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Return of the Dark Side

Gary Lachman

Is the war in Ukraine part of a deeper conflict within ourselves that has been going on for centuries?

It's a truism of psychoanalysis and other forms of depth psychology that, although we would very much like it to, the repressed does not go away. It has instead the inconvenient habit of turning up in the most unlikely places. William Blake, no friend of repression, grasped this a century before Freud when, in *Vala, or the Four Zoas*, he said that "When Thought is clos'd in Caves, Then love shall shew its root in deepest Hell." What Blake means is that when the imagination is kept from its natural, spontaneous expression, it turns sour and will seek out any way to manifest. The result, as any analyst knows, can be disturbing. And although we may not go so far as Blake does in one of his "proverbs of hell," declaring that we should "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle then nurse

unacted desires," we get his point. Blake was not, I think, advocating infanticide, but recognising that the murder of our own spontaneity and innocence is a way of what we could call "killing the child within."

"It's a truism of psychoanalysis and other forms of depth psychology that, although we would very much like it to, the repressed does not go away"



The repression that Blake railed against was what he called “single vision and Newton’s sleep.” What is that? It is the vision of the neat, orderly, rational, scientific, clockwork universe that Newton quite inadvertently ushered in, bringing us the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason. I say Newton did this inadvertently, because, as John Maynard Keynes said long ago, Newton was not the “first of the age of reason”, but the “last of the magicians”, referring to Newton’s long interest in alchemy and such arcane pursuits as predicting that the end of the world would arrive around the middle of the twenty-first century. This is a sobering thought that at least gives us a few years yet, but we may take comfort in the fact that Newton also predicted that Christ would return in 1948, which, as far as I can tell, was a no show. Yet reflections on the end times, unfortunately enough, are not out of place today.

In my book *The Secret Teachers of the Western World* (2015), a history of what we might call the alternative or counter-tradition to the Enlightenment, the western Hermetic or Esoteric tradition, I suggest that at the start of the seventeenth century, the nascent scientific – soon to become scientific – sensibility launched an all-out attack on the until then very prestigious Hermetic sciences. The fact that Newton wrote more about alchemy

then he did about gravity, and that gravity itself is an “occult”, that is “unseen” force, alone tells us that the “dark arts” were once held in high esteem. Yet, through a combination of a rising reductive, materialist science, a church keen to stamp out any form of “magic,” and the sharp eye of some humanist scholars, the prestige the Hermetic tradition had enjoyed for centuries, dissolved. From then on, for something to qualify as knowledge or as “real” it had to be grasped by the senses and proven by measurement. It had to submit to being quantified. And this was something the alternative approach to knowing was not capable of. Its source was not the external, visible, measurable world, but the inner, invisible, spiritual one, the occult, the unseen.

So the magical side of human life, what we might call “the dark side of the mind,” was rejected and subjected to an all-out character assassination, the effects of which, four centuries later, we are still feeling. To be sure, over the centuries there have been periodic outbreaks of occultism, simply because, whether we like it or not, the occult is part of us. The seventeenth century was itself the heyday of Western alchemy. The eighteenth century saw the rise of Freemasonry, Swedenborg’s remarkable accounts of his journeys to heaven and hell, Mesmer’s “animal magnetism” – which

led to the discovery of hypnotism – and the colourful careers of half sage/half charlatans like Cagliostro and the Comte de Saint-Germain. Spiritualism spread like wildfire in the nineteenth century; from it emerged the redoubtable Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, from whose ample numbers went forth numerous mystical offshoots. And in the twentieth century, in the 1960s, a burgeoning youth culture and a growing psychedelic movement combined with yet another occult revival to produce a grassroots magical renaissance, that had the most famous people in the world, the Beatles, at its head.

We might think that with the widespread popularity today of yoga, meditation, and a variety of other “mind, body and spirit” pursuits, that some of the knowledge and the means of acquiring it rejected with the rise of what we know as science, has found a place in the postmodern world. Humble, to be sure, and perpetually subjected to snide criticism by sharp-minded rationalists, but still a sustainable niche. But I wonder. Because in recent years much of what had been rejected centuries ago and kept under wraps since then seems to have erupted and “shown its root in deepest Hell”, or at least in a very unlikely place. I’m speaking about the “occult politics” that have been with us now at least since ex-US president Donald Trump

threw his hat into the ring in the dim pre-Covid days of 2015. After that, what had been hovering on the margins of the mind found itself at centre stage.

“... inspiration for the book were reports that the once newsworthy alt-right had used ‘chaos magic’ to help Trump win the election”

In *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump* (2018) I look at the strange “magical politics” that surrounded Trump’s campaign and the early days of his administration. The inspiration for the book were reports that the once newsworthy alt-right had used “chaos magic” to help Trump win the election. Chaos magic is a peculiar postmodern magical practice that avoids the traditional magical impedimenta – circles, candles, wands etc. – and uses whatever is at hand, a kind of DIY sorcery. In this case, what were at hand were internet memes featuring the hitherto innocuous cartoon character Pepe the Frog, now commandeered as a far-right magical

talisman. By flooding the net with images of Pepe as Trump and in various other guises, the idea was to perform an act of “synchromysticism”, an information age update on Jung’s synchronicity, in which what happens on the net is mirrored in “real life”. Other items soon came to light. One was Trump’s own devotion to a Christianised form of magic, Norman Vincent Peale’s “power of positive thinking”. Trump absorbed Peale’s central dictum – borrowed from Karl Menninger – that “facts don’t matter, only our attitude toward them does.” With the inauguration, both of his presidency and the era of “post truth” and “alternative facts”, we can get an idea of Trump’s attitude. Oddly, as I point out in the book, leftist academic fads like deconstructionism and postmodernism, which reject any notion of a stable “truth” or “reality”, ironically paved the way for a populist demagogue.

We can even say that Trump “magically” prepared for his time in office, by adopting the image of himself as president during his term on *The Apprentice*. Imagination then became reality. The whole phenomenon of reality TV can be seen as a form of magic, in which the simulation becomes the “real thing” and vice versa.

More disturbing perhaps was the fact that Steve Bannon, Trump’s then lieutenant and the conduit for the alt-right through his Breitbart website, was a reader of

Julius Evola. Evola was a twentieth century Italian esoteric thinker with far-right leanings who ingratiated himself with Mussolini and National Socialism. And he is also a link between occult politics US style, and the kind we can find in Mother Russia.

I wrote about Russia in *Dark Star Rising*, describing how Putin’s spin doctor Vladislav Surkov had created an entire “virtual reality” society through the state control of practically all media, maintaining across an entire network the kind of “alternative fact” act that Trump was performing as a one man show. But more disturbing was the influence that a Russian reader of Julius Evola seemed to have on Putin’s plans for the future. This was Alexander Dugin, who turns up in the political pages these days as “Putin’s Rasputin.” The analogy is inevitable but inaccurate and unfair to Rasputin. Dugin has had a peculiar trajectory. Starting in the 1980s as an anti-Soviet punk dissident, through a series of ideological quick-change acts and various far-right, proto-fascist guises, he ended up lecturing on geopolitics to generals at the Kremlin. During the 2014 annexation of the Crimea, when asked what the Russians should do with the Ukrainians, his reply was “Kill them.” Today his attitude is not much different.

“Vladislav Surkov had created an entire “virtual reality” society through the state control of practically all media”

Along with being a reader of Evola, a fellow-traveller with the alt-right, and having more than a passing interest in chaos magic, Dugin is the proponent of a disturbing vision of global conflict. Reviving a theory put forth more than a century ago by Sir Halford Mackinder, Dugin believes that throughout history there has been one single battle, enacted in different forms and with different players, yet centred on one archetypal opposition. This is the perennial struggle between the sea-faring, mercantile nations, known as the Atlanticists, and the Motherland, the largest landmass on the planet, Eurasia, home of tradition. Dugin borrows from Oswald Spengler the notion that the West is in decline and that a new *civilization* – not nation or state – is emerging in the East as the West goes under.

This new civilization is the “Eurasia” that

Putin has alluded to in speeches over the past several years. It has its own view of reality, its own way of being, which is often incomprehensible to the West. Dugin envisions a new Eurasian civilization stretching from “Vladivostok to Dublin,” which suggests that if Putin is listening to him, he may not be satisfied with absorbing Ukraine.

The battle between the sea-faring Atlanticists and the more traditional Eurasianists has been repackaged more recently by Dugin as the opposition between a hyper-liberal and commodifying West, eager to turn the planet into a global market place in which *anything*, reality itself, is on sale, and the traditional East, upholding the standard of “traditional values” against the corrosive rot of globalisation and everything that comes with it. Unfortunately, this anti-Western free market rhetoric has led some, understandably disenchanted with capitalism, to embrace a cure worse than the disease.

