. However, as marriage transitions from being the harbinger of doom for a woman’s subjectivity to a choice with the potential to recognise her as a sexual and autonomous subject, the malignant aspects of this identification become glaringly visible. The daughter’s access to a cultural good breast perhaps evokes intense envy in the mother as it threatens to make her conscious of her deprivation and split-off rage at being denied the possibility of being a desiring subject. The process of

witnessing her daughter, through whom she relives her own split-off girlhood desires and subsequent psychic knots and wounds, triggers an enactment to preserve her psychic twin. As Layton’s (2020) work reminds us, we keep parts that we split off near, wounding the other just as we have been wounded, repeating that which we have not been able to feel and integrate within ourselves. The mother perhaps uses marriage as a symbolic object for her envy. She projects onto her daughter’s inner world a dread and instability similar to her own, instilling the excruciating possibility of losing the luxury to be her own person rather than being limited to a functional extension of others. This causes the girl-child to have a tenuous relationship with her own subjectivity, being unable to trust and enjoy parts of herself she closely identifies with, such as her occupation or interests, despite having greater social opportunities to do so – as they threaten to come at the cost of her mother’s affection. Two years into treatment, Mannat’s reflection brings me close to the terror and sadness this mistrust evokes: ‘When my mom told me growing up that I will have to give up on the things I love, things I work so hard for... I already lost. By her saying I need to lose myself someday, who I am was already lost.’

“the unconscious envious attack of the mother creates within the daughter a mirror of her own parched, vacant and self-evacuating inner world”

Further, the pressure to conform to the ‘ideal’ maternal archetype in India prevents the mother from performing the psychic work to make this latent envy and rage conscious. Thus, despite the appearance of a ‘fuller’ culture-breast (Giffney, 2021), the daughter is unable to feel satiated, as the unconscious envious attack of the mother creates within the daughter a mirror of her own parched, vacant and self-evacuating inner world. The task of psychotherapy with young women thus becomes to enable them to be curious not only about themselves as unconscious subjects but also about their mothers and to imagine hate, envy, desire and love as operating freely in the mother-daughter relationship. In order

to free herself, the daughter must create room for her rage at her mother as well as reimagine her not as a cultural ‘good object’ but as a subject capable of a full emotional range herself.

Reva Puri is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist based in India, with a special interest in the culturally constituted inner world of mothers and daughters.

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Letters

Dear Editor,

New Associations, Summer 2024

I wish to register my concern about the publication of Jackie Charbat's letter in the above issue.

It presents a one-sided argument about the Gaza conflict and, as there is no right of reply, I believe it brings our profession into disrepute. We will seem to have abandoned our neutrality, a central tenet of our calling.

The letter portrays the war in Gaza as an Israeli offensive without provocation. In fact it was the pogrom carried out by the terrorist organization Hamas on Israel in October 2023 which precipitated the conflict.

Secondly, much is made of the fact that, in 1948, the UNO partitioned Palestine to provide a homeland for the Jewish people. This resulted in enormous suffering for the Palestinians. But we should also recognise that the Jews were expelled from Israel in AD 70 by the Romans and have wandered the face of the earth for the last 2000 years, culminating in the Holocaust.

I was born in 1936 and spent my early childhood growing up in wartime London. I find it distressing that, the values we fought for then, are once again under sustained attack. The situation has polarised into fundamentalist thinking, both Left and Right. As we all know this leads to scapegoating and demonization, ultimately genocide. My considered view is that both Israel and Palestine have an equal claim to a homeland and I hope that a two-nation solution can be found.

Can I therefore make a plea that we desist from self-righteousness and do what we do best – analysing.

Thank you,

Jean Pearson, Senior Member BJAA.

Dear Editor,

After almost a year wherein I didn't feel at home in the organisation following different expressions and letters circulated, I was almost relieved to read Lee Smith's article (*New Associations* 43, Summer 2024) which was a breath of fresh air and ability to think about the Israel-Gaza conflict without the familiar painful splitting so many clinicians expressed, in my opinion, in the last year.

