NewAssociations

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NEWS, ANALYSIS, OPINION FOR THE PSYCHOANALYTIC COMMUNITY | ISSUE 38 AUTUMN 2022

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Holding onto Hope

Sarah Majid

This year, we have been shocked by the unfolding horror of events in Ukraine. Following Russia's hostile attack in February, 5 million Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes in search of safety, and an estimated 14,500 Ukrainians have died. The war has been going on since 2014, but this year the world took notice and all over Europe communities mobilised to come to their aid. By August 22 over 100,000 refugees had arrived through Government Schemes and been accommodated in private homes across the UK. It's been inspiring to see how our community has stepped up to support individuals and families in finding refuge from the horrors of war – keeping alive the possibility of hope and goodness in a society that wants to help.

"5 million Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes in search of safety, and an estimated 14,500 Ukrainians have died"

But the Ukrainians are just one community amongst the millions around the globe impacted by the multiple trauma and losses of war and civil conflict and forced to leave their homes in search of safety. The majority have not been so welcome on our shores. UNHCR estimate the current refugee population at 26.6m, with significant numbers from Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Central African Republic and Eritrea. A significant proportion have experienced direct threat to their lives or witnessed the death of family members in bombing or brutal massacres. Estimates suggest approximately one third have been tortured in detention, frequently linked to religious or cultural persecution. Many of the refugees are fleeing climate induced famine in addition to political and social instability There are also increasing numbers of victims of trafficking, who may have been sold as children or voluntarily lured by false promises of work – only to find themselves in enforced labour or sexual exploitation. The majority of refugees are accommodated in neighbouring countries, nearly 7m in refugee camps, with the largest number in Turkey. A small proportion embark on arduous and dangerous journeys to Europe and the UK. The dangers are compounded by secrecy, smuggled by agents in lorries and precarious small boat crossings into a country that doesn't seem to want to help at all.

Prior to the events of 2022, over the past decade we have had approximately 35,000 asylum applications per year in the UK, last year including 3,000 unaccompanied minors. Given the hitherto predominantly denigrating narratives of asylum seekers as draining the system, with anxieties of being overwhelmed by unwanted intruders, it is striking how small these numbers are in absolute terms. They are also considerably lower than those seeking asylum in other European countries such as France and Germany who have well over 100,000 new arrivals every year.

In my role as an expert witness assessing asylum seekers for the Immigration Tribunal, I can say that these count amongst the most severely mentally unwell people I have seen as a psychiatrist – and the most disadvantaged in terms of social and mental health care. The majority of the cases are in a complex traumatised state with characteristic symptoms of PTSD alongside chronic dissociative or depressed symptoms with emotional dysregulation contributing to suicidality, self- harm or substance misuse.

Psychoanalytically we can understand how the severity of traumatic events have overwhelmed the ego's capacity to process and filter experience. Some present with paranoid or psychotic symptoms, in which the memories of the past are experienced as real in the present by an ego unable to hold onto a sense of time. We see how the reality of the trauma typically involves not just the devastating loss of loved ones, but the loss of containment that family or community members might ordinarily provide. Moreover, when the trauma involves the turning against the individual by the state there is a devastating attack on any internalised sense of goodness, such as the idea of justice or a parental state offering care and protection. With this profound loss of good objects, an individual may be plunged into a regressed paranoid-schizoid world, dominated by violent persecutory objects, terror, helplessness and despair.

In this context, the possibility of asylum becomes essential for both physical and psychic survival, as they desperately hold onto a fragile sense of goodness linked with ideas of justice – typically located in the West. This beacon light of an imagined new "good mother"-land affords tremendous resilience, enabling individuals and families to endure harsh journeys without adequate resources, risking their lives trekking through mountains or hidden in lorries or boats. Whilst we might view this as "false hope", this capacity to idealise seems crucial to survival.

"Asylum seekers are required to 'prove' their entitlement to refugee status"

Yet, for so many, actual arrival in the UK brings harsh and bitter disillusionment. Asylum seekers are required to 'prove' their entitlement to refugee status, and in recent years typically 50-60% have been refused at the outset. Many become despairing, often making their first suicide attempt after receiving a letter of refusal. We can understand how this rejection deals a devastating blow to the idea of hope itself and the possibility of a good world maintained by a protective parental authority. The rejection is typically experienced as a brutal denial of the reality of their trauma and they feel profoundly failed by those they have turned to for help.

For professionals working with this population it can be gruelling to witness over and again how the traumas and loss suffered in their country of origin may be re-enacted in further experiences after arrival in the UK. Refused asylum seekers begin a new journey – typically

a long process of appeals and refusals that may go on for over a decade. This "violence of uncertainty" is compounded by social and economic deprivation since asylum seekers are unable to work and at best receive money equivalent to half of mainstream benefits. Failed asylum seekers typically fall into destitution and victims of trafficking may be highly vulnerable to exploitative and abusive relationships.

During this period they are subject to multiple experiences that may associate to past traumatic experiences. The repeated requirement to tell their story may trigger intrusive memories, flashbacks, agitation or dissociation. Cross-examination in Court may be experienced as a re-enactment of sadistic and controlling experiences, particularly for those previously subjected to torture and interrogation. Failed or refused asylum seekers are subject to dispersal, detention in an immigration removal centre (IRC) or forcible deportation. Standard procedures such as being forcibly removed by police in "dawn raids" are inevitably re-traumatising for many. For those who are detained there are multiple triggering perceptual associations such as being in a locked cell, hearing keys jangling, footsteps of guards, cries of other inmates. Facing imminent deportation to their country of origin inevitably triggers vivid memories of the events that led them to leave. Any of these factors may precipitate acute deteriorations in mental health and suicidality, with high rates of both in IRC.

When I started this work, I was struck by how few of the cases I saw had ever been referred for psychological assessment despite the majority showing signs of severe and complex trauma and depression. There are many reasons for this – not least the difficulty and reluctance of individuals to talk about traumatic events which may be somatised, or trigger distressing reliving experiences or intense shame. This is inevitably complicated by language difficulties and the limitation of basic resources such as interpreters or GP appointments. These factors are further compounded by homelessness, temporary accommodation or measures such as dispersal disrupting fragile links an individual may have started to build with support workers, and repeatedly disrupting professional attempts to set up care and support.

Nonetheless, for traumatised asylum seekers, an appointment with a mental health professional can be a precious opportunity to share their story for the first time, and to feel heard in the intensity of their distress. Documenting the individual's mental health may also provide crucial evidence for an Immigration hearing. A psychoanalytic encounter can also provide an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the current trauma in the context of earlier events or family history – deepening the individual's understanding of the intensity of their distress and freeing up the possibility of change. This has been the approach of the Tavistock Trauma Consultation Service, since its inception by Caroline Garland, and for some individuals the containment of an extended consultation provides an invaluable space for exploration that can help individuals re-connect with internal resources enabling them to engage with help and support available in the present.

For any patient a context of safety, security and support is a crucial factor in recovery from mental illness. This is particularly relevant for asylum seekers, for whom the ongoing uncertainty and instability of their lack of asylum status can be constantly re-activating of trauma symptoms undermining the possibility of working through. Many do not feel able to engage in meaningful exploratory or trauma-focused psychological work until asylum has been granted. For clinicians then, the most important intervention may be to support individuals accessing basic resources such as food, accommodation and emotional and practical support through referrals to support agencies, Community Mental health and Social Services for key worker care and risk management. Non-statutory organisations frequently offer therapeutic group activities that help individuals stay engaged in meaningful activities and with others through art, film, sewing, cooking or music. These resources are crucial lifelines, helping sustain individuals through the continuing asylum journey and providing opportunities for sharing with others who have had similar experiences and may be at different stages of the process.

Working with asylum seekers is inevitably emotionally challenging but can also be very rewarding. A psychodynamic formulation can bring a richness and depth to the mental health assessment and be helpful in addressing specific questions of interest to the Immigration Tribunal. Whilst it is important to remember that the primary duty of an Expert Witness is to the Court, and to remain as impartial and objective as possible in our professional opinion, it is nonetheless an opportunity to bring our psychoanalytic expertise to a hugely significant and practical application. For many, being granted asylum is a vital intervention in itself, providing a foundation of safety and security enabling them to work through past trauma and loss to begin new lives and relationships in the present.

A psychoanalytic approach can also be invaluable in supporting professional colleagues engaged in direct work with asylum seekers through reflective spaces to process the emotional strains of vicarious trauma. We have found this to be important not just for frontline clinicians and support workers, but for interpreters, lawyers, administrative staff and police. The tragic and horrific stories of asylum seekers can resonate with our deepest human fears and fantasies. Staying emotionally engaged whilst retaining a reflective distance can be hard and peer support is vital in this. The intensity of projections can feel overwhelming, with powerful pulls to identification or manic rescue, and equally to shut down, denial, dissociation and re-enactments of neglect. As clinicians we cannot escape the broader social and political context within which we work. As professionals we too can feel like "outsiders" working with the marginalised in a society where so much of their trauma seems unacknowledged, and where the most vulnerable seem to also be the most deprived.

For those of us who have been working with refugees and asylum seekers for some years, it affords heartwarming relief to see the welcome accommodation of refugees from Ukraine. But it also brings into stark relief the societal rejection of the majority of asylum seekers – who have typically been related to as dangerous and unwanted intruders and rivals for scarce resources. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Government's most recent plan to put asylum seekers in offshore camps where they can be forgotten about with no hope of assimilation or integration into a living society.

This has all the hall marks of massive societal splitting between the "good refugees" whom we want to help and the "bad" whom we suspect, fear, hate and want to get rid of. It is hard not to think that this splitting has occurred along a division of self and other, drawn upon lines of ethnic, racial or religious difference. It is perhaps easier to identify and empathise with the plight of Ukrainians as white Europeans who can be trusted and taken into our homes, in contrast to asylum seekers from Afghanistan, or Africa – who seem more suitably sent away to live in the "black" camps of Rwanda. Perhaps also reinforced by geographical proximity with the shared fear of a common and historic enemy in Russia and personal connections making it harder to push the struggles of our European neighbours out of mind.