Another facet of this, and an inspiration for my book *The Return of Holy Russia* is Putin’s attempt to revive the religious, spiritual, and mystical heritage Russia embraced before the Bolshevik Revolution. The years just before Lenin seized power are known in Russian history as the Silver Age, and Putin has looked back to it, anxious to exploit the remarkable creative

efforts of this time. One sage of the Silver Age who has had a powerful influence on Putin is Ivan Ilyin, a theocratic religious political philosopher, who envisioned the kind of union between church and state that was in place during the time of Ivan the Terrible. If we remember the Grand Inquisitor from *The Brothers Karamazov* we can get an idea of his views. In the 1950s, as the voice of European White Russians, Ilyin spelled out what would happen when, as he knew it would, the Soviet Union collapsed. In “What the Dismemberment of Russia Means for the World,” Ilyin predicted that with the collapse of the USSR would come the “Balkanisation of Russia,” the parcelling out of its organic unity – think of the German Volk but with a Christian stamp – into smaller, independent entities that the West would absorb. A period of chaos would then ensue when Western economic and social ideas failed to take hold, before the rise of a strong man to bring the nation together. Putin read Ilyin’s essay and agreed, and his aim to regain the “near abroad”, the lands lost with the collapse of the USSR, goes hand in hand with his repackaging of Russia as the last bastion of the true faith.

What does this mean? It may mean that the magical, mythical, spiritual side of the psyche which the West has repressed for some time now and which, even with

all the New Age bells and whistles, it still hasn’t integrated in any serious way into its conscious outlook, is popping up in some unlikely and inconvenient places. Does this mean that Putin and a revived Holy Russia are the remedy, a means for the West to regain its soul? No. But it may mean that we need to throw more light and awareness on a side of the mind and ourselves we have ignored for too long. Otherwise it will remain a region where the far-right meet the far-out, leaving we enlightened ones in the dark.

Gary Lachman is an author and lecturer on the links between consciousness, culture and the Western esoteric tradition. His books include Jung the Mystic (2010), The Lost Knowledge of the Imagination (2017) and Dreaming Ahead of Time: Experiences with Precognitive Dreams, Synchronicity and Coincidence (2022). Visit www.garylachman.co.uk

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New Associations is published by the British Psychoanalytic Council
Suite 7, 19-23 Wedmore Street, London N19 4RU
Tel. 020 7561 9240
www.bpc.org.uk hello@bpc.org.uk

Three issues of *New Associations* are published each year, in the Spring, Summer and Autumn.

Subscriptions

UK annually (3 issues): £50. Overseas annually: £56

Advertising

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Printer Blackmore

Mailing house Menzies Distribution

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Views expressed in *New Associations* under an author's byline are the views of the writer, not necessarily those of the BPC. Publication of views and endorsements does not constitute endorsement by the BPC.

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ISSN 2042-9096

Contribute to New Associations

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.

Deadlines: Copy deadlines for *New Associations*:

Spring edition: 10 January

Summer edition: 20 May

Autumn edition: 01 September

Editorial

The Art of Ironing

Helen Morgan

Way back in 2001 I was co-convening a Social Dreaming Matrix¹ with my late and much missed colleague, Peter Tatham at the triennial Congress of the International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP).

It was late August and, although we were not to know it then, we were less than two weeks away from the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. It was the second morning and increasingly the images from the dreams were of war, conflict and terror. In one dream the dreamer lived on the edge of a volcano which had been dormant for years. It was now about to erupt and the devastation would be widespread and terrible. It was certainly unlikely that the dreamer would survive. As she watched the terrible devastation from her kitchen window as the volcano erupted, the dreamer was doing her ironing.

“How political is the personal? How do we live life on the edge of its multiple eruptions?”

This was to become a powerful and contradictory image for the Matrix throughout the week. Were we fiddling while Rome burned? Was analysis itself like fussing with the housework whilst devastation and destruction were taking place in the world outside? Or is attending to the wrinkles and imperfections in ourselves a necessary, indeed the only thing we can do in the face of powerful forces beyond our control? How political is the personal? How do we live life on the edge of its multiple eruptions? Do we deny differences, ironing them out, finding little ways to tolerate the intolerable, smoothing things over to make things easier for ourselves whilst, meanwhile, the

world is dying? Or is that where the only possibility of hope lies? According to the Matrix, “Yes” is the answer. “All of the above”.

Over 20 years later I was reminded again of this dream when reading the articles for this edition of *New Associations*. Most stark and striking is the agony that is conveyed in the contributions describing the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Here the terrible implications of war for the individual are laid bare. There is no explicit mention of other wars in other places in this particular edition, but we know such pain and anxiety is echoed in Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Palestine, Afghanistan, Taiwan... Other articles pick up wider aspects of 21st century life: lying, the threat to democracy, division and dysfunctional social dynamics, disappointment, failures of mourning, the danger of finding simplistic solutions to complex ethical dilemmas and the struggle to find a third position rooted in the depressive position. The themes of this edition are not cheerful. Given the

way things are in the world, it would be odd if they were.

Acting politically from the depressive position is a complex matter as, for the moment at least, one needs a certain conviction and a readiness to take up the position of the partisan. But, as several articles stress, the possibility of being wrong needs to be not too far away so that doubt can reappear as a precursor to thought. This is not the stuff of the political manifesto. We know the paranoid-schizoid position has all the best soundbites! The siren call of cynicism, fantasy and fundamentalism is persistent and sweet, but it is a call towards unfreedom and death.

Perhaps the most important message from the dream is that, whilst attending to her ironing, the dreamer remained turned towards the troubled world. She did not look away. Through facing the difficulties and the complexities of thought, I believe the contributors to this edition help us in that task of reflection and witnessing as we keep turned towards the troubles of our world.

¹ Social Dreaming is a means first conceptualised by Gordon Lawrence for exploring the unthought and unconscious dimensions of the social world. It assumes we dream, not just for ourselves but as part of the larger context in which we live.

The war in Ukraine

Shadows of War

Elena Liulina

My life is now divided into before and after 24th February.

Before the start of the war, I lived with my family in my home town of Kyiv where I also had a private practice as a psychotherapist. An atmosphere of anxiety had been steadily building up since the end of last year. From being concerned with Covid and vaccinations, we were now having to adjust to footage of Russian military movements close to Ukraine's borders, and to the sight of signs to bomb shelters suddenly appearing on buildings. There was talk of evacuations and, as usual, a lot of rumours. The fears that became part of our lives spilled over into my consulting-room. I distinctly remember the last session on the eve of the invasion when a patient proudly told me in detail about the purchase of everything necessary for martial law.

I still can't believe that the next morning I woke up at 5am because of a distant explosion. I decided not to wake up my

family. But the next explosions woke everyone up, although the feeling of it was like being in a nightmare. The first message at 7.30am was from my patient, a young man, saying, "Due to the

circumstances, our meeting is cancelled." Reading it the question flashed through my mind: will we ever see each other again? That day I had a single online session with a patient from Odesa, where it was still safe. Afterwards I began to realise how much the analytic frame changes during war, when there's a threat that hangs equally over both participants and we have to start thinking about how we're going to survive it. All my friends, colleagues and patients remember this



day, 24th February 2022 – what they were doing, where they were and how they and their families responded. Everything was going to change.

“In my own dreams... there a family of birds with eggs flying away from danger”

I thought until the last moment that I would stay in Kyiv for the duration of the war. I was relieved when I met my analyst for the first time after it had begun and could cry, even though I was in too much pain and fear to be able to speak. But my resolve changed after a week during which we spent several nights in a bomb shelter, with the air raid siren howling continuously and street fighting starting in the suburbs, as cities all over the country were being bombed. I began noticing that I was rapidly losing everything: my freedom, my profession, my home. I could only think about getting by from day to day, and it wasn't until much later that I was able to look back at my notes from sessions from before the war and see some of the recurrent dream images that anticipated it. In men's dreams there was often the

figure of the superhero, while women were dreaming more about dangerous men or groups of men. In my own dreams from that period there was a scene of dry earth in a spring garden and a family of birds with eggs flying away from danger.

My family decided to move to Western Ukraine, so I took photos of my apartment, including some of my sons' paintings I like most. There I was surprised how quickly one can get used to the constant sirens and the sounds of fighter jets, to blackouts and to living among strangers. I have received sincere messages of support from colleagues and friends in Britain and other countries, but not one from Russia. Most of my analytic patients disappeared in looking for a safe place for themselves and their children. Others were mobilized or became volunteers. With those that have stayed there's the loss of the usual frame with its predictable schedule and boundaries. We do what we can to maintain contact through messages and calls, seeking not to get lost in all the chaos. But I felt something vital and valuable inside me was being lost, a part of my soul.

Colleagues from Israel held relevant and useful webinars on interventions that might make a difference in a time of war, and this led to members of the Developing Group and I setting up a crisis helpline. We have received requests for help from people who have stayed where they were before

the war as well from those who have fled to safer places either inside the country or outside it. My first 24-year-old patient initially asked for help to cope with panic attacks. During the phone call, she told me about her abuse by a male neighbour, the same age as her father. It happened ten years ago when she was fourteen. We were speaking against a background of reports of mass killings of civilians, and of the rape of women and children by the Russian military.

The archetype of war is terrible always and everywhere. The words that came up over and over again in my meetings with patients were hatred, fear, life and death, rape, helplessness, suffering, hero, victory, victim, guilt, blame, destruction, homelessness, explosion, sleeplessness, nightmare. Our personal and collective containers are overwhelmed and hope becomes unimaginable. But working with my supervisor I learned to stop exhausting myself trying to understand what is beyond comprehending and to try and find as much strength and wisdom as I can in my own resources.

I have adapted to the new conditions and am angry at the same time. Why the hell am I supposed to adapt to this? I don't want to get used to the war. I don't want to get used to the killing, destruction and economic collapse in my country, a land so rich in human and natural resources. My

parents' generation was deeply traumatized by the Second World War and the Soviet regime, and now it's as though we're going through the devastating experience of that trauma all over again.