My ability to breathe was short-lived as I reached David M. Black's article wherein he chose to compare Zionism to fundamentalism and extremism in Islam. I was disappointed by David's choice of a narrow definition of Zionism, which sees it as a strictly national segregating movement without understanding the complexity and the fact that Zionism has been and still is the understanding that Jewish people can also, like any other ethnic group, have the right for political collectivism. I am sad and disappointed by David's choice to adopt this definition of Zionism which unfortunately has been used as part of the propaganda to portray Israel as an apartheid state.

I didn't think that the BPC's place was to facilitate the expression of people's political opinion in such a dangerous way that stating it as a fact, despite the fact it is not, makes it a fact to many. I am disappointed that David was allowed to create this equation to all the readers of the *New Associations*. I can think of many national movements in many countries that will be so much more suitable to give as an example, and am hurt by David's choice, as well as the editor's choice. This by itself dismisses Lee Smith's important article.

Nechama Polak

Specialist Clinical Psychologist

Individual Psychotherapist and Couple psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

Letters

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Lee Smith's article in the Summer 2024 *New Associations* issue 43, "The Israel-Gaza Conflict and the BPC". I appreciated his piece which highlighted the impassioned reaction by many BPC members to the tragedy occurring in the Middle East. I wanted to reiterate and support his view that "... if we lose the ability to create and hold space for thinking and feeling of all kinds, we risk losing the essence of what our profession has to offer" -- and, in fact, can try to model for the world: thinking, taking part in heated discussions, and listening to the other.

Listening well and deeply, as we well know, is fearsomely difficult when one is forced to live in deprivation and humiliation for years and years. I appreciated also his statement -- "Whether and when to break our silence.. is about sensitivity and the need above all to protect a capacity for thinking in the face of unbearable pain." 'Unbearable pain' seems to be the relevant words in this terrible dilemma, and it evokes huge compassion -- which is no doubt underneath the anger felt regarding our limitations in remedying suffering.

I agree with his efforts to try to understand the conflict as being about 'history, identity, and soul and feelings, and humiliation and anger and fear', as he quotes from an Ezra Klein podcast.

Best wishes

Suzi Harvey,
Psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice
in Frome, Somerset.



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Letters

A response to David Black, 'Ethics: the larger picture', *New Associations*, Issue 43 Summer 2024, pp. 7-8

I have the greatest respect for David Black as a thinker and as a poet, not least for his wonderful translation of Dante's *Purgatorio*. But I cannot quite go along with his dismissal, in his otherwise admirable article, of Darwin's assertion that evolution has no goals. If we take Darwin's conclusion seriously, and hear in it more than just the echo of a materialist or nihilist world view, I think we can support and supplement David Black's ethical argument.

While evolution may have no goals, what Darwinian theory powerfully underlines is that life itself does have a goal: that is, simply to continue, to go on being lived. Life's cyclical unfolding is, indeed, an indisputable phenomenological fact. As Darwin also showed, the persistence of life, the survival of species, depends not only on 'the survival of the fittest' but also on (bio)diversity, and on co-operation between species and organisms.

Bion, among others, foregrounded alertness and responsiveness to signs of life as fundamental to psychoanalytic practice. In a famous metaphor, he invites us to imagine a searchlight beam consisting not of knowledgeable, penetrating light but of a darkness so intense that the faintest glimmer would show up in it. A radical suspension of disbelief and preconception, in the interests of maintaining maximum openness to the life of the other, is not just a technical or moral requirement; it is both phenomenologically grounded – the analyst is alert to signs of the life striving to be lived – and underpinned by evolutionary theory, which highlights openness to deep inter-connection as essential for life's continuation. It is the robust central plank, arguably, of an ethics of psychoanalysis.

Levinas's ethics, which Black so appropriately invokes at the end of his article, are also rooted in phenomenology, and similarly receives implicit support from Darwin. If we take on board that the aim of life is to go on being lived, then the idea of evolution as exclusively a vision of nature-red-in-tooth-and-claw can seem a crude and reductionist caricature indeed: not so much a universal, 'scientific' truth as the expression of an individualistic,

fatalistic cultural and political belief (albeit one that many human attitudes and behaviours might seem to confirm). The assumption or preconception behind this belief would be that we are somehow programmed ('selfish genes' – materialist argument) or even 'death-driven' (metaphysical argument) to reduce the other to the same as us.