Dr Sarah Majid is a Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and Camden & Islington NHS Trust. She is a founder member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Mental Health of Asylum Seekers Working Group, and worked for 10 years in the Tavistock Immigration Legal Service which she set up with Dr David Bell.

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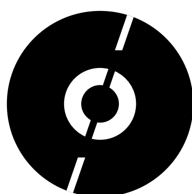
To read more about this work, see Majid, S. (2021) 'Between hope and horror: complex trauma in refugees and asylum seekers' in Stubley, J. & Young, L. (eds.) *Complex Trauma: The Tavistock Model*, London: Routledge.



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www.bpc.org.uk hello@bpc.org.uk

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

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Editorial

The Moral Third

Helen Morgan

One of the pleasures of my job as editor of *New Associations* is taking part in the discussions with the editorial board when planning future editions of the magazine. Thought-provoking conversations arise about current social and political issues, how a psychoanalytic approach could offer a helpful and original viewpoint and who we might invite to provide that perspective. With only three editions a year and a long lead-in time, we can never be that topical, so we have to hope we are dipping into the more subterranean rhythms of the Zeitgeist.

Besides our commissioned pieces, we also welcome unsolicited proposals for articles on matters outside of our discussions but which fit the remit of *New Associations*. The views expressed may not be ours but, providing they are within our ethical framework, expressed according to our guidelines and well written, we agree they should be published; given the printed proviso that the views expressed in any article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the BPC. Recently we chewed over the notion of 'balance' with its implications of matched weightiness and agreed this was meaningless and even dishonest. Suffering, whilst always heavy, cannot be weighed and matched. So, not 'balance' we agreed. The best we think we can do is to put contrary arguments alongside each other and see how they work individually and, through their juxtaposition, in the mind of the reader.

"Suffering, whilst always heavy, cannot be weighed and matched"

In this edition the articles by Leila Barnes and Adam Ferner specifically relate to the analytic profession and our trainings and each take a very different perspective. Placed alongside those of Nini Fang and Adam Goren, we think they raise complex but important questions about how we approach matters such as 'race' within our trainings and our practice. It is perhaps, to use Adam Goren's phrase, a 'clash of convictions.'

As citizens, convictions are inevitable and required if we are to drive change towards a fairer world. But in a society that seems increasingly at war with itself – whether culturally, psychologically or physically – we urgently need spaces where the opposites might meet and be in dialogue. In describing the moral third, Benjamin (2016) states, 'The less able we are to identify with all parts of the self, the more likely we are to give in to the temptation to identify with one side of the doer/done-to opposition . . . The idea of recognizing the other needs to include transcending the binary between weak and strong, vulnerable and protected, helpless and powerful, and especially discarded and dignified.'

"we urgently need spaces where the opposites might meet and be in dialogue"

According to David Smith's essay the search for such spaces in Northern Ireland continues to be an imperative in the current fragile state of peace having been side-lined and ignored in the rush towards Brexit. He refers to the concept of the 'culture-breast' as described by Noreen Giffney as a way of understanding how art and culture in their healthy non-pathological form can provide forms of healing and reparation. They offer the potential for the encounter with the moral third in transitional spaces where convictions can meet beyond the clash of war.

It seems that this key Winnicottian idea is never very far away from the content of *New Associations* as we seek to grapple with complex and often painful dynamics within the public sphere. In this edition the articles on universities, training, organisations, analytic work, psychological warfare, and on play itself have in common a concern for the importance of that transitional space within which we might meet, be creative and learn about and from each other.

"we seek to grapple with complex and often painful dynamics within the public sphere"

Thinking of the 'discarded' in the previous quote from Jessica Benjamin, I come to our opening article by Sarah Majid, 'Holding onto Hope' about her work with refugees. Not all those she writes about are fleeing war – that most extreme expression of a clash of convictions – but a great many are. More and more are forced to leave homes devastated by the impacts of climate change – a result largely of the West's hubristic clash with nature. Whatever one's views on immigration, to read her account of how we treat those who arrive on our shores the 'wrong' way (when there are so few 'right' ways made available) is distressing. As this essay explores, our current approach clearly causes further suffering and exacerbates trauma. People who arrive in the UK from horrific situations followed by harrowing journeys deserve our basic human hospitality even if the eventual decision is that they cannot stay. Instead, they meet suspicion and sometimes downright cruelty in this publicly acclaimed and government endorsed 'hostile environment'. As well as physical care, they desperately need what Nini Fang refers to as 'relational spaces' where their humanity can be recognised and met and I am grateful to Sarah, the Tavistock Trauma Consultation Service and others for persisting in providing such places.

Returning to my role as editor, a less happy aspect of the job is when a member of the board decides it is time to step down. Johnathan Sunley has been a member for many years having started soon after I was appointed as editor so we have worked together on a number of editions. As well as an active and involved member of the board generally, he has also managed the task of reviews editor ensuring each edition carries two reviews of a film, book, play, exhibition, or TV series. Working with interested reviewers, Johnathan has ensured a consistently high standard of articles which have brought an original perspective to aspects of arts and culture within society today. In this edition of *New Associations* he has offered his own review of *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. We are very grateful for all his contributions over his time as a board member. He will be sorely missed.

We are now recruiting to expand the membership of the board and an advert appears elsewhere in this edition. Besides the need to recruit additional members with a general brief, we are specifically looking to enlist a new reviews editor to replace Johnathan. If you are interested in joining us either for this specific role or as a member without portfolio, please do contact me. Full details are given in the notice elsewhere in the magazine.

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Do you need a proofreader specialising in psychoanalytic writing?

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

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On the Ground

Losing and Finding Ourselves: Organisational Consultancy post-pandemic

Gabriella Braun

"Appelby House stood at the end of a long gravel driveway with sweeping lawns on either side. I imagined Jane Austen's Emma looking down from a perfectly proportioned window or strolling out of the dusky blue door and plucking a white rose rambling up the side of the entrance porch.

Pauline, consultant psychiatrist and director, met me by the front door of the private residential service for children with eating disorders. Her face pale without makeup, her hair pulled back roughly, she told me a girl had jumped from her bedroom window while home for the weekend."

(Braun, G., 2022, p. 33.)

This was an organisation I consulted to, helping them to address their dynamics and reflect on the impact of their work. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the work, they often battled with the opposing pull towards and away from life. It's a battle you will know well from your consulting rooms. Using psychoanalytic and systemic thinking in my work with leaders and teams, I find the themes from individual therapy echo, unseen and unknown about, in the workplace. I see on a daily basis the struggle between the contradictory parts of ourselves, including our capacity for love and hate. I come across the pain of facing reality, the tendency to turn a blind eye and resort to denial and delusion, and the ways in which these can corrupt and bring teams or whole organisations down.

> **"I often work with stressed teams and when anxiety overwhelms them, thinking stops"**

I often work with stressed teams and when anxiety overwhelms them, thinking stops. And when splitting, paranoia and persecution take over, atmospheres can become toxic and performance diminishes. Working with surgeons taught me about the crucial place of defences at work, and the problems that occur when they become rigid. Our attachment patterns effect our outlook and the way we relate to others at work. I have seen envy playing out in many ways including managers being unable to support or value their staff.

When organisations cannot digest difficult experiences, they often get caught in repetition compulsion. All organisations deal with change yet most fail to connect it with loss and mourning. This affects their capacity for liveliness, development and change.

> **"All organisations deal with change yet most fail to connect it with loss and mourning"**

Succession frequently fails in the workplace because of unresolved Oedipal issues. These also contribute to tensions and discrimination around difference.

As in us as individuals, there is another side: organisational life, not just work, provides an outlet for our constructiveness, offering containment, camaraderie, belonging and purpose, a place for thinking and creativity, where we can support and appreciate each other. But we have let our drive for ever increasing profit and doing more for less rule us for years. It has dehumanised many workplaces, damaged staff and created a crisis in mental health. Since organisations are key to social health, the repercussions of this have been far-reaching.

The pandemic made us rethink: as it ruptured our lives and re-shaped organisations, we asked existential questions about our lives and work. We thought about the place of work in our lives, its meaning and reward, how and where we work. Covid brought an urgency and conviction to changing the old norms. People refused to return to them, using their agency in a way they didn't before. Along with hybrid working, our expectations about what work gives us and how we are treated there have changed. Many employees now expect their managers to take an interest in their lives not just their job; they are no longer prepared to accept the stress levels or lack of care they tolerated before, but expect the increased support they received during the worst of the pandemic. Many managers and leaders enjoyed the closer relationships they had with staff and being able to show more of their own vulnerability and have continued to operate like this.

We do not yet know how the long-term effect of the trauma from the pandemic. Organisations will have to deal with this, as well as adapting to the return to the workplace with all the different responses that has evoked among staff and learning how to use hybrid working effectively. They are now dealing with staff shortages, the cost-of-living crisis, pending recession, a new Prime Minister, and the Queen's death. Whatever our views of monarchy, she provided a containing figure, perhaps especially during Covid and, whether consciously or unconsciously, for many people her death will create further emotional instability.

The excessive strains and uncertainty of the current environment are likely to push organisations backwards again, but I trust some will be able to hold on to the gains made recently and continue to become more humane.

Applying psychoanalysis, with its unique understanding of humanity to the workplace, not only addresses seemingly intractable problems found there, but can also offer an alternative to the way we work. Yet few organisations have come across this approach. In part, that is because there is a tendency for organisations to opt for quick fixes, but it is also because us consultants have failed to get the ideas broadly known. Wanting to change this, I decided to write a book aimed at anyone interested in what really goes on in the workplace and the way human nature plays out there. To reach that audience, I wanted a mainstream, rather than academic or niche publisher.

All That We Are: Uncovering the hidden truths behind our behaviour at work, was published by Little, Brown in February 2022. Part one, Human Nature at Work, covers the basics of who we are; Part two, Losing Ourselves, explores our destructiveness; and the third part, Finding Ourselves, is about our potential. It is written as stories from my work and also uses memoir and illustrations from well-known organisations. It shows, as the cover flap says, that "try as we might, we cannot leave part of ourselves under the pillow with our pyjamas when we go to work."