So how do I make it through? My priority has become to nurture a symbol that would help me withstand the pressure of seeking answers to unanswerable questions. In Ukraine the Feast of the Intercession of the Virgin Mary has special significance. Pokrov, as we call it, is celebrated in October together with the Day of the Cossacks, and the word itself refers to the veil or shawl with which the Mother of God has protected Ukrainians throughout our history.

In the Christian-folk tradition Pokrov can be many things. It covers the grass with leaves, water with ice, the Cossacks with a shield and girls with a wedding-shawl. I keep in my soul this image of a protective veil and allow the hidden work of the coming together of opposites to begin. I feel the stirring of seeds of hope watered by tears.

Elena Liulina is a psychotherapist in Ukraine and a member of the Ukrainian Developing Group of the International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP). She is also training to become a Jungian analyst with the Association of Jungian Analysts (AJA).

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The war in Ukraine

A Question of Divided Professional Loyalties: Working in Russia and Ukraine

Jan Wiener and Catherine Crowther

Since 1995, we have been involved in a project training would-be-Jungian-analysts in Russia and to a lesser extent, in Ukraine. Since all psychological treatments had been banned during Stalin's time in power, the greater freedom of contact between East and West post-Perestroika revealed a hunger from our colleagues both in Russia and Ukraine to develop much-needed clinical skills that they could use to treat the many mental health problems in their countries. These included high rates of alcoholism, and the effects of early mortality, poverty caused by sudden economic collapse, broken-up families, unexplained disappearances of family members. There was a general recognition of severe collective inter-generational trauma.

We first organised 12 weekend seminars in St Petersburg over a period of a year, to offer interested Russian psychological

professionals a taster about what it meant to become a Jungian analyst. Such was the enthusiasm for further training that with the support of the International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP) and our own charity, The Russian Revival Fund, we had sufficient resources, both personnel and financial, to develop a full training programme with trainees in Moscow and St Petersburg. Twenty UK analysts were willing to commit themselves over several years to 4 or 5 visits per year, teaching and supervising. Ten colleagues took on candidates for personal therapy, an experiment really, since many Russians could not speak English and sometimes an interpreter was present. At this stage, we were aware that what we offered was not on a par with UK training standards, but it was a start. The project developed its own momentum and expanded to other cities in Russia, including Krasnodar in the South and Kemerovo in Siberia. Russia now has its own internationally recognised Society

offering training to new analysts interested in Jungian practice. Ukraine has a younger Society working towards independent training status.

From a personal perspective, working in Russia has been a profound and life-changing experience. When we began, relationships between Russian and Ukrainian colleagues were harmonious, with students travelling regularly to Russia to participate in the training programme that we offered. Ukrainian trainees had genuine friendships with their Russian colleagues. There was a memorable conference in Kyiv in 2006, attended by more than 250 people. It was they who taught us about the teaching they were undertaking in different cities across Russia. Further learning for us came from the realisation that Western models of teaching do not always work. Models of education in the East are different and we realised quickly that we had to discover

where they were culturally and make adaptations. For example, the idea of free-floating discussions in seminars was very new to them as they were used to a system of didactic lectures. Of most importance and relevance from our own thinking for them was the modelling of good boundaries, setting the frame in which analysis could proceed.

“When we began, relationships between Russian and Ukrainian colleagues were harmonious”

After February 2014, following the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the disputed status of Donbas, not surprisingly

relationships between our Russian and Ukrainian colleagues began to deteriorate. In Ukraine, groups are now painfully divided on the question of whether Russian colleagues known well to them should be permitted to continue as members of their Ukrainian Society and groups. Other Ukrainians have left their Institute altogether, preferring a more radical approach and fierce in their patriotism.

“The present war is truly dreadful in terms of its civilian casualties, its cruelty and the breaking of the ‘rules of war’”

The present war is truly dreadful in terms of its civilian casualties, its cruelty and the breaking of the “rules of war”. It is impossible, of course, not to feel filled with anger at Putin and great distress at what we witness on the news each day. And yet, we have resisted attempts to boycott Russian colleagues from the analytic community. How could we do this when over the past 27 years, we have developed so many collegial relationships. It is truly a question of divided loyalties.

One of us is supervising a therapist in Kyiv, giving seminars to the Ukrainian Institute and has recently been asked to offer consultancy to help their Society in its future development. At the same time, we both continue to supervise groups and individuals in Russia over Zoom. It has been impossible not to mention the war – indeed we felt it vital to express our dismay and sadness about what was happening in their name. Although they are forbidden to speak against the war, we have acknowledged that they are shocked by their return to the international isolation and privations of Soviet times. So often we are met with a wall of silence. How can we know what they really think? Gradually, this emerges, often through case material. A member of the group brought clinical case material where her patient was expressing hatred of her own government for its cruelty. The therapist then let the group know that she felt this too. At the end of her presentation, another male member of the group said something that later I needed to check for accuracy with our interpreter. He said, “If I was your patient, I would not want you as my therapist”. This speaks for itself.

Another Russian therapist was faced with unexpected excuses about session times from his Ukrainian patient whom he had been seeing for two years over Zoom. She was now evacuated to Germany.

The patient was sobbing and expressing gratitude and the therapist was puzzled. It took another group member to express the painful truth – she was struggling to tell him she was ending, “She would be betraying her people if she continued working with a Russian therapist.”

For the most part, it has become clear, as people begin to voice views that nearly all are filled with a deep shame about what is happening, what it means to be Russian at present. We understand that some people have made the effort to access independent sources of news through VPNs (virtual private networks) but they are very careful not to speak publicly with each other.

“Through our charity, we have been able to send money to therapists living and working in Ukraine to help them work with traumatised families”

Divided professional loyalties yes, but we must live with these and face the

sometimes unbearable tensions. Through our charity, we have been able to send money to therapists living and working in Ukraine to help them work with traumatised families, and of course to get the help they need for themselves. Most important, we will continue to offer our psychological thinking and support in the steady routine of supervision to both our Ukrainian and Russian colleagues. One of us has no intention of stopping singing poignant Tchaikovsky songs just because they are Russian, and because, as a Russian supervisee has remarked “while the culture has lost its soul, this is not true for many of us.”

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Society today

Beyond Divisions

Dr Lita Crociani-Windland

Divisive dynamics seem to be part of our everyday life, affecting most of the key issues of our times. I am not thinking so much about culture wars in general as much as internal divisions in groups dedicated to social justice causes whether ethnic, racial, gender and sexual identities; climate change; political and economic identities and alliances. Splits can be around minor differences, and yet be felt as so huge that even within progressive groupings there are topics and experiences that can barely be discussed. Attempts to reflect on divisive issues can result in an experience of being silenced by projections rather than being invited into respectful, collegial dialogue, as “virtue signalling” furthers the binaries and inhibits reflective engagement.

The inspiration for these reflections and a plenary panel for the 2021 Annual conference of the Association for Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society was a conversation between myself, Marilyn Charles and Candida Yates, also BPC

scholars, in which we found ourselves reflecting on the difficulties of having conversations across difference and how even trying to can evoke powerful affects and provoke divisions. It was and is a potentially dangerous effort to have such conversations, and even more so when the tone, presence and gestural dimension of the conversation is hidden by the written nature of an article. I will nonetheless try to convey my meaning, aware that what I write may provoke different reactions. As I prepared for that conference plenary, I was similarly anxious – as my first association shows. This was reinforced, as you will see, by an awful synchronicity of events.

My association to divisions took me back to the terrible time of the UK Brexit referendum and the assassination of British Labour MP Jo Cox. Jo Cox died on 16th June 2016 after being shot and stabbed multiple times by right-wing activist Thomas Mair. That tragic event, like the January 6th storming of the US Capitol, tells us of the deadly potential of divisions. Jo Cox has become known in the UK for



Continues on page 12

her maiden speech, which went viral after her death and where the idea that “we have more in common than that which divides us” came from. *More in Common* is now the name of a “learning organisation” spanning four countries, trying to both “understand the forces driving us apart” and “find common ground and help bring people together” (www.moreincommon.com), inspired by that speech and the tragedy of her death. This is what the plenary title “Beyond Divisions: More in Common Than That Which Divides Us” took as its inspiration, and was meant as a small tribute to that courageous young woman politician. And yet this is a difficult truth to hold onto during difficult times, whether this be in relation to political views, identity issues, disabilities or, even more existentially threatening for us all, climate change. It is easier to punish her murderer with life imprisonment than to acknowledge the context that led to her murder.

Uncannily, my opening plenary contribution remembering Jo Cox’s murder happened to coincide almost exactly with the death of the conservative MP David Amess, also murdered in cold blood by an extremist. Jo Cox’s murderer was portrayed in the media as mentally ill, whereas David Amess’ murderer was not. There is something interesting about this difference that could be the subject of

further reflection, but whether mad or bad, the point I wish to make as a psychosocial thinker is that these individuals are not just products of dysfunctional families, but that dysfunctional societal dynamics have a big part to play and need to be thought about in psychoanalytic terms. The incendiary tone of much political speech and the manipulation of public sentiment can and does affect us all, even if not to the same extent.