Levinas's 'face' is a phenomenological counterargument: the living face of the other asks that we do it no violence, and precisely avoid reducing it to the same. This, for Levinas, is our ethical responsibility to each other as humans. He goes further: we are responsible for each other's responsibility, since, as both phenomenology and evolution show, we are profoundly interlinked and interdependent. Levinas's 'face of the other' can be taken literally as well as metaphorically.

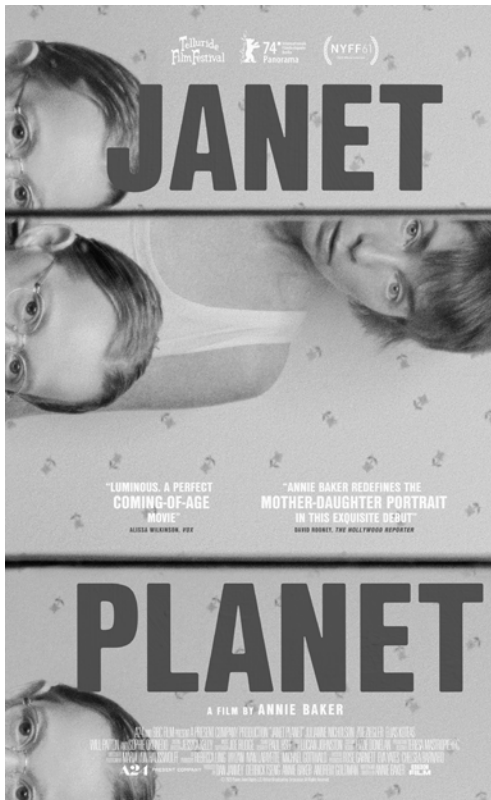
Robert Snell

Psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice in Brighton, a full member of the BPF, and author of *Antonino Ferro. A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge 2024) among other books.

Review

Film Review: Janet Planet

Maxie Szalwinska



Annie Baker's *Janet Planet* does for latency what Kenneth Lonergan's 2011 *Margaret* did for adolescence: it lets us linger in its bewilderments without offering an easy path out.

Written and directed by the Pulitzer-winning playwright, it keeps hinting at the spaced-out, hippy-dippy first feature it could have been even as it turns into a spacious one. Out-subtling most coming-of-age films, at its best it's cosmic-domestic.

“Out-subtling most coming-of-age films, at its best it’s cosmic-domestic”

The movie is set in 1991 among the green expanses and cicada-thrum of a summer in western Massachusetts. What's covered here is distance and closeness between a mother-daughter duo, as well as the three people who briefly enter their orbit.

Eleven-year-old Lacy (Zoe Ziegler) phones home from camp in the middle of the night: 'I'm going to kill myself if you don't come get me'. As soon as her mother Janet (Julianne Nicholson) arrives, with her monosyllabic older boyfriend Wayne (Will Patton) in tow, Lacy wants to stay.

So begins a spell at home, with Lacy mooning around her mother and their house, a place with sequoia-coloured interiors, skirted by woods and diverging pathways. Janet took herself back to college and changed her life after some unspecified crisis but there are intimations that in mid-life she's still caught in a 'bad pattern'. Now she practices as an acupuncturist – her daughter knows to wait outside the mauve door of her practice room rather than knock.

At first Wayne is part of their summer scene, out in the garden with his lawnmower and, later, bare-chested in a mysterious state of affliction. Next, long-lost friend Regina (beautifully too-warm-to-be-true Sophie Okonedo) arrives,

seeking temporary refuge from 'radical impersonal love' and her relationships among a farm-commune-cum-arts-troupe.

Beardy would-be-guru Avi (Elias Koteas balancing the seductive and the ridiculous) is the last to call by. He might like Janet; he certainly likes growing zucchini and the sound of his own monologues, not to mention directing dawn-to-dusk outdoor theatricals complete with wind-chimes, grotesque-folksy puppets and polyphonic singing.

Together, these adults don't just bring more of the outside world into Lacy and Janet's relationship, they communicate conflicts within it.