My hope is that readers will be left with "no illusions about human nature and the cost of ignoring it in the workplace, yet also uplifted by the potential of all that we are."

Gabriella Braun is the Director of Working Well, a specialist consultancy firm using psychoanalytic and systemic thinking to help leaders and teams understand the hidden truths behind their behaviour at work. She has consulted to hundreds of clients including the British Library, RADA, Tate, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, University of Cambridge and Queen Mary, University of London. She holds a master's degree in Consulting to Organisations: Psychoanalytic Approaches from the Tavistock Clinic; and was a Principal Consultant in the Tavistock Consultancy Service.

Universities

The tensions of teaching psychoanalysis in the neoliberal university

Candida Yates

In 2001, I used the ideas of Winnicott to think about the university classroom as a creative "transitional space" for teaching and learning psychoanalytic studies. I linked my analysis to a "therapeutic turn" in public life where it was argued that the values and practices of psychotherapy had extended beyond the clinic to social, cultural and educational contexts (Brown and Price, 1999; Richards and Brown, 2011). It seemed that an aspect of that development was that universities were becoming less authoritarian – as, for example, in the style and content of teaching and assessment where students learnt psychoanalytic concepts and were assessed through reflective blogs or dream diaries and so on. The more formal and rigid forms of teaching and relating in the classroom had given way to a more fluid, "feminised" way of communicating, evoking the notion of a "facilitating", environment as discussed by Winnicott.

Today, however, there are numerous tensions when teaching and learning psychoanalysis in a neoliberal university setting, where education is treated as a commodity and where the values of the market are equated with academic achievement and self-worth.

Acknowledging the limits of knowledge and learning to live with uncertainty are important aspects of a psychoanalytic approach. However, allowing space for the experience of not knowing, something that Isca Wittenberg et. al. (1983) argue is a pre-condition for learning, seems to contradict the ethos of what is now increasingly an instrumental approach to education as a consumer-led experience.

Much has been written about neoliberalism as the dominant economic system with its accompanying target managerial techniques (Hall, 2011). The ideology of neoliberalism, which promotes competitive market values of individualism and self-reliance, has been discussed in terms of its emotional costs, its impact upon subjectivity, and the unconscious defences and fantasies that are mobilised as a consequence – both at individual and cultural levels of experience (Layton, 2010). In Higher Education, the values of the market permeate different levels of the university organization and are expressed and defended against by academics and students, as education is treated as an individualized consumer experience rather than, say, as a gift passed on between generations.

For those of us who teach psychoanalytic studies in the university, one might hope that the focus on questions of subjectivity that underpins this field would encourage students to develop a therapeutic sensibility which, to cite Christopher Bollas, is "observant of and attuned" to one's feeling and the more hidden dimensions the mind (cited in Richards and Brown, 2011, p.20). However, I am sometimes struck by how competitive anxiety rears its head and a capacity to stay with the unknown is defended against by an instrumental, goal-driven approach to their work. Such anxieties are linked more widely to the growth of audit culture in which universities and their systems of management behave like "over-anxious parents", preventing a proper "attunement" between student and the objects of study. Academics are encouraged to treat students like consumers and their performance as teachers is assessed and quantified by the university via student feedback forms. This system of measurement extends to the competitive pressure for grant capture despite the diminishing pots of research money actually available for academics – many of whom are on precarious short-term or hourly-paid contracts.

Students may be identified as consumers, but it is also worth noting that when it comes to the lecture theatre or a one-to-one tutorial, the power-dynamics of the teacher-student relationship and the powerful feelings and phantasies that are stirred up for students in that relational context remain. Given the competitive, narcissistic setting of Higher Education, where so much is at stake and where the experience of narcissistic injury is widespread, such feelings can range from grandiosity and idealisation to anger, fear and shame.

I lead a module on a Masters programme where students apply psychoanalytic theory to political case studies, and the topic of shame is highly evocative for students who identify with it and its psychosocial links to the experience of misrecognition, stigma and loneliness. The relationship between shame and the pressure to be self-reliant resonates for students who, following the pandemic, want a society and post-neoliberal politics based more on the relational values of care. Phil Mollon (2002) has linked feelings of shame to an experience of not being recognised and a failure of object relations that resonate with a very early experience of being dropped. The shame I am referring to in Higher Education is linked to the fear of narcissistic failure, where for students, fears of not being good enough, of not making it, of not getting "that job" are present and the high fees and student loans exacerbate such fears. Anxiety associated with the pandemic, further reinforce feelings of vulnerability and ambivalence about relationality and may create a shameful self-consciousness and a resistance to forming attachments.

"the topic of shame is highly evocative for students who identify with it"

Object relations psychoanalysis provides a language to unpack such feelings, and the ideas of Winnicott are popular with students in this regard. Whilst Freud's ideas about gender and sexuality are often resisted by students, Winnicott offers a perspective on their experience that is somehow less confrontational and shaming than other psychoanalytic perspectives. I increasingly pick up a desire for relationality from students who want to challenge the competitive individualism of the university and the wider world. Winnicott makes sense to those who are looking for ways to understand the potential for creativity, both in terms of their experience in the classroom, where the space for play may be undermined by the instrumentalism of Higher Education, and wider socio-economic pressures. The dynamics of teaching and learning psychoanalysis echo some of the processes of creativity described by Winnicott, and can open up spaces to work through such feelings.

Candida Yates is Professor of Culture and Communication at Bournemouth University. She teaches and researches Psychosocial Studies and its application to politics, culture and society, and has published widely in that field. She is Head of the Centre for the study of Conflict, Emotion and Social Justice at Bournemouth University, a Founding Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council and a Research Associate of the Freud Museum. She is writing a book on the psycho-politics of political leadership and emotion and is leading a new project on cultural identity and the maritime imagination in a post-Brexit, landscape.

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Northern Ireland

All More Human than Otherwise: Northern Ireland and the Cost of Living in Crisis

David Smith

"We already did identity politics in Northern Ireland: it didn't work out so well. And while we were waiting around for Northern Ireland to become more like the rest of the world, the rest of the world turned into Northern Ireland: partisan, oppositional, identity-focused." Nick Laird (2019)

The narrator of Peter Schneider's 1984 novel *The Wall Jumper* remarks on the way in which the Berlin Wall came increasingly to stand as a powerful metaphor in the consciousness of Germans in the West, becoming for them a mirror that reassuringly told them, day by day, who was the fairest of them all. Almost a quarter of a century on from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, there remain at least three dozen so-called "peace lines" in Belfast, many dating back to the late 1960s. Running for almost 30 kilometers in total, these walls draw complex lines in the sandbank, from which Belfast derives its anglicised name, offering protection from inter-communal tensions and at the same time standing as enduring monuments to ongoing mutual mistrust, reinforcing the deep divisions and sense of alienation between neighbouring communities.

To be clear, so much has changed for the better in Northern Ireland since the Troubles came to an end in the late 90s. The long drawn-out peace process succeeded in containing deep-rooted mutual antagonisms, and has paved the bumpy enough way for a new era of relative co-operation and previously unimaginable political progress. This has been underpinned by a pragmatic recognition that Nationalism and Unionism simply have to make respectful room for each other, and to co-create a shared space in which to live as peacefully and as healthily as possible. Northern Ireland has become a more pluralist and ethnically diverse society, and has benefitted from the incorporation of different racial and religious communities (though, to some extent, the old joke about whether someone is a Protestant Jew or a Catholic Jew still stands here). Key sectors like policing and the law, traditionally dominated by Protestants, have become much more representative, and human rights and anti-discrimination legislation have provided the foundation for the emergence of a more equal society, which to some extent could be characterised by the WB Yeats line "all changed, changed utterly" (1963, p.203).

And yet, at the same time and on another level, a troubled mindset persists – the inevitable legacy of three decades of murderous conflict which has left so many lost, physically wounded, and emotionally damaged lives in its ongoing wake. Northern Ireland remains a deeply traumatised society. To paraphrase Gerry Adams' infamous remark in relation to the IRA, the underlying tensions haven't gone away, you know, and many issues remain unresolved, with a great deal of trans-generational trauma still painfully raw and dangerously unprocessed. The annual marching season is a period when such tensions and hurt tend to rise to the surface, revealing the fragility and sense of brokenness which lies beneath. At different times over this last quarter of a century, the relative stability of Northern Ireland has felt alarmingly threatened, exposing a frightening sense of unsteadiness - recurrent moments of crisis in which it can feel as if "the centre cannot hold" (Yeats, 1963, p.211) and that "anything can happen" (Heaney, 2018, p.142).

Northern Ireland came into being in 1921. Born out of crisis, violence, bloodshed, trauma, and division, and hundreds of years into British colonial rule, the state emerged out of the turbulent backdrop of the Home Rule Crisis, the Irish War of Independence, and the partition of Ireland. In attachment terms, this lack of a secure base has served to ensure ongoing instability and insecurity for generations to come, and a century characterised by pervasive sectarian tension, hostility, and persecution has followed – inevitably taking its toll and leaving its mark on the mental and emotional state of an embattled population. Set up as an unequal Unionist state, in which the Protestant majority would dominate the Catholic minority, such unsettling foundations have only served to foster the chronic insecurity of a Unionist people who find themselves anxiously attached, dependent upon, and distrustful of, an unreliable and often uninterested parental UK state. Separated from their closest, Scottish kin by the Irish Sea, the Unionist people inhabit a place apart, strongly identifying themselves as British, whilst finding themselves uncomfortably outside of Great Britain itself (with the "and" in "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" itself psychologically unsettling). There is a deep-rooted Unionist mindset of intransigence, with the mantra "no surrender" deeply embedded within the collective psyche – a protective state of mind which works both for and against the peace of collective mind, a defensive digging-in which serves to heighten the fear of what's being defended against. And all of this is exacerbated by the shift in the make-up of the population of Northern Ireland, with the Protestant majority upon which the Unionist state has shakily stood, being steadily eroded over the decades, until the current tipping point, on the verge of a Catholic majority which, in turn, will present an interesting test of the deeply-held Republican commitment to minority rights here.