“Jo Cox has become known in the UK for her maiden speech, which went viral after her death and where the idea that ‘we have more in common than that which divides us’ came from”

I want to be provocative and say that we can easily fall into the trap of division ourselves: this idea of going beyond divisions and holding to the “more in

common” idea is a most difficult and radical position to hold in our times. It can threaten both victims and aggressors in demanding the letting go of vested interests, whether they be privilege that is taken for granted, lived experiences of painful history or positions, or even, to use one of Vamik Volcan’s (2021) terms, “chosen traumas” at the level of populations. Going beyond divisions is anti-competitive, it is hard to stay with, it calls for tolerance and the acceptance of imperfection, of less-than-ideal solutions and continuous reflexive vigilance and critical reflection. It calls for the acceptance of difference and assessment that is not judgemental or power driven, while also demanding that we do not turn a blind eye to cruelty and abuse when it occurs or has occurred. It could be seen in Klein and Bion’s terms as being about staying in the depressive position. The problem is that it is not only human to be prone to fight or flight and being defended subjects, but also that it is more exciting to fight and be in the paranoid-schizoid position. The intensity of affect in paranoid-schizoid dynamics is object seeking, and is therefore mobilising, while also freighted with fear and persecutory anxiety. It is where our human frailty can take us, we have this in common.

I use the “we and us” provocatively and deliberately, as I write I can hear voices

in my head saying: “I’m not like that”, “we are not like that”, and I agree to some extent: we are not always like that, but “there, by the grace of God, go we all” is also true. Culturally and politically there has been a focus on narcissism as a characteristic of our time – less has been thought about in relation to a narcissism of minor differences afflicting progressive movements. Often it is driven by an unconscious refusal of complexity and shades, the many hues of real life, and an unconscious hankering after purity and sameness that necessitates strong contrast and difference against which we can define ourselves. Sometimes this is manipulated consciously for power.

“It is division itself that is the issue, and its consequences are serious”

Divisions abound in movements dedicated to social justice causes and climate change, itself a social justice issue that will ultimately affect us all, but in the meantime affects some more than others. Psychoanalysis and left-wing parties have a history of divisions that have allowed others power over them. I am sure it would not be hard for readers to think

of examples from their own experience, and some of the content of the last BPC issue, mostly focused on sexualities, shows how hard it is to find agreement when it comes to complex and affectively laden positionings. But I do not wish to focus here on the specifics of any one aspect of divisions, be that race, religion, ideology or politics. It is division itself that is the issue, and its consequences are serious. How to go beyond division is the big question.

The American artist Faith Ringgold for me speaks to this. Working from an intersectional position of being both black and a woman in an art-world and society that put her at the margins on both counts, she became an activist and educator, while never abandoning her artistic vocation and production. Unrecognised for much of her earlier life, she has given us poignant portrayals of race relations and was one of the first artists to portray black, white and mixed-race people in her paintings. She had the courage as a black activist to go beyond divisions, without forgetting or denying differences. I have chosen two pieces that for me say more than I can say in words.

Between Friends (American People Series #1, 1963) speaks both to the barriers and connections of friendship across race divisions; its title is deliberately ambiguous. The painting (and others in the series) is derived from observations of gatherings

at Dr. and Mrs. Goldsberry's home, where she was a summer guest. According to the National Museum of Women in the Arts (2013, p.8), "the Goldberrys were lifetime members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and hosts to inter-racial gatherings. Ringgold was particularly struck by the uncomfortable interactions between their black and white visitors, even though they shared a belief in civil rights." The original title was changed from *The Wall Between Friends*, which emphasized the interracial divide to the more ambivalent *Between Friends*. We often speak of the understanding "between friends," or the special connection "between friends." The "between" can indicate a shared relationship, a 'thirdness' in a Winnicottian sense, but can also indicate the tension and difficulty of relating across difference. Both are possible. In the painting a portion of each woman's body overlaps the central beam, which may offer a sense of hope for the future of this and similar friendships based on common goals and ideals. The hope is that the friends may go beyond "doer" and "done unto" dynamics, without merging into one another.

Die (American People Series #20, 1967) is the next one, now prominently displayed in New York's Museum of Modern Art. As ever the picture can be read in different

ways. To me it says that whether white or black, man or woman, division ends in dying, whether literally or not. The next generation suffers. I find the white boy cradling the black girl in the picture heartrending in their tender posture and terrified expressions. The mixed-race infant on the left of painting is precariously held by a white woman, who seems to be fleeing. We can all suffer if we don't try to see what we have in common and try to keep it in mind more than that which divides us. As Anne Monahan points out in the museum website (www.moma.org/artists/7066) there are both formal and conceptual ambiguities in this painting that allow viewers to identify with the victims regardless of race.

“she has given us poignant portrayals of race relations and was one of the first artists to portray black, white and mixed-race people in her paintings”

Although *Die* speaks to the ultimate consequence of racial divisions in

particular, what has happened since I first had these thoughts is even more extreme than the murders that led to the Black Lives Matter movement or the murders of MPs. And it is even worse than the current situation of a “divided kingdom” that has left the EU and that has its nations of Scotland and Wales wishing to leave the Union of Great Britain, while divisions in the island of Ireland have also been exacerbated. Now we have war in Europe between two independent states, Russia and Ukraine, whose ethnicities and languages are closely related. Thousands are dying and displaced. World order is being threatened and NATO is having to tread carefully to avoid further escalation. All the while climate change is threatening an even larger death toll from natural disasters. I am not trying to depress us all, by reminding us of these perils. What I am trying to do is to make us not turn away or find easy scapegoats, satisfying though that can be, but to make us think about what psychoanalysis can offer to the socio-political and environmental issues of our times. The stakes could not be higher and there may be just enough time for us all to think about what is in our power to do to counter the divisions at whatever level we can engage in our own personal and professional lives. Co-operation across divisions is not easy, but it is possible to acknowledge and respect differences while holding onto ethical values of care for one



Above left: *Between Friends*

Above right: *Die*

© Faith Ringgold / ARS, NY and DACS, London, Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York, 2022



another. Acknowledging our vulnerability to these problems and recognising when we might be falling into them, even if only in hindsight, is the important place to start. Listening and avoiding silencing one another is the other side of that. These I believe are part of psychoanalytic practice and knowledge that we can try to hold onto in our collegial and personal interactions outside the consulting room too.

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executive board member of the Association for Psychosocial Studies, a British Psychoanalytic Council scholar and a director of the Centre for Social Dreaming. Recent articles include 'Masculinity, affect and the search for certainty in an age of ambivalence' (co-authored with Candida Yates) in Free Associations, 'On Transience and Other Hatreds' in the Journal of Psychosocial Studies, and 'Between Scylla and Charybdis: Losing balance in an age of extremes' in Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society.

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Society today

Practices of Disappointment: Going along with stuff less and getting out more

John Adlam and Christopher Scanlon

To be disappointed is to be human; to be disappointing is also to be human. To endure, engage with, and then reach beyond “disappointment” in our internal relatedness, and in interpersonal and social relationships, *may* enable us to re-connect with our own humanity and with the humanity of others. If we do not grapple with disappointment in these kinds of ways, we risk remaining locked into cycles of humiliating reciprocal self-and-other destructive violence and recrimination.

Not only are we *either* disappointed or disappointing, but we must also face the more complex double-edged, psycho-social “moebius” reality that we are all simultaneously *both* disappointed *and* disappointing. We are disappointed in others *because* we feel so disappointed; and disappointed in ourselves because we are so disappointing. This disrupts our capacity to be concerned about or

engaged with our individual and collective experiences of loss and ultimately the loss of our shared home, the planet Earth. We become displaced, redundant, rootless and disconnected from ourselves and each other and our environment.

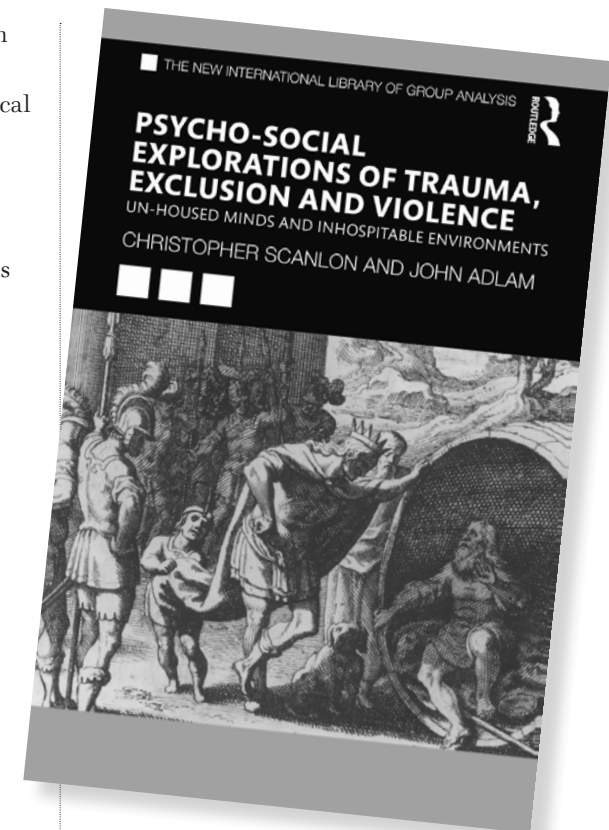
In this psycho-social context our invitation is for colleagues to join with us to re-imagine different narratives for the experience of disappointment: to understand both disappointed-ness and disappointing-ness as existential threats and as impediments to our creativity that need to be urgently re-thought.