Two mentions of Iraq, one when Lacy briefly finds herself in a carpark where a man self-immolated in protest over the Gulf war, are part of the maelstrom beneath reticence.

Will Patton's Wayne has a face as faded and worn as his jeans, and about as demonstrative. In an early scene Lacy pretends she's leaving camp because a motorcycle crash has seen him off. While this is both a wish and an intimation of a damaged man, you understand the wish given he barely seems able to acknowledge her presence. It turns out Wayne has

a young daughter and Lacy gets a day racing around a shopping centre with her - cinematographer Maria von Hausswolff makes an early 1990s mall a realm of pastel period enchantment.

To a prone Wayne, felled by a subsequent migraine, Lacy asks why his child doesn't live with him some of the time. This tingles with what's unquestioned between Lacy and her mother. 'I can't listen to her voice right now,' Wayne tells Janet, even though Lacy isn't actually speaking.

While various adults come and go, Lacy herself trots off to visit a music teacher whose home is a chintz dream, and whose eyes have the sharp shine of piano keys. Baker allows her images to quietly, subliminally work on us; the film is intricately needled with Grimm Brothers' allusions.

“Baker allows her images to quietly, subliminally work on us”

When Lacy asks her mother to give her a piece of herself to help her sleep, she's handed a single, glowing hair. Something is tellingly drawn on the edge of a fingertip during a piano lesson. Turned inside-out, a red-riding-hood doll becomes

grandma, then wolf. Throughout it all, Ziegler's moonlit pebble of a face looks out. Her Lacy is a quizzical wonder in glinting granny glasses.

Lacy collects figurines and cast-off treasures she troves in a miniature theatre she's rigged up on a bookshelf. Behind red velvet cloth, one of her mother's earring glows. You could hazard a girl's growing awareness of her vulva and clitoris, seldom given much of a peek by psychoanalysis, but the meanings seem never-ending as she plays. While she works on her private imaginative world, we see her simultaneously going into things and keeping them at bay.

Lacy complains that her mother never takes her on any adventures, but plenty is going on here, as parent and child wander in and out of the picture for each other, wondering about one another and themselves. The movie rustles with trees and breezes. Sometimes characters are seen from above, at the bottom of a well of greenery.

When Lacy, lying next to her mother in bed, tells her that her life is hell but she thinks it will pass, the latter responds matter-of-factly that she seems pretty happy most of the time. Baker allows these two viewpoints to co-exist, and gives both their growing pains recognition.

In *Mare of Easttown* Nicholson breathtakingly matched Kate Winslet as a parent under pressure. Here, she's no sandal-wearing caricature. Luminously disenchanted, her Janet is a woman beginning to contemplate whether she's ruined her life. We find out she's the daughter of a holocaust survivor by way of a mind-bending anecdote about wanting a pet.

The film keeps asking: 'Who knows?' as well as saying 'Don't kid yourself'. It makes time for a sublime passage from Rilke's *Duino Elegies* during a picnic before cutting to a shot of a woman biting into a chicken leg.

“it moves us towards new perceptions without telling us what to think”

As fall approaches Janet heads to a country dance, commenting in passing that she's terrible at it. 'It's not really about good or bad. It's about meeting people,' she's told. Baker wants us to meet people. Janet Planet may not achieve the grace of her stage work John – a masterpiece of deep calling unto deep – but it moves us towards new perceptions without telling

us what to think. Its project goes beyond an astute, gentle ribbing of irresponsible new-age adults (for that go to Lukas Moodysson's 2000 Swedish hippie drama *Together*). It has to do with the coalescing sensibilities of a child, transformational objects, and also the curtain of the heart and what's behind it.

Maxie Szalwinska is a psychodynamic psychotherapist practising in London.

Review

Film and Book Review: *That They May Face the Rising Sun*

Olga Cox Cameron



We look to the resurrection of the dead. These ringing words uttered by an embittered and somewhat broken old man close the film version of John McGahern's last novel, *That they may face the Rising Sun*. A film that has been hailed as warm, wonderful, life-affirming, but one that makes one think about the intrication of the life drive and the death drive put forward by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The film is peopled by damaged individuals, mostly solitary men penned in by a watchful, malicious society, yet carried forward by small generousities, by the rhythmic rituals in a near static community, and most of all by the beauty of the rolling seasons, insisted on in the film in long meditative stills of the sun-filled lake and the green leafy tunnels leading up to different houses, most often that of the writer and central protagonist Joe Ruttledge.