Long characterised by institutionalised inequality and sectarian discrimination, Northern Ireland for decades provided what David Trimble in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (1998) acknowledged as "a cold house" for the disadvantaged Catholic minority, who to some extent found themselves both abandoned by their maternal Irish state at birth and neglected at key developmental stages by their paternal UK state. Feeling themselves as very much alone, alienated, and oppressed within what is perceived by many as a foreign, enemy state, the Nationalist community have also, at times, had to manage a detached distancing on the part of their cousins in the Irish Republic, who have tended to look uncomprehendingly askance at Northern Ireland, as a place very much apart. Two unstable communities, ill-at-ease with each other, have emerged and developed side by side; twin communities, with much more in common, and much more alike, than either would want to recognise – each having consistently and forcefully projected so many unwanted aspects of their personality onto the dehumanised and distorted version of the other, with the narcissism of small differences very much in play, making it difficult to acknowledge their shared humanity, suffering, and insecurity. Both communities have had to manage dreadful collective anxieties in relation to deeply-held fears of abandonment, engulfment, and annihilation, which has both fed into and generated profound hostility and pervasive persecutory anxiety.

The Stormont Assembly election of May 2022 marked a seismic and potentially historic and transformative shift in the sands of the Northern Irish political landscape, with Republican Sinn Féin outpolling the Democratic Unionist Party to take 27 of the 90 available seats, to the DUP's 25. This marks an unprecedented electoral mandate for a Republican First Minister within this Unionist state, and an endorsement of a party committed to replacing the two-state island of Ireland with a single, united state. Just as remarkable was the huge surge in support for the cross-community Alliance party, consolidating and extending its own recent electoral gains. Under the progressive leadership of Naomi Long, whose effigy was shockingly and hatefully burnt on Loyalist bonfires in the run up to this year's Twelfth of July celebrations, Alliance more than doubled its existing Stormont representation to take 17 seats, drawing broad support – including that of younger Protestant people alienated by the DUP's ongoing fundamentalist intolerance of homosexuality.

The Alliance vote seems to reflect a growing appetite within the electorate to normalise politics here, and to embrace change – with the move away from voting along traditional sectarian lines signalling a desire to transition beyond the binary of Orange and Green. Old certainties have gone, and this, in turn, has activated traditional defensive responses, with the DUP using its effective veto to shut the devolved administration down. In its characteristically intransigent refusal to nominate either a Deputy First Minister or a Speaker, the DUP has been able to frustrate the democratic process, to the extent that mid-August marked 100 days of post-election Stormont inaction, at a time of devastating health and cost of living crises. Viewed in terms of enactment, this could be seen both as a repetition of parental neglect and as reflecting a powerful pull towards both crisis and the drama of crisis. Northern Ireland is a place where a great deal gets enacted and externalised, with the Troubles itself a long drawn-out, uncontained externalisation of pain, sorrow, and trauma. And this latest breakdown in what appears increasingly

Northern Ireland

to be an unworkable Assembly comes in the wake of a three-year Stormont standstill between 2017 and 2020, characteristic of the freeze response to unprocessed trauma.

Ironically, the pro-Brexit DUP refuses to share power because of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which itself has emerged out of Brexit, effectively establishing an Irish Sea Border which to some extent separates Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK in terms of trading, and represents an existential threat to the Union. The ongoing Brexit fallout continues to have a very unsettling impact within Northern Ireland, where a majority of the population voted to remain within the EU. Most upsetting is the strong sense that any consideration given to the impact on peace here was, at most, an afterthought by an either unthinking or uncaring UK government which, alarmingly, was prepared to play fast and loose with the stability of a fragile enough state. Brexit itself can usefully be viewed in attachment terms, as a referendum on whether people feel safer oriented towards a secure base in London or in Brussels; from this perspective, the apparently deeply divisive vote can also be seen as a moving illustration of a shared relational insecurity, bringing to mind the interpersonal dictum of Harry Stack Sullivan (2013) that we are all much more simply human than otherwise.

The recent election has made the Republican goal of a United Ireland seem more realisable, increasing pressure for a "border poll" referendum to determine whether Northern Ireland should remain within the UK. But, as what's happening currently in both the UK and the US has shown, the prefix United does not in itself ensure any degree of unity, and the one thing that a united Ireland would seem to guarantee is a divided Ireland. It's vital to bear in mind that Northern Ireland itself is not the problem here, but rather it's been a solution of sorts to a deeper, underlying problem which has still to be resolved – how to respectfully accommodate sectarian difference, and to find ways of living together that are not based on the perpetuation of a mutually diminishing dynamic of dominator and dominated?

This year marks the centenary of the publication of *Ulysses*, in which James Joyce sets out his world view of the cyclically repetitive, eternally recurrent nature of historical development – a sense that is reinforced, again and again, in Heaney's classical verse translations. Describing the future as "the sister of the past" (1960, p.249), and likening history to "a tale like any other too often heard" (p.30), Joyce is concerned with the notion of the apparent "irreparability of the past" (p.816). "History," declares Stephen Dedalus, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (p.42). Critic Terrence Killeen (2022) suggests that this recurring nightmare of history is one which has to be lived before it can be awoken from, and culture provides a vital forum for such living.

Ulster-based psychosocial theorist Noreen Giffney (2021) has recently introduced the concept of the culture-breast, emphasising the vital, formative influence, in terms of psychological development and emotional wellbeing, of cultural experiences. Encounters with cultural objects are seen as feeding experiences for the mind, with the potential to provide much-needed framing and containment of emotional distress, helping to alleviate the anxiety-inducing too-muchness of life, and providing invaluable opportunities for learning from experience. In terms of psychic life, Giffney makes a distinction between a relationship to the culture-breast which can be nourishing, and one which can be pathological, and she is concerned with the difference between an individual's identification with a cultural object and the capacity to make creative use of it. The cultural environment within Northern Ireland is one which has the potential to be both nourishing and toxic – providing cultural objects which, in their nature and the use to which they are put, can be reparative, helping to process and heal the trauma, or destructive, causing further damage, and in the process serving to reinforce prejudice, evoking further pain, and deepening societal divisions. Northern Ireland's legacy of trauma has inevitably impacted upon the quality of individual and collective psychic space in which to engage culturally, with cultural objects inclined to be incorporated into a restrictive and reductive defensive system through which cultural encounters are filtered – thus inhibiting greatly the opportunity for experiential learning and emotional development.

Throughout the course of the Troubles, which was characterised by the intimidating notion that "whatever you say, you say nothing" (Heaney, 1998, p.132), Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney managed in his poetry to find the words to "set the darkness echoing" (1998, p.15). Situating himself "in relation to the wound and the work of Ireland as a whole" (O'Driscoll, 2008, p.143), Heaney portrays in his poetry a "land of password, handgrip, wink and nod,/Of open minds as open as a trap" (1998, p.132), where the capacity to suffer and to torture go hand in hand; he describes a poisoned, noxious landscape, reflecting an inhibited and inhibiting state and state of mind, with "all around us…..the ministry of fear" (1998, p.136). Determined not to lose himself in what he regarded as tribal dirt, impulses, and identifications, Heaney was not afraid to fly his own flag, for uncertainties, subtleties, and tolerances. Chronicling "a time when the times/were…in spasm" (1998, p.273), Heaney was explicitly engaged with what he himself described as "pressures and prejudices watermarked into the psyche of anyone born and bred in Northern Ireland" (Foster, 2021, p.53), and according to Roy Foster he managed to "bleakly confront buried history, twisted roots, and inheritances" (2021, p.31). Crucially, Heaney was able both to offer a "door into the dark" (1969) and, at the same time, to hold on to a "hope for a great sea-change/On the far side of revenge" and a belief that "a farther shore/Is reachable from here", where "hope and history rhyme" (1990, p.77).

Oona Doherty's 2016 dance piece, *Hard to be Soft: A Belfast Prayer* is a powerfully expressive portrayal of the inevitable hardening of a suffering, traumatised people, who, in Heaney's words "get hurt and get hard" (1998, p.330). And, in stark contrast to the ongoing political impasse, there's an energising and enlivening cultural vibrancy within and around Northern Ireland, with artists describing and re-describing, across a diverse range of cultural media, something of the individual and collective experience of living in a troubled state. From Kenneth Branagh's engaging Oscar-winning boyhood recollection, *Belfast* (2021), to the pain and the sorrows of Anna Burns' Booker-winning *Milkman* (2018), through the harrowingly touching poetry of Gail McConnell (2021), the disarmingly honest songwriting of Joshua Burnside (2017), the haunting tension of Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman* (2017), the thoughtful social commentaries of Máiría Cahill, Malachi O'Doherty, and Susan McKay, the cautionary investigative journalism of Patrick Radden Keefe (2018), the very moving comedy of Lisa McGee's *Derry Girls* (2018-22), the devastating and lasting graphic reminder of *Lost Lives* (2019), to the silent testimony to loss of Colin Davidson's portraits (2015), artists are creatively engaged with the work of mourning – constructing a cultural clearing in which devastating traumatic experience, grief, and loss can be faced into, processed, and worked through, in a way which underlines the shared humanity of the people of Northern Ireland.

At the same time, there is also a toxic cultural underbelly, which speaks of a certain attachment to victimhood, and offers a one-dimensional, self-limiting, and re-traumatising mirror, which only serves to confirm who is the most oppressed of all. This constitutes a form of psychological lockdown, in which cultural objects are produced and used to keep people very much where they are, frozen in time, in persecuted, troubled states of mind. According to Joycean scholar Declan Kiberd (1992) there is a deep desire in Joyce to deliver a wake-up call to his compatriots, shocking them into a deeper awareness of their self-deceptions rather than providing a flattering mirror to feed into any complacent national vanity. Picking up on the leitmotif of the mirror in *Ulysses*, Kiberd (1992) associates to *The Playboy of the Western World* (1912), in which Christy Mahon discards two adopted mirrors, the first emblematic of "colonised self-hatred" and the second of "preening nationalist vanity", in favour of ultimately dispensing with external mirrors and learning to construct himself "out of his own desire".