In his 1934 play *Choruses from “The Rock”*, T.S. Eliot pinpoints the illusory pursuit of systems that are so perfectly constructed that the ordinary moral and ethical challenges assembled under the heading of “being good” can be quietly and conveniently set aside. The sense of Eliot’s play is that “the establishment”, in Eliot’s case the established Church, was in

a terrible collusion with its congregation to provide simplistic, institutionalised solutions to the complex moral and ethical problems of the day.

Eliot’s text can help us explore ways in which, through our personal and collective failure to address violent states of disappointment, we are all in danger of sleep-walking into psycho-social and ecological catastrophe by repeatedly dreaming up social institutions and systems that allow us not to engage in emotional thinking about what the “being good” might look like.

We suggest that it is now essential for psychoanalytic therapists of all kinds to leave their/our psycho-social retreats (clinics, consulting rooms, professional guilds and disciplinary silos; our artefacts, totems, and theoretical models *within*) and to join with “unlike-minded” others and engage more deliberately with



conversations in public spheres. In short, we might need to consider how to go along with things less and to *get out more* (Scanlon, 2019).

In our new book (Scanlon & Adlam, 2022) we revisit and restate our “Diogenes Paradigm” using numerous stories handed down about that dogged, itinerant, psycho-social practitioner/consultant/philosopher. In one such legend, Diogenes was found kneeling with his begging bowl (and his dog) at the feet of a statue. When asked the reason why he was engaged in this apparently futile pursuit, he replied that he did so to “get practice in being refused.” By publicly *practising disappointment* in this way, Diogenes invites his interlocutors to perceive, with him, that one might as well beg alms of a lump of stone, as expect accommodation from the inhospitable environment which the in-group generates and sustains. He wants to suggest that getting oneself accustomed to having one’s application for accommodation turned down may be a key life skill for any of us that find ourselves as a member of one or another of these socially-constructed, incohesive out-groups.

Diogenes is also working to practise disappointment so as to get the better of it or, more subtly, to get better at it – so as not to be waylaid, disheartened, or confounded by it. He wants to inhabit his disappointment in a particular way, so

as to sharpen the edge of it, rather than find himself tangled up in self-defeat. It is not so much that Diogenes practises disappointment: it’s more that he practises not identifying with the feeling of disappointment and the role of being “disappointed” when invited to do so.

The question of how we engage with our own and with others’ disappointment is important, because in “late” capitalism we are invited and expected, as good consumers, to be locked into an eternal circle of disappointment – in the goods and the “entertainment” services we procure and in the political classes and the media moguls who “bestow” or provide them homogeneously across the globe.

The hypnotising invitation or lullaby suggests that Gaia itself can always be framed as disappointing – disappointingly finite, disappointingly Earth-bound – “There’s always Mars!” it whispers, seductively, excitedly. The first line of resistance must be to *not* allow ourselves to *remain* disappointed in our planet, in the finite nature of its resources and delicate ecological balance of its operative systems. We must instead respect the reality of disappointing exhaustibility: to practise staying in touch with the limited and limiting nature of our individual and global existence.

“... working to practise disappointment so as to get the better of it or, more subtly, to get better at it”

We recognise the logic and moral force of the argument most powerfully advanced by Frantz Fanon that protest – perhaps even violent upheaval and revolution – is the only way to overthrow the powers that be. However, whether the conversations we have in mind take place before we take to the streets in protest and revolt, or after the structures that generated and perpetuate slavery and dehumanisation have been finally overthrown, it seems to us that we still need to find better ways to talk to each other.

We, none of us, can know if we are on the right track. The best that can be hoped (and planned for) is that *disappointment* can be embraced, and practised, and put to work, so that we might all be more strongly connected.

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Christopher and John were both colleagues at the Outreach Service of the Henderson Hospital Democratic Therapeutic Community before that Service’s abrupt and scandalous closure in April 2008.

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Society today

Lying in Autocratic Society: A challenge to democracy

Karl Figlio

Several years ago, Noam Chomsky said that governments sought primarily to protect themselves from the people. I thought his view extreme. But the prominence of governments loosely called populist makes Chomsky's depiction apt. In particular, I single out an autocratic character, which aims to marginalize the civil society that stands between the leader and the people. The autocratic leader creates an illusion of an immediate bond with "the people" – the leader's people only: others are excluded. Autocratic authority is magnified by lying, which attracts acolytes. Together, they form a group with absolutist power. The triumph of living inside the lie, favoured by foreclosing on a mediating domain, promises certainty and security by relieving the inner turmoil of ambivalence – and with it, the struggle for a common purpose, so essential to democratic consenting.

The Bond Between the Autocratic Leader and his Audience

The autocratic inclination builds on an idealization of the leader (ego-ideal) and identifications of individuals with each other and with the idealized leader (ideal-ego), as in Freud's model of groups. This form of relationship is illusory, even delusory, but grows by creating a culture of acolytes who dwell in this special reality. It attains a peculiar, swamping force, which absorbs the ego. It is strengthened by ejecting egos that retain a bond with external reality into a different world. This process is an act, not a thinking. The ejection eliminates whatever could dampen the idealization that drew the idealizing group together. Such a countervailing force no longer exists in its world.

The Lure of the Lie

How can falsehood lure the ego into replacing a good-object-leader-ego-ideal

with such an anti-ideal? One of Otto Fenichel's patients offers a clue: "If I can make others believe that things I know to be untrue are true, then it is also possible that my memory is deceived and what I remember as true is untrue". Troubled memories and thoughts thereby become untrue.

The autocratic leader is unreliable while proclaiming reliability. Edna O'Shaughnessy introduced the idea that lying can seem to offer security in the treacherous world of an unreliable parent. Alessandra Lemma identified two forms of self-protective lying: lying that seeks a relationship with an unavailable or inscrutable object by grandiose fantasizing of a more desirable self; and



lying that constructs a protective barrier against an intruding object. She also describes a sadistic lying, which reverses humiliation by humiliating others. With all types, she experienced in the consulting room an imperative to believe what was prescribed by the patient's lie. In a lying world, betrayal is handed on by projective identification, creating a vulnerable other

who can instantly be cast out, subjected, if not (only) to physical abuse, then to psychotic disorientation against which the lie brings the pleasure of security and of triumph.

The Social Lie

Lying becomes a social force. While democracy depends on debate and the ego thrives on it, there is no forum for it when there are two realities. 'Debate' becomes a misnomer. Instead, the ego is crippled unconsciously, in psychic reality, by a shaming, ego-destructive superego-ideal, embodied in the lying autocrat. As identification with the liar offers a defence against insecurity and betrayal, the ease of its idealized world seduces us away from the labours of sticking with reality and the conflicts that beset the internal world. Although the autocratic leader lies, he is as much appointed by acolytes lured by the lie's promise of security, as he is the originator of the lie. Identifying with the liar is achieved by handing on the betrayal and the betrayal is passed on through each instance of identification, gathering momentum in a chain reaction that creates and engulfs ever more acolytes into its alternative reality.

As the promise of security inside this alternative reality snowballs from acolyte to acolyte, any resistance to it builds up in the ostracized, denigrated group. The conscious promise of meeting the

unsatisfied needs of everyday reality can be swept into this lure, but the cost of compliance with the lie is to join forces against reality. As reality falls prey to the lure of the lie and the threat of exclusion from it, lying gets into the system and perverts the conscious aim of satisfying need. Support for the social agencies that depend on reality-orientation, such as experts or regulatory agencies, dwindles along with belief in evidence.

“Autocratic authority is magnified by lying, which attracts acolytes”

Autocratic relief from Ambivalence

Ambivalence refers to the contrary currents of feeling, such as love and hate, directed simultaneously at the same object. Primary ambivalence refers to a contradiction between the nascent ego and its object world. Ambivalence poses a fundamental challenge to democracy, because its internal turmoil seeks an outlet by turning against an external object, making it the bearer of one side of its internal contradiction, creating illusory security.

Democracy depends on honest decision-making with others. It rests on the idea that individuals are not triumphal ideal-egos: they are egos that work to come together. It requires bearing the internal agony of ambivalence – not unburdening it into an external repository, but living with its doubt, uncertainty, ambiguity and contradictory feelings. Opposition between dissenting groups is easier, as the magnetism of the lie lures people into an illusion of transcending ambivalence. It even acts as a haven in giving way to the passion of clear-cut opinion, with paranoid anxiety acting as a defence against depressive anxiety of ego-reality.

Further Thoughts

For a democracy to thrive, (the individuals in) society must remain individuals, able to tolerate ambivalence. But groups eliminate ambivalence by dismembering individuals, parsing their split selves into schismatic factions. An agglomerated individual is re-assembled through the confrontations between groups into which individual identity has been dispersed. An apparent identity is secured against ambivalence by identification with the community of the lie. Recovery from fragmentation depends on recovery of depressive thinking and feeling, mediated through reconciliation between factions, as they struggle towards consent in a climate of reality rather than the certainty of illusion.

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The full version of this paper, including extensive clinical material, citations, and references, appeared in *Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and Culture, Media, Groups, Politics* Number 83, September 2021, available at http://freeassociations.org.uk/FA_New/OJS/index.php/fa/article/view/396

Society today

Psychoanalysis and the New Progressivism – a critical view

Ian Thurston

A recent dream; I was taking part in a group therapy session during which there was a discussion of contemporary culture wars. I expressed the view that, though the malignancy of ethno-nationalism is clear, there are also worrying developments amongst sections of “progressive” opinion: an illiberal and increasingly authoritarian hyper-liberalism, intolerant of a different perspective, and whose fundamentalism both mirrors and provokes that of the political right. As I spoke, however, all the other members of the group left the room, one by one, without a word, leaving only the therapist and myself. With exasperation I said this was an example of the very things we had been talking about. The therapist looked at me, stood up and walked out.