A green thought in a green shade. In terms of cinematography, Marvell's phrase is apposite. More than half of the frames immerse the viewer in greenness. Green lanes, green mountains, green rushes edging the blue lake; all of these filmically recreate the interpenetration of human living and the slow rhythm of

the world's turning, an interpenetration explicitly and repeatedly signalled in the novel. We first encounter Ruttledge in the act of evoking this; 'as the light faded, the sky beyond the dark shapes of the trees softened to a glow and the room became enormous as it reached out to the fields and the trees in the long velvety light off the sky'. And earlier: 'In the soft light the room seemed to grow green and enormous as it reached out to the fields and the crowns of the trees, the green banks and the meadow and trees to enter the room with the whole fullness and weight of summer'.

But this interpenetration is not an induction into what Lacan has called the domain of the pastoral. The sense of constriction, of emotional impoverishment, of narrowness is palpable, although much less so in the film than in the novel. It has been said of McGahern that the stylus he writes with is in fact an icicle. Almost all the characters are solitary elderly men. One might be forgiven for thinking none of them has had much of a life, hemmed in as they have been either by a lack of opportunity, or an inability to challenge the deadening constrictions of a close-knit community.

Reflecting on the possibility that ‘two kinds of processes are constantly at work in living substance, operating in contrary directions, one constructive and assimilatory and the other destructive’, Freud wonders ‘if we might recognise in these two directions taken by the vital processes, the activity of our two instinctual impulses, the life instincts and the death instincts’.

How might one observe this death drive in action? Lacan’s reading as evidenced in *Antigone’s* uncompromising heroism is one version, but the insistence on sameness, the refusal to branch out into newness is another. The novel underscores this deadly weight in a way that the film does not, rendering vividly present a social world based on ‘a fragile interdependence sustained by avoidances and obfuscations’ (McGahern, p195). What the neighbours think is paramount. Even in the timing of haymaking, for Jamesie to throw caution to the wind and chance cutting all on one day is ‘to invite the whole country to laugh at his greed if the heavens opened’ (McGahern, p197). That said, within the starkest conditions of non-life, the life drive insists. Or is it the death drive?

Bill Evans, victim of a savage orphanage system who has lived all his life essentially in slavery, the unpaid worker on a farm that bought him when he was a child, is

an image of deprivation: ‘he was wearing the huge wellingtons but no overcoat, wide braces crossing the shirt of mattress ticking. The braces were connected to the voluminous tweed trousers with nails instead of buttons’ (McGahern, p135). The speculation Bill invites from both Jamesie, McGahern’s best loved character, and Patrick, his most interesting, sums up Freud’s assessment of the organism’s wish to die only in its own fashion. ‘He is perhaps as happy as anybody,’ (p135) Jamesie thinks, while Patrick goes further: ‘We all want our own two shoes of life. In truth none of us would swap with anybody. We want to go out the way we came in.’ However circumscribed these lives appear, they are nonetheless life.

**“Their
openharted
kindness, while
gently mocked,
is a magnet for
their starved
neighbours”**

Ruttledge and his wife Kate are outsiders. They come to live by the lake and as such are somewhat immune to the enmities and allegiances that constrain this

community. Their openhearted kindness, while gently mocked, is a magnet for their starved neighbours. Whiskey and sandwiches are the conduits for their sneered at but much sought after affection and acceptance. The word most frequently uttered in their kitchen is ‘welcome’, and the film lingers on shots of an old man; Johnny; Patrick; Bill; the Shah sitting up to the table and tucking in.

Nowhere is Freud’s surmise concerning the inextricable crisscross of Eros and Thanatos more evident in the film than in the long sequence showing the laying out of Johnny’s dead body for the wake. Gently, lovingly the dead hand is clasped, the body washed, shaved, hair combed, face arranged in repose, and then all of this lovingness is attacked by the distraught Patrick as an outlet for his grief.