For Louis MacNeice (1988, p.72), writing in the formative early years of Northern Ireland, the world is both "what was given" and, crucially, "what we make". And this is a sentiment echoed in Heaney's line, "whatever is given/Can always be reimagined" (1998, p.345). This is a key, transitional phase in the life of Northern Ireland; a time for creative re-imagining, and for catching hold of what gets repetitively acted out within both the political and cultural arenas here – an opportunity to catch ourselves on, in Belfast parlance, and to recognise ourselves in each other, and to acknowledge the shared insecurity that is literally flagged up across the traumatised towns and villages of this still troubled state. On a recent visit to Belfast the psychoanalytic philosopher Richard Boothby (2022) suggested that Christianity might rightly be thought of as the religion of the real, par excellence, in so far as it enjoins us to open ourselves to the unknown thing (das Ding) in the other, and, by extension, within ourselves. Noting Lacan's observation (2015) of the irony in Jesus invoking people to "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark: 12,31), given the often unkind and hateful ways in which we tend to relate to our own selves, Boothby underlined the Lacanian emphasis on the importance of somehow embracing what we fear, as far and as directly as we can, in the other. And this, for Boothby, involves facing into what's most traumatising within our own self – an idea which brings to mind Yeats's acknowledgement of the kind of "reckless courage" required to enter into the "abyss" of one's own self (Ellmann, 1986, p.6). It is Northern Ireland's lively and enlivening cultural arena, rather than the deadlocked political arena, which seems to offer both transitional space and objects with which to continue the difficult and challenging journey of reconciliation and healing – a paradoxical process of returning, repeatedly, creatively, and bravely, with imaginative vitality, to the traumatic legacy of the past in order to move forward into a shared, mutually accommodating future.

David Smith is a Belfast-based psychoanalytic psychotherapist, Chair of the Northern Ireland Institute of Human Relations, and Guest Member of the Northern Ireland Psychoanalytic Society.

For references, please email David Smith: davidsmiththerapy@googlemail.com

Society Today

A plea for moderation and open debate

Leila Dubois-Barnes

Speaking about race, gender, religion and sexual orientation can be challenging. But lately it has come to require some courage. I would like to raise my concern about the excesses of a culture – or a binary ideology – sometimes described as "woke" that is beginning to stifle individual voices and to erode our (learning) institutions. According to *The Economist*, this ideology "is not yet dominant, but it is dynamic and spreading" (The Economist, 2020). It is the anxieties of the students, trainees or supervisees I work with in my consulting room that have prompted me to write about this new phenomenon. The plural identities of these individuals reflect an ordinary multicultural, non-heteronormative and ethnically diverse London practice. Yet irrespective of their ethnicity or gender, some of these individuals have feared they risk being labelled as prejudiced or racist, or even of being chucked out of their course.

"the excesses of a culture – or a binary ideology – sometimes described as "woke" that is beginning to stifle individual voices"

Woke is often associated with cancel culture. Other terms linked to it that are much in the news at present include white privilege, cultural appropriation, identity politics and trans. Originally "woke" was a call that questioned the dominant (white) paradigm. It was a way to say "conscious" – having an awareness of injustice endured by ethnic, sexual and/or religious minorities in the US. It gained more widespread use as part of the BLM and #MeToo movements. The premise underpinning an ideology that calls for social and racial equality is formidable and justified. But what about when "it defines everyone by their race, and every action as racist and anti-racist" (*The Economist*, 2020), when the ambient undertone becomes one of you're either with us or against us?

Perhaps this is one aspect of 'culture wars' – a term that has increasingly featured in the media lately. Scholars in America and in Europe are now exposing a culture that is out of control. For example, a Letter "On Justice and Open Debate" signed by prominent figures representing a panel of diverse voices was published in *Harper's Magazine*. These included professors fearing for their jobs, journalists fearing running controversial pieces or writers fearing book withdrawals. The signatories denounced an intolerance of opposing views and a vogue for public shaming in favour of ideological conformity.

Is intolerance of this kind creeping into our own field – particularly our training organizations? In a recent paper, Chan (2020) described her personal journey through psychoanalytic training amidst a heightened cultural polarization of race and ethnicity in America. She writes about aggressive initiatives intended to increase inclusiveness which not only paradoxically reaffirm a racist narrative, but that also contribute to the perpetuation of the diminished educational status of minority students. "Any diversity of viewpoint," she observes, "against the progressive ideology was seen as evidence of racism if you were white or internalized racism if the person identified as a person of colour". With only one version of reality permitted, students have no choice but to submit to compulsory or mandatory values training.

In France, theories of race, gender and post-colonialism are threatening the French ideal of an indivisible secular nation. Its universalist model assumes that all citizens, not groups, have equal rights. In fact, France intentionally avoids implementing "race conscious policies" – hence there is no data on racial, ethnic, or religious origins. In France, one's identity is primarily one's citizenship. It is my experience that working within an Anglo-Saxon paradigm on diversity may not necessarily sit well with a French (black) client for whom secularism may be an accepted modus vivendi. Thus, it is important to keep an open mind about the person we have in front of us in our consulting room, without presuppositions of any kind. If I am curious about the possible unconscious fantasies of a (prospective) patient, I do not make assumptions based on difference, i.e., that the person feels stigmatised because of his/her BAME background or non-binary sexual orientation. Instead, I am interested in what brings us together.

Is it significant that I might be an "ethno-culturally different" therapist or that English is a second language to both of us? Similarly, is it pertinent (or not) that we speaking the same language (French)? Who am I in relation to my client, the host country, (non-) British people and vice versa? This is particularly interesting since my first name and both my surnames can be confusing in terms of my country/ies of origin. Which different parts of the therapist the analysand is and is not relating to offer multiple concrete and symbolic meanings within the transference. It may also potentially reverse a patient's (or supervisee's) perspective and/or generate a realization. For example, one of my supervisee's clients, recognizing himself in the LGBTQ community, had been "othering" someone from the BAME community. My supervisee said about his client: "He is we-ing us [implicitly for having the same ethnicity]". My supervisee wanted to say to his client: "You can't say that!". My understanding of this interaction was a deep wish on the part of my supervisee's client, who had a history of feeling excluded, to "pair" with his therapist*. Sometimes "othering" reveals a longing for "pairing". I also believe that the analytic pair may connect through reciprocated (broken or complex) identities even if they don't share the same culture or ethnicity.

We should not underestimate the power and the pervasiveness of this culture. If institutionalised racism exists, there is now a real danger of increasingly institutionalising censorship/wokeness, of fetishizing differences and self-worship. I also fear this ideology will generate splits between and within communities giving rise to communitarianism and identity drifts. Green (2005) pertinently pointed out that a psychoanalyst's role is not to act as a representative of social conformism and that psychoanalysts should not seek to adapt the patient to society. Some cultures, scholars (and therapists?) may have a different approach. Diversity should also tolerate divergent (or cross) models of thinking and working deemed countercultural. Isn't the life blood of our work to value non-binary over binary? The formation of new perspectives over ideological conformity? Just as trainees need to develop their own style within our analytic paradigms, we need to allow multi-perspectival views in our psychoanalytic institutions – whether we are working within or beyond an ethnic based approach or whether we would rather adopt, despite its shortcomings, a more universalist philosophy.

*I am grateful to the supervisee for this material and for having given me his consent for publication.

Leila Dubois-Barnes is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice in West London and online. She trained at WPF Therapy and holds an MA in Psychoanalytic Studies from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. Leila is a registered member of BPC and is BACP accredited. Address for correspondence: leilabarnes37@gmail.com

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Society Today

What Can We Learn from Reading Lists?

Adam Ferner

At the end of 2021, I was enrolled on an MA in psychoanalytic theory at a prominent London institution. Since beginning my studies, I have become frustrated and saddened to find our course reading list overwhelmingly mono-cultural and white. I gather from colleagues and friends that the same is true for psychoanalytic curricula in other organisations. Having pursued my PhD and later research and teaching in analytic metaphysics, I am no stranger to rarefied areas of study. Even so I have been shocked to find such a glaring deficit.

"I have become frustrated and saddened to find our course reading list overwhelmingly mono-cultural and white"

Quantitative data is not by itself an argument, but it can certainly be indicative of a trend. Of the 618 items on our reading list, less than a third (186) are singly authored by women, with an additional 32 where at least one woman is credited as a co-author. Shockingly only 22 items are authored by writers of colour, and only two of those are women of colour. Of those 22 items, four are duplicates. ("Whiteness", of course, is a flexible category – in this context I am using it to encompass those people racialised as white in contemporary British society.) In contrast to the reading list, the student cohort is diverse, with members from South America, the Indian subcontinent and China. The lack of representation within the curriculum has been a staple topic of discussion.

A reading list presents a narrative. It tells us which authors are important and, through their omission, which authors are not. The effects of white citational practices have been powerfully articulated by, among others, Sara Ahmed. If we conflate the history of ideas with white men, she argues, "we are being taught where ideas are assumed to originate" (Ahmed, 2017, pp.15–16). The implicit message of a reading list almost entirely comprised of white thinkers is that thinking is done almost entirely by white people.

Alongside the whiteness of the authors is the whiteness of their subjects. The clinical studies showcased in our theory modules – most prominently those examined by Sigmund Freud – feature white subjects. By implication, the experiences of white people merit the most attention. It is no surprise that in the 2014 BPC survey, members of colour described how questions about racial difference were repeatedly deemed "irrelevant", and their experiences ignored or dismissed (Morgan, 2021). Nor is it a surprise that there is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that people from Black and minority ethnic groups in the UK experience poorer outcomes from mental healthcare.

Seeing racial difference as irrelevant can be the result of "universalist" assumptions. Freud aimed to develop a scientific practice that was applicable to, and representative of, everyone. Psychoanalysis is often assumed to apply across the board, irrespective of cultural heritage or circumstances of life. Egalitarian as these aspirations may be, the result is an experiential flattening that positions whiteness as the norm. And if texts position whiteness as the norm, then readers of colour are positioned *outside* the norm. This leads to the kind of "double-consciousness" described by W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon; subjects of colour are conditioned into a world-view in which their subjectivity is seen as inferior: "…I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognize that I am a Negro…" (Fanon, 1952, p.197).