The dream is of course my own, and may be as much be about my own conflicts as about the wider milieu. It does however express my sense of alienation and disquiet. Psychoanalytic perspectives are of course invaluable in shedding light on the scapegoating of those considered to be “other”, on the way in which, particularly at times of social dislocation, inadmissible aspects of the self are projectively identified with denigrated outsider groups, who then become subject to contemptuous attack. They shed light, too, on the dichotomized thinking evident in contemporary ethno-nationalism; the ways in which a valorized “people”, held as the true repositories of the nation, are contrasted with global elites; a mind-set that may also be accompanied by hostility towards those “outsider” groups held to receive preferential treatment.



“hostility towards those “outsider” groups held to receive preferential treatment”

However there is also a need to recognize the ways in which ideas, even good ideas, are also emotional objects (Main, 1989) moving from the creative ego of one generation to the super-ego moralism of the next – as much a form of group and class identification as a means of critical enquiry. For if we are to better understand

culture wars we may need to look not just at populist movements, which for the most represent the return of uncouth politics to a depoliticized, technocratic and increasingly undemocratic form of globalized market capitalism, but also at a hyper-liberalism that has become as much a class based faith, blind to its own contradictions, as a way of critically engaging with reality, and which, increasingly, seeks not so much to inform debate but rather to bend recalcitrant reality – and opposition – to the will.

For campaigns for civil and minority rights, pluralist movements with foundations in the critical rationalism of the bourgeois enlightenment, have to be conceptually

distinguished from a postmodern mindset in which there is a hostility to all meta-narratives and where the complexities of identity are reduced to a matter of self-assertion. The intense subjectivism of this mindset might be distinguished, too, from the modernism of classical psychoanalysis, seeking as the latter does to explore the complexity of the human psyche without jettisoning the notion of truth – proposing instead that psychological maturity involves facing, as best as is possible, internal conflict and an external reality which does not care to answer to human wishes, which has to be discovered as much as it is made, and which inevitably involves limits and disappointment.

“other people, ideas, books, words, films and inanimate objects are conceptualized as sources of psychological threat”

It is just such a notion of reality that is being contested in a progressivist ideology where “lived experience” is

asserted over the claims of evidence and “objective knowledge”. Here reality becomes subjectively defined, and a different perspective is treated as an intolerable imposition. The world becomes a dangerous place: other people, ideas, books, words, films and inanimate objects are conceptualized as sources of psychological threat. Thus a thin-skinned, solipsistic world in which a third position is no longer possible – there are simply two incompatible subjectivities – and where the fear is of invalidation by a more powerful other. The aim is not one of integration or resolution but of maintaining a split through projective identification, through the provocation of a counter response which bestows further victimhood and sense of righteous grievance – in the process of which status is maintained and socio-economic privilege recast as moral superiority.

None of which is to minimize the reality of ethno-nationalism, but rather to highlight those regressive tendencies amongst sections of progressive opinion which may share similar underlying assumptions and which further fuel the growth of what have been for the most part fringe movements – not least by the conflation of mainstream social conservatism with populism and even fascism. Such a narrative, well evident in the Brexit debate, neglects the public

presence of an understated liberalism; a sense of solidarity, decency, tolerance and fair play. It ignores, too, the extent to which tolerance and pluralism may thrive best in conditions where there is a secure sense of identification (Reimer, 2018) – not in a nativist sense but within a living tradition with a sense of the past and of future expectations – a connection without which progressiveness may become facile.

Perhaps most disturbing, however, is the way in which liberal institutions have fallen in with illiberal demands – either because they are in agreement, or because they fear the consequences of not so doing. Here there is a collapse of paternal authority which only fuels a further regression. There is, in other words, an urgent necessity, as there is in the clinical situation, not just for understanding but also for the setting of limits, for the exercising of a good enough paternal authority. Thus the need to critically appraise dominant narratives without collapsing into masochistic collusion with an oedipal overturning of history – with profoundly reactionary tendencies which, wearing the clothes of political righteousness, seek to reduce emancipatory intellectual traditions to dust.

It remains to be seen, however, whether the group is slow-open – or closed.

Ian Thurston works as a principal adult psychotherapist within the NHS in north east England. He has a background in psychiatric nursing and was formerly clinical lead for an acute day hospital in east London. His book, Everything is Permitted, Restrictions Still Apply, was published by Routledge in 2018.

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Society today

Un|forgettable: The memorial as a locus of memory or amnesia?

Lisa Moran

Over the past decades we have seen an exponential growth in memorialisation practice. Characterised by what historian Kirwin Klein (2000) refer to as the “memory industry”, this is evident in the proliferation of memorials, memorial sites and memorial museums, the latter often designed by star architects, in cities as far-ranging as Berlin, Kigali, Washington and Phenom Penn. Yet, according to Walter Benjamin (1979), memorials are not compatible with modernity: “A criterion for whether a city is modern: the absence of memorials” (p. 487). But memorials serve a more complex purpose than mere architectural trophies or spectacles.

In the same way that a gravestone gives expression to individual mourning, memorials can be the locus of collective mourning, providing a narrative for loss and a focus for grief. Situated in public

sites, memorials call on the viewer or passer-by to remember some person or event, usually associated with a past conflict or trauma. Yet the effect they have is often to be forgettable or worse still invisible. As Elizabeth Giddens (2011) notes, “One generation’s solemn effort to never forget is another generation’s skateboard platform”. What is the significance of these public ciphers of memory and what purpose do they serve in marking or perhaps even substituting for collective memory? And why, despite their claims on remembrance, are they so forgettable?

According to Freud (1930), nothing that has been formed in mental life can perish, everything is preserved and stored and can be retrieved again under the right circumstances. However, forgetting plays an important role in the experience of loss and mourning where memories can be consciously stored away and retrieved at

will, ensuring that the experience of loss is not relentless or overwhelming. According to historian Ernest Renan forgetting was also essential to the process of nation building, noting, “The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things” (quoted in Judt, 2010, p. 803).

“In the same way that a gravestone gives expression to individual mourning, memorials can be the locus of collective mourning”

However, in the context of trauma or conflict, despite its imperative to ensure that we never forget, the mnemonic rhetoric of the memorial may function as a means of avoiding dealing with loss and the painful process of remembering essential to normal mourning. Rather than embodying the issues central to its subject matter, the memorial may in fact function as a container of primitive, unwanted and unprocessed thoughts and feelings, especially feelings of ambivalence. Many of the events which engender memorialisation – conflict, trauma, loss – are complex events. Shaped by the selections and exclusions of historical memory and experienced from a range of perspectives, their accounting may be disputed or change over time. Yet the social, political and cultural imperatives underpinning traditional memorial practice tend to favour clear-cut categories of victor/vanquished, good/

bad, victim/persecutor, leaving little room for nuance or ambivalence. Even more recent paradigms such as the counter-monument tend to default to these binary or generalising positions, precluding representation of a more complex set of experiences.

Maya Lin's 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is an exemplary memorial commemorating the loss of US forces during the Vietnam War (1965-1975). Comprised of a long, black, polished granite wall that bends at an angle in the centre and descends into the ground on either end, it works at both a personal and collective level. The names of the 58,318 US military personnel who perished during that conflict are etched into the granite. However, the constraints of the commissioning brief prohibited any reference to the wider context of the conflict or the more than three million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians who also perished during the conflict. In *The Inability to Mourn* (1967) German psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich drew attention to the impact of psychic defences against shame, guilt and remorse in post-war Germany that problematised and delayed the memorialisation of the events of WWII and the Holocaust. The selective understanding of the role of the US in the war in Vietnam and its impact

on the Vietnamese has engendered a similar inability to mourn that renders its memorialisation partisan and incomplete.

“Salcedo spoke to children who had witnessed the murder of their parents and created this work as a form of witnessing”

Reflecting on the trauma and losses incurred during WWI, Benjamin refused the possibility of commemoration as a means of “working through” grief. He protested any notion of memory as a “re-membering” of what has been dismembered. For Benjamin, strategies of commemoration and remembrance were a means of sustaining and legitimising loss and trauma rather than confronting its “deepest sources (Jay, 1999). Yet there are examples of memorial works that do confront these “deepest sources”. These artworks often happen outside the political machinations and constraints of public commissioning, generated instead from the imperatives of the artist's practice. A notable example is the “Unland” series

of sculptures by Columbian artist Doris Salcedo: “Unland: Irreversible Witness”, 1995-98; “Unland: Orphan's Tunic”, 1997; and “Unland: audible in the mouth”, 1998. Made from combinations of tables drilled with tiny holes, fabric and human hair, these works are informed by extensive research into events and witness testimonies relating to the Columbian civil war. Salcedo spoke to children who had witnessed the murder of their parents and created this work as a form of witnessing, noting “The children wanted their story to be known. In Columbia, you are aware that you are invisible, especially in the countryside. They simply wanted to exist” (quoted in Barson, 2004). Drawing on the use of hybrid and fragmented words in the poetry of Paul Celan, Salcedo created a work that attempts to convey, through the experience of the work, the horrors for which there are no words and to render visible and unforgettable those who had been erased.