The gathering of the neighbours, the loving laying out, the readiness to criticise this, all body forth a world held together by kindness, fear, remembered hardship and malice. The novel recounts instances of near collusion with criminal cruelty – omitted in the film. A marital rape is carried out in full view of the townland. The orphan child Bill is beaten and mocked by his owners. The response in both instances is a helplessness close to collusion, stated as a simple fact of life:

‘If I went into the field they’d turn on me unless I went and knocked him into the furrow as well’ (p14). What could they do but look at one another and say how things could turn out all right in the end and hurry away?

The film and the novel are works of art, but it is difficult not to have in mind that McGahern himself suffered greatly from the death-grip of a small-minded society. While this is not avoided in the novel, ultimately, as in the film it is the life drive that prevails. The rolling seasons bring more than the tides of time. They bring the gifts of beauty and renewal and the almost risky realisation that in this is happiness.

Olga Cox Cameron is a psychoanalyst in private practice and has been for the past 36 years. She has lectured and published extensively and is the founder of the Irish Psychoanalysis and Cinema Festival. olga.coxcameron@yahoo.com

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Review

Book Review: Naked Portrait by Rose Boyt

Sally Warren

Rose Boyt is the daughter of Lucian Freud, one of the foremost English figurative painters of the 20th century. She is also the great-granddaughter of Sigmund Freud. Although she is a novelist of some note, Boyt's new work: *Naked Portrait: A Memoir of Lucian Freud* is ostensibly about her famous father. The title is undoubtedly a nod to the mixed blessing of being a descendant of genius, never quite being able to get out from under the shadow.

Naked Portrait, though, is actually Boyt's memoir – not a hagiography of Freud, but the story of the consequences of being his daughter. It is about her struggle to make sense of her insecure, poverty-stricken

childhood, her unboundaried relationship with her father and its traumatic effect on her. It is a re-framing of the genius from her point of view.

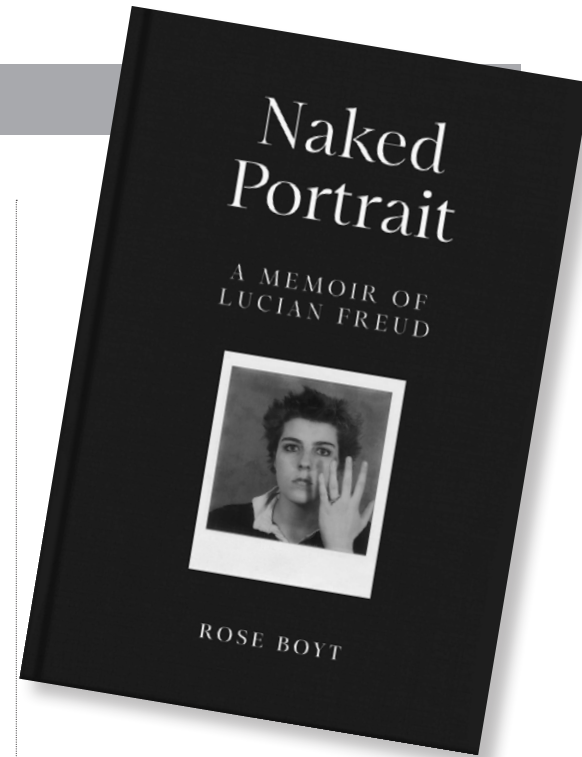
She shapes much of her story around three sittings for her father, the first as a teenager, entirely naked, legs apart on her father's chaise.

'I had the luxury and pain of his full attention in the studio,' she writes of that sitting, which captures the crushing and perverse nature of her relationship with Freud, who had 14 acknowledged children from six mothers, several wives and countless girlfriends – some of them Boyt's friends. Not many of them appeared to interest him very much for very long.

Boyt writes with clarity about the rivalry and shame of fighting for her father's scant attention amongst the endless siblings, sitters, girlfriends, lovers, friends, famous artists, journalists and hangers-on, and the inevitable damage it did to her sense of self-worth.