It is considerations such as these that have motivated attempts to decolonise syllabuses. The #DecoloniseTheCurriculum movement began as part of the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in 2015. Analyses of the academy as deeply enmeshed with racist, colonial projects began to gain traction, and universities were persuaded – if only by market demands – to turn a critical eye on curricula. Despite reactionary claims by some white commentators, the aim is not to "erase history", but to contextualise it. As Rowena Arshad frames it in her piece for *Times Higher Education*:

"decolonising is not about deleting knowledge or histories that have been developed in the West or colonial nations; rather it is to situate the histories and knowledges that do not originate from the West in the context of imperialism, colonialism and power and to consider why these have been marginalised and de-centred" (Arshad, 2021).

The arguments in favour of decolonisation are clear and compelling. However, as psychoanalysts well know, we are motivated by more than rational argument. In racist, white supremacist societies like our own, white people are invested in their whiteness and, consciously or not, deploy defense mechanisms to protect it from critique, and to minimise the possibility of "white guilt". These mechanisms have been well documented by philosophers and critical race theorists such as Charles Mills, Nathaniel Adam Tobias Coleman, Linda Martín Alcoff, Darren Chetty, Kristie Dotson and José Medina, as well as psychoanalysts such as Farhad Dalal, Helen Morgan, Nicholas Frealand and M. Fahkry Davids. It is a testament to the efficacy of these mechanisms that despite widespread calls for decolonisation and extensive theoretical support, supposedly progressive organisations – like my own – can still produce uncritical, white reading lists.

"The arguments in favour of decolonisation are clear and compelling"

As someone familiar with different academic disciplines, I have been particularly shocked by the obstacles to critical engagement within psychoanalysis. I invite readers to consider why analysts might be particularly well defended against institutional critique.

The concerns listed above have been raised with the faculty, on feedback forms and through student representatives. In meetings, there is a gestural acknowledgement of the problem, but little enthusiasm to do anything about it. On two occasions, members of staff, on recognising the failings of the reading list, have asked students to suggest how the curriculum might be revised. In some ways this is progress, but it is hard not to be cynical about an administrative move that farms out labour from a primarily white faculty to the fee-paying, diverse student body. The way to combat this deficit is not by asking students to course correct. The faculty and their institutions need to invest *meaningfully* in systemic change. Among other things, this involves critiquing the ideas and texts on which these systems are founded, and employing people who are well equipped to do so.

Dr Adam M Ferner is a writer and youth worker based in London. His latest books include The Philosopher's Library (with Chris Meyns) (Ivy Press, 2020) and Notes from the Crawl Room (Bloomsbury, 2021). Website: adamferner.com

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Society Today

An Imaginal Dialogue with You

Nini Fang

It is about time. This imaginal dialogue I am about to have with you is a work I realise I must do for myself in order to hold the relational space open between us: to encounter you and the unspoken dimensions between us and to consider, imaginally, how you might respond to me as if we were in a tête-à-tête conversation (Fang, 2020). I wonder how this imaginal dialogue might destabilise my private assumptions about you, shift my feelings towards you? This requires that I acknowledge that this "you" who I see, feel, and hear so clearly in my head, who I seek to dialogue with now, may just be a version, and not all of who you really are. The real you are undoubtedly much more nuanced, contingent, than what I have lodged within me, much more complex than what can be perceived by me based on collected fragments from our socio-cultural moments together. Despite being imaginal, a dialogue is a relational undertaking: I can only give an account of myself when I perceive that you are ready (Butler, 2005). So, it is with an imaginal sense of our mutual relationality that I wish to address you.

"How dare she have a voice? How dare she act like she has something to say that is of interest to "us"?"

I often wonder: what do you hear when you hear me? What do you see when you see me? The truth is, I often feel that you dislike the sound of my voice and my ways of being. How dare she have a voice? How dare she act like she has something to say that is of interest to "us"? Often, I expect you to dismiss me through subtle gestures: to look away, frown, check your phone or, incessantly, your watch. You see, what I perceive to be your lack of interest in me, in what I have to say, lurks in many paranoid lairs inside me. At times - remember that time? - I expect you to simply cut me off and ask that we move on – only that I seemed to be excluded from this "we" that should be moving on as the one who should be left behind. It was rather disorientating to be addressed in a way as though I was not present – with you. Perhaps it was never your intention to make me feel this way. Perhaps, and just perhaps, it horrifies you to hear this from me. I admit I struggle to dismiss my hurts even now, but, you see, I know so little about what was going on in you and what prompted you to behave towards me in these manners: were you to know this is how I had experienced you, I wonder, would you have related to me differently? Would you at least let me finish my sentence?

"You see, you represent something in/for me that evokes my worst fears and insecurities: to be silenced, attacked, marginalised"

The truth is, I had felt so angry yet powerless in relation to you for so long; I became so afraid of confronting you for fear of an un-reparable rupture with you – for how else might we think together about relational failings, tensions (and longings too!) except in my own mind, if we had stopped talking all together? Powerful states of rage lead to projections. In moments of rage, I could not perceive your vulnerabilities but my own; in the grip of fears, I could not help but relate to you from the place of pre-emptive suspicion and defensiveness as though you were ready to hurt me, take me down, dismiss me. You see, you represent something in/for me that evokes my worst fears and insecurities: to be silenced, attacked, marginalised, and left quite alone in my everyday struggles as a yellow woman struggling against the ancient, stereotype-inflected ideal of how she should be. I, too, am plagued by my own unrelenting complexities. The cultural ideal of demureness may seem an "easier" option, I admit, when I seek to just get on with things, get on with you. Yet with each word I wish I could articulate but swallow, I play a part in reinforcing the oppressive hold of racial profiling against a community that has for so long struggled to speak from the margins and make themselves heard (see an extended discussion on this in my 2021 paper).

"It can be such a challenge to break the silence, to believe in one's own voice, to have faith that one's voice is worth hearing to others"

It can be such a challenge to break the silence, to believe in one's own voice, to have faith that one's voice is worth hearing to others. It has been for me. You see, voices from the margins are not harder to reach, but easier to go un-heard – it requires a different kind of hearing, a psychosocial kind of hearing that attends to the silence, the lost-for-words-ness, the broken-speech-ness and how they convey, in their most authentic forms, the complexities of power as socially and racially construed and personally lived. Voices from the margins need to be re-situated as a way into the lived challenges concerning agency, voice, and misrecognition of the marginalised. They are, in Freud's words, "parapraxes", revealing the uncompromising insistence of the oppressed that the truth, their truth, is not one that can be spoken directly or heard willingly. Attending to these voices is not the kind of work that can be achieved through performative white allyship, less the endless denial and avoidance of our everyday feelings of racism. This is not the kind of work that can be done from a place of white liberal guilt that seeks relief from an over-simplified link between "who is suffering" and "who is responsible".

Feelings are inevitably implicated in how we experience each other. Like now, I feel a little worry that you think that I am taking too long, or worse, by sharing all these with you, you fear me as a threatening outsider who seeks to hold you accountable for some of my and our collective hurts, take something precious away from you, or disrupt something you hold dear? Like you, I can be afraid of hearing your truths for fear of their potential contradictions to mine. These intimate examinations of our own fears, fantasies and impulses for reductive projections may take considerable effort and time. They are what it takes to ready us, and, you never know, one day we might find ourselves in these conversations, for real.

"Feelings are inevitably implicated in how we experience each other"

Nini Fang is a Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy at the University of Edinburgh and the Associate Director for the Centre of Creative-Relational Inquiry. She has published extensively in the fields of psychosocial studies and creative, qualitative inquiry concerning the lived domains of the other. nfang@ed.ac.uk

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Society Today

Prejudice (Beyond the Transference)

Adam Goren

Salma's dad flew into Britain on angels' wings, translucent, luminous, and trailing a fine golden mist. That is what her father told her in contact. Resting sharp elbows on rounded knees, Salma worried thick nail-bitten fingers through close-cropped coal-black hair and eyed me sceptically. "I want to believe him," she said. "It makes everything seem better." What was I, her therapist, myself to believe? Her father was always berating her ignorance of scriptures and cursing her foster carers. He never asked her how she was. There was a history of his cruelty. It was possible he had a serious mental illness.

In as little time as it took to nod acknowledgement, I'd made up my mind against something that didn't make sense to me. I spent the remainder of the session fighting myself to not bulldoze through Salma's fragile doubt with my own certitude, about the nature of their relationship and her father's need for control.

The American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin talks a lot about this battle against battling; against falling into therapy relationships of doing and being done to, of telling and being told. But beyond reference to fear of shame, failure and vulnerability – ours and theirs – Benjamin never really answers the question of why we so need to be right; to "make operative" our reality; why we are so compelled by our own convictions?

> **"this battle against battling; against falling into therapy relationships of doing and being done to, of telling and being told"**

It is Benjamin's emotive language that hints at what's at stake: invasion, toxicity, malignancy, submission to extortion, threat of insanity; a "killer that threatens treatment" both figuratively and literally speaking. This is a clash of convictions depicted as a fight for one's life. Understanding such a visceral sense of existential threat implies understanding the nature of survival. And if we want to understand survival we might just as well ask what it means to be a living thing.

In his arrestingly titled *Every Life Is On Fire*, the biophysicist and rabbi Jeremy England posits the following hypothesis: since the universe is inexorably dissipating towards a kind of heat death, the only way life can exist, statistically speaking, in seeming defiance of this law of thermodynamics, is by absorbing, storing and burning energy faster than universal background cooling. Life seems to cheat the arrow of time, until we're all burnt out. There is no way living organisms could do this, so the neuroscientist Karl Friston and his colleagues tell us, without them being able to sense and adjust to their environment; without the ability to discriminate: hot from cold, poisonous from edible, friend from foe.