Arising from the imperative of the artist's practice – what compels the artist to make her work – rather than from the compromises of a commissioned brief, this act of rendering visible and unforgettable underpins the process of memorialisation and is essential to the meaningful engagement with and resolution of the effects of trauma and loss. This suggests that memorialisation can move beyond the

limitations of architectural statements and street furniture to take on more flexible, dynamic and fugitive forms.

Dr. Lisa Moran is Curator of Engagement and Learning in the Irish Museum of Modern Art. Projects include the IMMA International Summer School; IMMA | texts; groundwork; IMMA Reading Group; Art | Memory | Place; and What is_? Her research focuses on commemoration, memorialisation and art in public spaces.

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On the Ground

“A pebble in the pool”: A simple usable model for a free time-limited psychotherapy clinic

Ally Kessler, Marta Bolognani and Nicola Padel

As if we needed reminding – the pandemic has thrown into high relief the appalling inequalities, the politically-induced suffering, and the decimation of provision for mental distress in our society.

What the pandemic also did for our profession was to insist that we accept and even embrace working with our patients remotely.

The coming together of these two things motivated us at Severnside Institute of Psychotherapy in Bristol to start a free local psychotherapy service, Orchard Therapy, for those who can't afford to pay.

The ethos behind the project arose from long-standing feelings of anger and helplessness and a wish to do something directly. We were enthused by Elizabeth Danto's book (2005) on the free clinics of the 1920s and 30s, ultimately lost to fascism. Our aim was to create a small free

service, keeping things simple, sustainable, and *possible* at every stage – minimum admin, minimum costs, maximum accessibility for both patients and therapists, using resources that we already have – no need to fundraise.

“Our aim was to create a small free service, keeping things simple, sustainable, and possible at every stage”

We want to share our model in the hope that others might feel inspired to set up something similar. We're also happy to talk directly with anyone who's interested.

The model is very simple in outline:

- 10 sessions, offered remotely pro bono, no fee to patients.
- Referrals from GPs known to us and carefully briefed.
- No need for clinical oversight – all therapists are qualified, registered, insured members of Severnside (no trainees), and patients are considered part of their private practice.

The project is supported by Severnside, and the administrator also worked voluntarily. Her participation was key to the project and the good news is that it didn't require a great deal of her time.

The patients

The main criteria for inclusion are inability to pay, even low-cost, and a wish to talk to someone about their distress. They also have to have access to at least email and a phone.

The GPs

We spelled out our referral criteria and gave the GPs a handout for patients. GPs were sourced from our own contacts – those we knew to have an interest and a feel for our work.

GPs who have chosen to be in Balint Groups would also be an ideal source of patients. Balint groups are part of the training of both GPs and psychiatrists and involve psychoanalytically informed exploration of the doctor-patient dynamics in the consulting room.

The therapists

Ten therapists went forward into the pilot from our organisation of 64, mostly for reasons of shared ideology and a wish to contribute. 13 therapists are in the current round.

The admin

We couldn't run a waiting list so frequent communication was kept with the GPs

about spaces. A web portal and email templates were created for patients and therapists. Severnside trustees and executive were keen for us to go ahead.

The learning

Having attended the Freud Museum's thought-provoking online conferences, "Psychoanalysis for the People", it became clear how important it is to feel part of a wider movement, a community of people interested in working in this way. We've set up a termly seminar to discuss some of the issues arising – such as, working with a time-limit, the dynamics created by no fee. We're developing small groups for peer supervision.

Research

We're also running qualitative research alongside the project to evaluate it in terms of therapists' experience, patients' experience and professional insights – based on therapists' interviews, participant observation of group meetings and survey of the patients' feedback. Some of the results from this appear below.

The therapists' experience

It was generally felt helpful to have had experience of time-limited work, but not essential. Our brief was to be friendly, not weird or anxiety-provoking (not on purpose anyway), to maintain awareness of the time-limit and what that might mean for

the patient, and to be prepared to address negative transference quickly and simply in order to maintain the working relationship. Unconscious processes and transferences were very much in our minds as usual and used with discretion and an eye on the ending. Many therapists found saying goodbye painful and poignant – the work was powerful and the relationships formed intense and meaningful.

The role of the GPs

This turned out to be more important than we realised at the beginning. The GPs made a frame around our 10 sessions. In essence they assessed the patient's capacity to use the work, mostly very well. The GPs were also there for the patient after the 10 sessions were over. The therapists had a sense of being part of something beyond private practice, and for some this meant that some risks could be taken in opening things up for the patient, even over such a short time. In terms of transference to the service we offered, the GPs' recommendation seemed to be validating and to help with a hopeful approach to the work.

Patient feedback

We won't share the patients' exact words – but in their written feedback they spoke of how helpful it was to talk to someone who didn't judge, that they have gained more understanding and acceptance of themselves, and a possibility of reaching

out for similar help in the future. Importantly for our psychoanalytically informed approach, one patient mentioned how the therapist was able to pick up on things mentioned in passing, and another how they had been able to think about things in a different way.

There was no negative feedback – and there may be many reasons for this, which we have thought about a lot. We called it "problem of gratitude" – but is it actually a problem? It's only a problem if you're intending to work through deeper issues of aggression etc, whereas in our 10 sessions we intentionally made use of what might, in an open-ended therapy, be considered a honeymoon period.

Finally, from one of our therapists:

"...my patient felt she was helping some women she sees and her younger sibling who has the same trouble – it's the pebble in the pool aspect of psychoanalytic work – I would rather see three patients a year for ten sessions each than have one open-ended patient low cost – it's the greatest good for the greatest number."

Ally Kessler is the founder of Orchard Therapy, and a training therapist and supervisor with a private practice in Bristol. She is interested in the application of psychoanalysis to communities who traditionally have no financial access to it. Contact: allykessler1@gmail.com

Dr Marta Bolognani works as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice in Bristol and is a lecturer in psychoanalytic theory and research at the University of Exeter.

Dr Nicola Padel began work as a GP, attending Balint groups at the Tavistock, then worked as a psychiatrist. She now has a private psychoanalytic psychotherapy practice in Bath.

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PPNow 2022

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Saturday 12 November

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- A consideration from Professor Ankhi Mukherjee on her latest publication *Unseen City: The Psychic Lives of the Urban Poor*, an interdisciplinary study of the relationship between global cities, poverty, and psychoanalysis across three continents, and the issues this raises.
- A panel discussion on race with Helen Morgan, Fakhry Davids and Maxine Dennis.
- PPNow 2022 Awards.

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This award focuses on training and supervision that gives substantive and considered attention to thinking about diversity (in its broad definition to include race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender etc). This may include, for example, novel curriculum developments, projects to address inclusivity in supervision and training, programmes that address barriers to accessing training.

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Review

Wish You Were Here?

Emmanuelle Smith

A film about a missing child raises questions about what sometimes goes unseen in mothers.

Maggie Gyllenhal's directorial debut, adapted from an Elena Ferrante novel, follows the story of Leda, a 48-year-old literature professor and linguist who is spending the summer alone on a fictional Greek island.

The Lost Daughter opens on a nocturnal beach with present-day Leda, brilliantly played by the prolific Olivia Coleman, dressed in white and collapsing wordlessly onto the shore. This scene, which we return to right at the end of the film (no spoilers) very much sets the tone.

A subtly threatening mood permeates the whole film, placing it firmly in the psychological thriller genre.

Still, brighter shots follow. Leda arrives on

the island with her suitcases; sunbathes; swims; writes – all against an idyllic backdrop (particularly enticing when watching, as I was, in the middle of a cold and grey British winter). At first, Leda is alone and her few interactions with others don't give us much of a sense of who she is.

This changes when Leda clashes with a large, noisy extended family who ask her to move along the beach to make space for them.

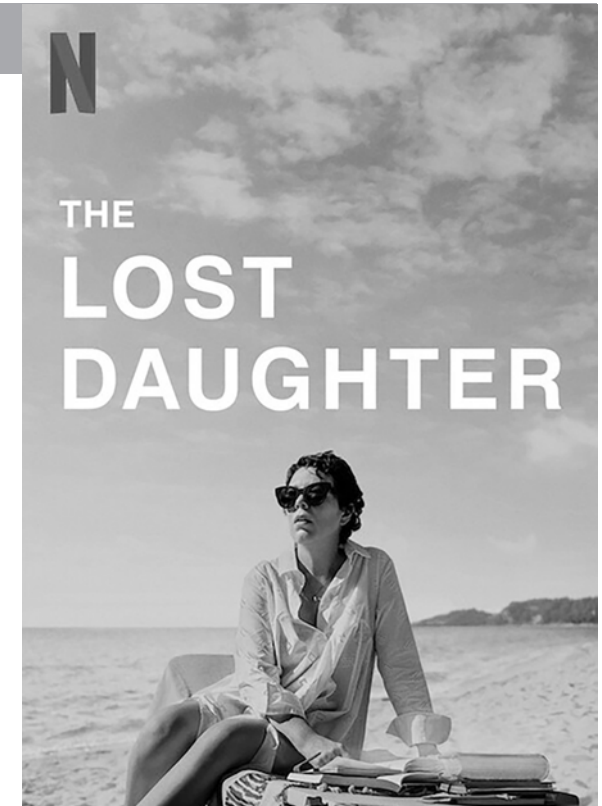
"No, I'm fine here," she replies. The family is insistent, explaining that they all just want to sit together.