“Boyt writes with clarity about the rivalry and shame of fighting for her father's scant attention”

Of the naked portrait, it is troubling to consider its explicit nature, not to mention the oedipal complications of its creation, after hearing how it was for Boyt. The fact that no-one questioned the very idea of it (least of all Boyt, who seemed to feel she had no options) is a clue to many of the themes of the memoir: Freud's complete domination of all those around him, his deliberate rejection of societal and familial norms, his cruelty, his selfishness, his lack of paternal thought and care. The reader can only weep for Boyt's younger self



who only seemed able to capture her father's full attention while sitting for him, naked or not.

Lucian Freud was one of three sons born to Ernst Freud, who was the fourth child of Sigmund. There is little reference in the memoir to the founder of psychoanalysis, and, in his contrarian fashion, Freud is largely dismissive of psychotherapy. 'He thought a person ought to be medically trained to perform psychoanalysis' Boyt remembers. 'And that it was shameful if you found yourself on the receiving end of it.'

Freud met Boyt's mother, Suzy, when she was his student at the Slade School of Fine Art. She was 17 years his junior. 'He told me he took the Slade job to get girls,' Boyt writes, echoing the offensive candour of his language.

Soon Suzy was pregnant by him. 'The authorities overlooked the birth of her first child but when her second pregnancy manifested itself they asked her to leave. She was expelled but my father kept his job – nobody challenged him about his behaviour.' Nobody, it seems, ever challenged Freud about his behaviour, the collusion was absolute.

Boyt's mother went on to have five children by Freud. Not that that made him feel any sense of responsibility towards her or indeed any of the children. They largely grew up in poverty, Boyt's mother never asking Freud for anything, although he often used his own wealth to lord it over them. Boyt recalls her father taking her to Patisserie Valerie and ordering an array of cakes, into all of which he stuck his fingers and then left. She thought about stealing the very large tip he left for the waitress to give to her destitute mother, who only just had enough food in the cupboard to feed all five of them. Food is an ongoing theme: the day Rose was born, Freud brought two

live lobsters to the house and insisted her mother boil them up for supper in a nappy bucket. Clearly an oven-ready pizza was too mundane.

After Freud, Boyt's mother went on to have a series of unsuitable boyfriends: one of them, Uwe, a German sea captain, took her and the children away on an uninsured cargo ship, travelling the world. Baby brother Kai fell into the sea once and was nearly lost. Uwe was predatory towards Boyt.

'I was conditioned to acceptance, beyond outrage,' Boyt writes. The larger part of the memoir is centred around a forgotten diary Boyt kept during a second sitting for her father, clothed this time, aged 31. She typed up notes of her father's stories during breaks in the sittings and was horrified to discover, years later, the grotesque nature of his stories: coprophagia, child cruelty, incest.

'How often I just smiled and even laughed a little when I should have put my hands over my ears and screamed SHUT UP YOU SICK FUCK'.

By now, though, Boyt was seeing a therapist three times a week. 'Bridges' helped her to begin the process of unravelling her childhood, her suppressed feelings of rage, helplessness and sadness.

Freud was unsurprisingly hostile, referring to him as the 'venal sadist'. Although he did pay for his daughter's therapy, it was often in cash stuffed in envelopes, sometimes by cheque deliberately miswritten.

Boyt had a second therapy later in her life, a female therapist this time with whom she began working before embarking on *Naked Portrait*. It was only then, in her early 60s, that she was finally able to accept and understand that she was suffering from childhood trauma, which shocked her. 'I was almost numb to things that had occurred by which I am now horrified,' she writes.

“Boyt captures with terrible melancholy the profound effect of her parents’ lack of care: a long-lasting legacy of theirs that remains painful”

Naked Portrait is a horrible, solemn, harrowing memoir. Although peppered

with details of Freud's entirely singular life and his famous friends, it is still never more than wholly upsetting. Even details of Boyt's coming of age in and around the London club scene is marked by violence, scarcity and lack. Boyt captures with terrible melancholy the profound effect of her parents' lack of care: a long-lasting legacy of theirs that remains painful.

But in the end, this is a survivor's tale, as well as an illustration of the transformative nature of therapy. Boyt, the child who thought she was unloveable, that nothing was possible for her, that everything desirable was out of reach, becomes a novelist, gets married and has two children. It is also a very naked portrait of her father. But she is the artist this time.

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