> **"Homo sapiens bend so much of their cleverness towards marking and guarding the patch that sustains them"**

Humans use this inferential intelligence to harvest the sun's energy through what's consumed of the planet's resources. We feed ourselves and perpetuate our kind by passing the burning flame to our progeny. Since self-replication and energy-sourcing are core to survival, few things matter more to humans than territory, whether it's a woman's body, a lucrative idea, or a strip of land. Homo sapiens bend so much of their cleverness towards marking and guarding the patch that sustains them. In fact, if you believe the evolutionary psychologist David Geary, even empathy and altruism were forged through evolved territoriality, with coalitional conflict triggering the development of sophisticated cooperative behaviours all the better to exclude and exterminate the competition.

We are not then designed to play it fair. Rather, as Geary suggests, humans come with attributional bias stitched in. Whether it is organ cells detecting and attacking foreign bodies or playground friends singling out their foe, we are primed for individual and collective discrimination, especially where resources seem under threat.

This is why, beyond whatever people represent and trigger in us in the so-called transference relationship of therapy, we experience such high levels of stress and distress at not being able to help. We are triggered into this threat state because the belief systems that sustain our coalitional value, our place in the world, the keep we earn to keep us alive, feel under attack.

> **"Surrender involves being frank and honest about our fallibility"**

It is no surprise that Benjamin refers to "surrender", the language of the battlefield she is striving to abjure, to press for a kind of radical affirmation and acceptance of another's lived experience in therapy. Surrender involves being frank and honest about our fallibility, generating a heartfelt alliance and communicating compassion, she says. Being a good psychotherapist involves being less zealously pre-occupied with being a good psychotherapist. But I think it is more than this. Radical acceptance involves doing a thought experiment in which being a psychotherapist is momentarily inconsequential; in which we remember for a second that when we strip away our prosaic preoccupations and territorial posturing, our separate realities are both indescribably and wondrously varied and yet profoundly of a piece.

Chris Ofili's bronze sculpture *Annunciation* depicts the fused faces, limbs and torsos of two figures: one a life-size black angel, rough-hewn, heavy-winged and brooding, the other a super-gleaming golden feline figure. It's not the kitsch profanity of Mary and Gabriel's carnal tryst that catches my imagination. It is that the same piece of base metal is rendered in such utterly different forms. Ofili's bronze seems to ask a pointed question: What is it we think we're doing when we mark and weigh distinctions between gold and coal, male and female, black and white skin, the sensual and the spirit?

How Salma's dad came to England from Karachi is maybe beside the point, although quite possibly a miracle of a kind, or at least felt by him to be one. What Salma perhaps invites me to reflect on is how it feels to be like her father ecstatically infused with the holy spirit? What could such an encounter with the universe be like? "Dad says that God's light shines through the sun," she tells me later, "which is kind of comforting, because the sun is always there, even when it's not." For a moment we seem removed from an atmosphere of intense loneliness, looking at the summer light pouring through the living room window, kissing what it touches.

Evolved from a talk given at the British Psychotherapy Foundation on the graduation of the 2022 cohort of child and adolescent psychotherapists.

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Play

The importance of a playful state of mind for adults

Joanna Fortune

I am a psychotherapist and I am passionate about play. I would even say that I have been in pursuit of play for most of my career, dedicated to finding ways to ensure that we all live more playful lives and approach life with a more playful state of mind, because I believe that play is a truly extraordinary and largely under-utilised medium in our lives.

Developing and sustaining a playful state of mind, as a means of overcoming adversity and nurturing and sustaining connections, is a core principle of my work. I see a playful state of mind as being essential to our work as psychotherapists. To embrace the power of a playful state of mind in our work we must lean in, come off the couch and play to provoke something within the work.

> Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play (Winnicott, 1971, p. 38).

When I say that play is a state of mind, I am describing play as a neural exercise. Play can help us to up- and down-regulate our emotional arousal as required. It can serve as a brake to slow us down and as an accelerator to speed us up when we feel sluggish and flat. We require ventral (safe and regulated) energy to connect with others. Without this we are travelling pathways of protection rather than connection. Play calls for sympathovagal balance, which is a blending of both ventral and sympathetic (vagal) pathways. Embracing a more playful state of mind is an investment in ventral energy, and it fuels flexibility, adaptability with the aim of supporting lower levels of stress for any of us (Porges & Dana, 2018).

Knowing how to tune into our arousal state and how to slow it down or speed it up, depending on what is needed, is what makes us more flexible and adaptable in the face of life's challenges. This capacity helps to prevent us getting stuck in a heightened anxious state where it can feel hard to switch off and also help prevent us zoning out or switching off for lengthy periods. In essence, this means that play and playfulness serve to keep us regulated and out of survival mode, which can deplete us physically and emotionally. In a playful state of mind, we can enjoy the activation of play without getting hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused. This is about keeping our internal system in check – at least mostly in check, most of the time.

"Not being able to play or to access our playful state of mind is precisely what can render us feeling stuck or blocked in our lives"

Adulthood, and specifically how adulthood prioritises responsibility and being serious (of course we have responsibilities as adults, I do not mean to infer otherwise) should not be at the cost of play and playfulness in our adult lives. Not being able to play or to access our playful state of mind is precisely what can render us feeling stuck or blocked in our lives. Play is the way out of and beyond that stuckness and I wrote my most recent book, Why We Play, as an accessible roadmap towards a more playful state of mind.

> Our concept of play in the West is often bound up with the idea that play is inseparably connected to childhood, while adulthood is connected to seriousness and responsibility. Yes, we change as we grow older and develop – but all this means is that how we play should change and develop with us. In fact, I believe that play is key to helping us develop and reach our full potential. (Rosen, 2019, p. 21)

Winnicott distinguishes the content of the play (overt behaviour or activity) from the act of playing (disposition or state of mind) (Winnicott, 1971, p. 40). This concept enables me to separate out and indeed value the content of play and the act of playing within the analytic clinic. Any time that we are "wondering", we are engaging the imagination and as such we are playing. What is psychotherapy, if not a space to wonder and imagine?

We all arrive at adulthood with a play history. We are storied people and this play history is part of our story. As we lean into a more playful state of mind, we need to first challenge our preconceived notions of what play is and is not and how it might look and feel for each of us. Play is not a box of toys in the corner of a room. It is a state of mind and a way of being. When we are faced with a challenge in our lives and can bring ourselves to a starting point of *I wonder if…*, we are approaching the matter from a playful state of mind. In this way, "I wonder" can be viewed as an indispensable life skill.

Winnicott also said that he wanted to

> Draw attention away from the sequence psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, play material, playing and to set this up again the other way round. In other words, it is play that is universal, and that belongs to health: playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads into group relationships; playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy; and lastly, psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of communication with oneself and others (Winnicott, 1971, p. 41).

What I have found over the course of my 20+ years career is that regardless of the area I was working in, be that children's rights, politics, child abuse/child protection, homelessness, domestic violence or overseas orphanages, my playful state of mind was my greatest therapeutic tool. When I was standing in a domestic violence shelter packed with families, or sitting with a family in the transient housing they lived in or even in orphanages located in forests in rural Russia I did not have access to a clinic room filled with therapeutic toys and props. In such instances, I found that I did not need the props but what I needed to create was connections.

The therapeutic alliance is the play space. But, of course, it must feel safe in order to play because it must feel safe for us to be curious. As analysts we must be prepared to step out of and away from a position of authority so that something more mutual, more playful that is, can emerge. In this regard the mutual playfulness we see in analysis, akin to a state of mutual reverie, can only occur when we experience this connection within the analytic relationship. From this position the analysand can immerse themselves fully in the playfulness and seemingly "forget themselves" within what is the unconscious communication of the analysis.

When embraced fully, a playful state of mind is the constant throughout our lives. It will not eliminate the challenges of life nor will it protect us against the pain and stress that life can bring our way. But it can prepare us for these inevitable and unavoidable experiences. This playful state of mind should not be dismissed as a tool of positive reframing, applying a silver lining to the challenges of our lives. A playful state of mind has space for the darkness of life too. There is darkness in play and it holds just as much value as the lighter side of play does because there are dark and light sides to life too. Being able to play and nurturing a playful state of mind equips all of us with the requisite skills and armour to more easily negotiate a fully lived life. We have to play to live. I believe that psychoanalysis offers a very rich landscape for such playfulness, on both sides of the couch.

Joanna Fortune is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice. She is a published author, newspaper columnist, podcast host and radio/media commentator. She is a doctoral candidate with the Metanoia Institute in Middlesex University. Her 4th book, Why We Play, was published by Thread books UK on September 14th 2022.

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History

A Psychoanalytic Approach in the British Secret Service – Henry Dicks: child of the revolution.

Glenn Gossling

Henry Dicks is mostly remembered as a Tavistock Clinic man. He did after all write the book on the Clinic, but there is much more to him – he was a man who traversed the shadowy undercurrents of 20th century history.

Henry Dicks was born in 1900, the same year that Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* and launched the psychoanalytic revolution. He went to school in St Petersburg, trained as a violinist to concert standard, and witnessed battleship Aurora fire the shell that signalled the start of the Russian Revolution.

During World War I he served with the Artists Rifles, the regiment now known as the SAS, where he was recruited by Military Intelligence and posted back to Russia as part of "Archangel", Churchill's unsuccessful operation to destabilise the new Soviet government.

After the First War, Dicks studied medicine at Cambridge, under WHR Rivers, best known for his work with Siegfried Sassoon as portrayed in Pat Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy* and a notable World War 1 "shell-shock" psychiatrist. It was at St John's College Cambridge that Dicks first became interested in psychological medicine.

After qualifying, Dicks was appointed as Chief Assistant to King George V's physician, Lord Horder, but then took the unusual step of joining the Tavistock Clinic. It was unconventional for a doctor to go into mental health, especially one who had won a gold medal for surgery.

At the Tavistock Clinic, Henry Dicks was part of a new, "younger generation" that included Wilfred Bion, Mary Luff, and Ian and Jane Suttie. Dicks studied under J.A. Hadfield, who had himself trained at Cambridge under Rivers, Myers and McDougall.