"I understand that, but I've no desire to move," she replies curtly.

This is the first insight we have into Leda's character – strong, not altogether likeable,

and in any case not out to be liked. Other interactions, particularly with two men on the island – one young enough to be her son and one old enough to be her father – give us further insight that Leda is unbalanced and unpredictable, at times solid and at times behaving quite strangely, as though on the edge. Of what, we don't yet know.

“Leda becomes obsessed with Nina and Elena, a young mother and child who are part of the beach clan”



Leda becomes obsessed with Nina and Elena, a young mother and child who are part of the beach clan. She embroils herself in their lives when Elena goes missing on the beach and Leda is the one to find her. That lost daughter, at least, is found. But later that same day the child's precious doll goes missing and she is inconsolable. The family, who we are led to understand are “not good people”, search the island. What they don't know and we do is that Leda has taken the doll.

Continues on page 27

During the frantic search for the missing child, Leda remembers her younger self (played by Jessie Buckley) shouting out desperately for her own lost daughter on another beach. We are frequently transported back to this earlier Leda, leaving us to wonder whether the aforementioned threat is to be found in the past rather than the future.

Young Leda is an early-career academic with two young daughters, married to a man who is also an academic and often absent. We see her trying to work in a small flat with her children around and we see the violence, both verbal and quasi-physical, that she inflicts on them as she struggles to manage her emotions under intense pressure. In one particularly chilling scene, Leda is working on a translation and recites “Siamo disturbando” (“We are disturbing”) over and over again with her eyes closed. Meanwhile, her daughter is asking, “Mama, how do you write ‘volcano?’” and eventually hits Leda to try and get her attention. It doesn’t end well.

We imagine that present-day Leda might identify with Nina, who is similarly ambivalent about being a mother. Indeed, Ferrante’s novels, *The Lost Daughter* included, subtly subvert the motherhood industrial complex that has dominated not only popular culture but arguably psychoanalysis too.

Dr. Orna Guralnik (of *Couples Therapy* fame), writes that “in psychoanalysis we circulate a well-rehearsed set of potential Mother-failures.” She goes on to list them: “the phallic mother”; Klein’s bad breast; the “seductress/slut”; “Green’s altogether dead mother”, and so on.

“Amid this parade of grotesque narratives,” writes Guralnik, “Winnicott is considered the benevolent patriarch, reaching down from his supreme perch and allowing the mother her depression and overwhelmedness, cheering her on for her heroic not-retaliating, and in her compromised state encouraging us to still consider her ‘good enough.’ Thank you?”

The wry interrogative “thank you” points to the implicit judgement that could still exist within Winnicott’s “good enough”. And good enough mothers have become a TV trope in themselves, with shows such as *Workin’ Moms* or *Motherland* depicting supposedly chaotic and overwhelmed mothers doing a sterling, “good enough” job nonetheless.

“Leda... belongs in another category altogether, one that is rarely portrayed”

Leda, though, belongs in another category altogether, one that is rarely portrayed and remains something of a cultural taboo – that of mothers who leave their children. It transpires that following a sexual encounter with an academic colleague at a conference, she leaves her husband and children, not returning for three years. There is a hint, as she leaves, of some intergenerational trauma involving her own mother (Leda begs her husband not to take the girls there after she has left), and in that moment we can see Leda as both doer and done to, as victim and perpetrator – a lost child herself, as well as a stealer of dolls.

Guralnik writes that “Ferrante speaks to motherhood actually being a dangerous

business; Ferrante’s women abandon children, lose them, steal from them, and are relieved once they’re grown and gone.” There is relief too in the portrayal of a complex anti-heroine holidaying alone – and holding her own – with her thoughts and memories.

The Lost Daughter is available to stream on Netflix.

Emmanuelle Smith is a psychodynamic psychotherapist in training.

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Review

The Messy Business of Being Human

Ambrose Hogan

Pain, mortality and compassion are among the themes of an imagined meeting between Freud and CS Lewis.

Back at the start of the year, the King's Head theatre in Islington staged a revival of Mark St Germain's 2002 play *Freud's Last Session*, which imagines a meeting – one that did not take place – between two of the twentieth century's most widely-read moralists, C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud. The production garnered rave reviews and as a result there are going to be further performances of it this summer.

The play is set in September 1939, shortly after Britain has declared war on Nazi Germany. Freud is now in London, suffering from advanced mouth cancer and just a few weeks away from dying. Lewis pays him a visit and the play unfolds around a series of dialogues between the two men – one a Christian apologist, the other an atheist – over some of life's biggest questions: its purpose; good and evil; the meaning of suffering; and the existence of God.

“Lewis pays him a visit and the play unfolds around a series of dialogues between the two men – one a Christian apologist, the other an atheist”

These are issues of personal concern to me, as is the boundary between acting and psychology. Before I got gazumped by the King's Head, I had been planning a semi-staged revival of the piece myself. The King's Head production also caught my eye because of a review in the *Guardian* which informed readers that the part of Freud would be played by Julian Bird, professional actor and former



© Alex Brenner, Kings Head Theatre, *Freud's Last Session*

psychiatrist. Dr. Bird's Freud, bouncing off Seán Browne's necessarily straighter foil as C. S. Lewis, is enthralling and gives one the impression of being in the room with the great man. Often holding the space in a vivid recreation of the famous portraits (I'm thinking in particular of the magisterial photograph by his son-in-law,

Max Halberstadt), his performance brings to life a Freud of our imaginations who is at the same time grounded in the facts of history.

This is the basis of acting technique – the “psychological” technique that has been developed from the writings of

Stanislavsky: research the character, then imagine the part in the context of the play you are performing, drawing on your own personality, memories, body, feelings and imagination. But where does one start building the character of Freud for performance? A daunting challenge for any actor, perhaps even more so for someone acquainted with the great man's works. This was a question I was able to put to Julian Bird in an interview in preparation for this review. Pain, came the answer – that was where Julian Bird started: physical and psychical pain.

And what pain: the text explicitly engages with the death of Freud's beloved daughter Sophie (in that other pandemic of a century ago), a traumatic loss closely followed by that of her infant son from tuberculosis only two years or so later. On top of this psychic pain, Freud had to bear the bodily agony of his cancer, the cancer that finally led to his death in 1939.

“On top of this psychic pain, Freud had to bear the bodily agony of his cancer”

The cancer provides one of the more physical events in the play (most of the

drama is centred around the jokes, verbal fencing and philosophical badinage between the two men). Towards the end of the performance, Freud's dental prosthesis, “the Monster”, needs to be reset. Normally this task is undertaken by Anna – only by Anna – but Anna is not available. So Lewis, compassionate Christian that he is, helps, persuading the reluctant Freud to accept assistance. What follows is an intense minute or so in which Freud and Lewis struggle to insert the prosthetic. In some senses, this moment is the centre of the drama, as the actors perform a bloody, messy, painful, almost violent struggle: two men grappling with a metonym of human suffering, replicating homosexually the daily oral penetration of one of them normally undertaken by his lesbian daughter.

Images of the prostheses (incrementally increasing in size as the cancer spread) are available – I found them in an article by Jane Taylor (2018: 190), who had been able to photograph them in an exhibition held at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. In her article, Taylor makes the point that the image of the prosthesis is deployed by Freud in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*:

Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much

trouble at times...Future ages will bring with them new and probably unimaginably great achievements in this field of civilization and will increase man's likeness to God still more. But in the interests of our investigations, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character. (Freud, SE 21: 91-92)

People suffer, and that suffering is at the core of therapy (as well as the Christian religion).

“People suffer, and that suffering is at the core of therapy”

Hovering in the background is Anna, and everything that she represented. In formal terms the play is a conventional ‘two-hander’ with only the actors playing C. S. Lewis and Freud always on stage, but that dyad is troubled by intrusions in the shape of the wireless news (always bad news) and Anna, telephoning in to clarify something about her father's treatment. Anna never arrives, and in the dramaturgy of the play this makes her a little like Edmund at the start of *King Lear* – ever present, problematic, usually silent, celebrated and yet an embarrassment, somehow disturbing.

Freud's Last Session runs at the Kings Head Theatre, Islington, London: 12th July and 6th August.

Dr Ambrose Hogan is a Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council and a lecturer at the UCL Institute of Education. His research explores how psychoanalysis can help teachers understand the day-to-day practice of teaching in schools. He has a theatre practice and begins a psychodynamic psychotherapy training in the autumn.

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Speaker: Dr Tamara Feldman.

Venue: Hallam House, London W1W 6JL. **Fee:** £40.

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Save the date

We are launching a new online lecture series, **Lectures from the Tavistock Relationships Model**, in which leading figures from the clinic will outline key aspects of our distinctive approach to psychoanalytic couple psychotherapy.

A Psychoanalytic Understanding of the Couple Relationship: Lectures from the Tavistock Relationships Model

Mary Morgan will describe the particular ways in which the couple relationship is viewed and treated in couple psychoanalytic psychotherapy as it has evolved over nearly 75 years at TR.

She will consider how relationships are influenced by the past, shaped in the present and have the potential for future development with reference to the concept of the 'creative couple'.

Date and time: 30 September 2022, 6pm–7pm

Speaker: Mary Morgan

Venue: Online via Zoom

Fee: £10

BOOK NOW:

Tel: 020 7380 8288

Email: training@TavistockRelationships.ac.uk <https://tavistockrelationships.ac.uk>