The "new generation" were well educated (some with MDs in psychiatry and Diplomas in Psychological Medicine) and being interested in psychoanalytic approaches, owed little allegiance to the founder of the Tavistock Clinic, Hugh Crichton-Miller. In 1931 J.A. Hadfield was involved in setting up the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency (ISTD) with Grace Pailthorpe and Edward Glover. The Portman Clinic was set up in 1933, as the clinical wing of the ISTD, with Hadfield's help. Its aims were the diagnosis and treatment of delinquency and crime; and to research the causes of crime and its prevention.

Hadfield took some of his students with him to the Portman, including Dicks and Bion. At the Portman they were exposed to the new clinic's psychoanalytic atmosphere, as well as working alongside some of the most influential psychoanalysts of their day: Edward Glover, John Rickman, David Eder, Aubrey Lewis and Barbara Low. Bion undertook a training analysis with John Rickman. Henry Dicks was analysed three times, but never felt that it worked for him personally.

Dicks' interest in forensic cases resulted in his Clinical Studies in Psychopathology (1939) and insights into individual and collective destructiveness that served him well in World War II.

Starting the war as a civilian in the Emergency Medical Service, Dicks joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1941. On 2 June 1941, he drove to an isolated MI6 safe-house known as "Camp Z" on an extraordinary, secret assignment. After an initial meeting with three MI6 men, Dicks was taken to see a prisoner known as "J" or "Jonathan." He found himself face-to-face with Rudolf Hess, who just a month earlier had been Hitler's Deputy Fuhrer. Dicks' first impression was that he was looking at a "very sick man", a "typical schizophrenic" or "a schizoid psychopath" (Dicks et al., 1947).

The British government were curious about Hess. It was hoped, on the one hand, that Hess would make revelations about German plans and provide vital intelligence. On the other, that he might give insight into the mentality of the German leadership and whether they were in the grip of delusions. Dicks' initial job was to establish whether Hess was sane or mad (Dicks, 2020), but he was also to study Hess to find out how the Nazi leadership thought and fantasised.

Psychological warfare was a new role for psychoanalysis that developed during World War II, as a systematic approach was taken to studying and influencing the morale of the enemy. Led by Henry Dicks, psychiatrists interrogated prisoners of war and used statistical analysis to build up a picture of political attitudes and personality types (Rose, 1989).

Dicks wrote the important report *Psychological foundations of the Wehrmacht*, using the interrogation of prisoners of war to study the social structure, morale and cohesion of the Wehrmacht and analysed German political attitudes in terms of personality types (Dicks, 1970). Previous debates over "good" and "bad" Germans shifted to personal and interpersonal characteristics that could be used to influence German morale.

This research was used to create more effective propaganda: between D-day and the German surrender, almost 1,000 tons of leaflets were dropped on Germany each month. By the end of the War, even Eisenhower was willing to admit that "psychological warfare has proved its right to a place of dignity in our military arsenal" (Eisenhower 1945).

From his Portman study of individual destructiveness, Dicks was able to study the mass psychology and dynamics of leadership and followership in Nazi Germany. This work continued after the war as Dicks assisted Bion to establish the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and made the acquaintance of several social scientists, including Stanley Milgram, who conducted the famous obedience study.

Dicks' own research into Nazism culminated in the publishing of *Licensed Mass Murder*. Like Hannah Arendt before him, there is little re-assuring in Dicks' conclusions, unless perhaps the idea that psychological understanding of destructiveness and evil helps to contain it.

In the late 1970s, towards the end of his life, Dicks campaigned against the Soviet maltreatment of dissidents, and the use of psychiatric hospitals for this purpose, comparing it to the behaviour of the Nazis.

Henry Dicks died in 1977, a few months before celebrating his golden wedding anniversary with his wife Maud, whom he met before going to Cambridge University and married in 1927 after qualifying as a doctor. Henry Dicks had four children and was devoted to his family life, as one might expect from the man who founded the Tavistock Clinic's Marital Unit.

Henry Dicks, WW2

Further reading

During his life Henry Dicks published: *Clinical Studies in Psychopathology* (1939), *The Psychological Foundations of the Wehrmacht* (1944), *The Case of Rudolf Hess* (1947), *Marital Tensions* (1967), *Fifty Years of the Tavistock Clinic* (1970) *Licensed Mass Murder* (1972).

There are two good BBC radio broadcasts on Henry Dicks: Emily Dicks, '1917: Eyewitness in Petrograd', BBC Radio 4, 25 February 2017 and Daniel Pick, 'The Psychiatrist and the Deputy Fuhrer', BBC Radio 4, 09 Apr 2012. Both include recordings of Dicks speaking (from a recording made by his son) and are available on the BBC website. Henry Dicks' papers are held the Wellcome Library, London.

Glenn Gossling is a communications professional and freelance writer, Glenn joined the Tavistock and Portman in 2018 and has been researching its history since starting. During his career he has won several national awards for his communications work and recently contributed a chapter to a chapter in Lee Ann Montanaro's forthcoming collection on Surrealism and psychoanalysis in Grace Pailthorpe's life and work (Routledge, December 2022).

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Review

'The actual doing' and the limits of analysis

Rachel Chaplin

The work of Louise Bourgeois seems to invite interpretation. But does that bring us any nearer to it?

A Louise Bourgeois exhibition is probably an unnerving experience for anyone. Walking into the first room of the recent Hayward Exhibition *The Woven Child*, a collection of Bourgeois' last works, you're faced by a steel pole supporting vast crude bones, from which hang petticoats, blouses and dresses, fine cotton and silk exquisitely pintucked, darted and embroidered, the vintage clothes you longingly handle at a French street market. But the bones, are they still a bit gelatinous? A bit bloody? Not certain. Behind you hangs a vast white cotton cloth, like a bedspread, a clock marked by 12 appliqués. Each one is a rough drawing of a male and female torso, the man's penis horizontally pointing at the pregnant woman's belly. The (mostly red) ink is scruffily applied, a bit leaky, like bloody sanitary towels (Bourgeois did think of making a quilt out of menstrual cloths). You're absorbing amorphous raw distress.

"Bourgeois' work asks a particularly unnerving question of psychoanalysts. She is doing 'our' stuff"

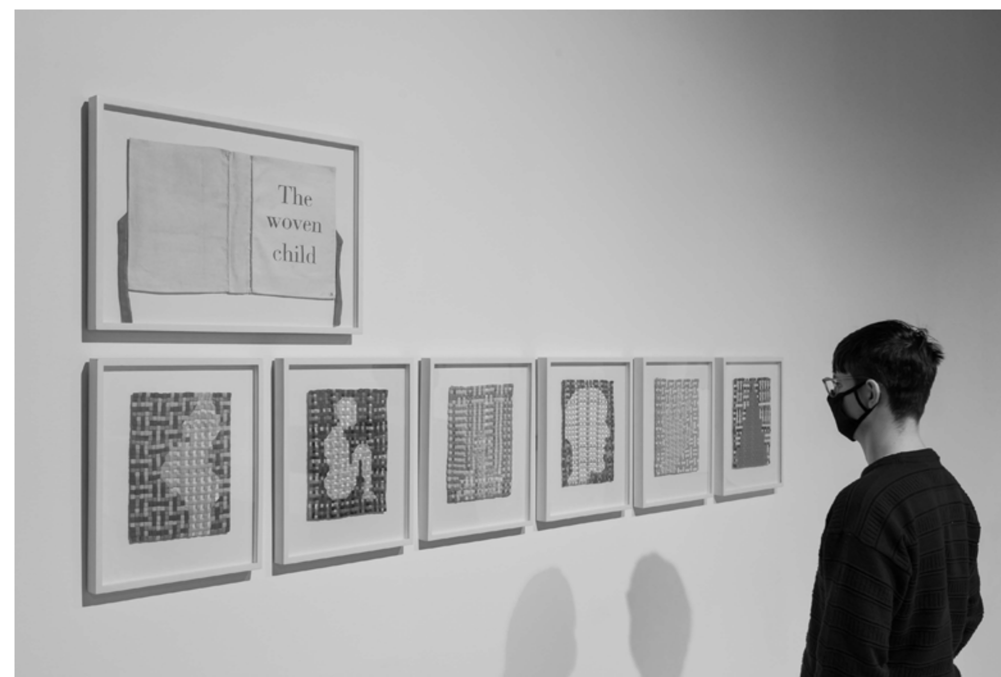
Bourgeois' work asks a particularly unnerving question of psychoanalysts. She is doing "our" stuff: she places anguished parents and children in little Oedipal theatres, constructs blurry fabric sculptures of the primal scene, draws scissors snipping the umbilical cord with a note that she is the "cut child", the "castrated" child. In analysis for 30 years with Henry Lowenfeld, she has all the words, all the interpretations. A serenely beautiful cloth book of screen prints is called "Return of the Repressed"; a sculpture is titled "Conscious and Unconscious". Someone asks on the internet: "was Louise Bourgeois Freud's daughter?" You can believe she really was. She had a "love affair" with psychoanalysis and "believed in Freud". At her request, her Janus Fleuri sculpture, a double-facing phallus/vulva amalgam, was hung over Freud's couch at the Freud Museum in 2012. Not Anna Freud's weavings, which presumably languished upstairs.

But she says, "the truth is Freud did nothing for artists, or for the artist's problem, the artist's torment". If the exhibition came to us as a patient, we would say she is compellingly articulate about her difficulties but still she is in agony. Bourgeois believed that "If one knew why one makes an oeuvre one would not make it" but actually "knows" an awful lot. For example, she is eloquent about the significance of the spider, a leitmotif of her work through many decades. She associates to her mother, patience, reparation and weaving. In extreme old age Bourgeois was up all night drawing spirals and circles, trying to calm her anxiety. Not art as play, more the "compulsion to represent" (Green). Commentators observe how one association slides to another as you look at her work, producing for me at times, a saturation, or over-saturation of meaning: still angry with her father, still looking for her mother, etc. The spider trapped in her spinning? I would have liked to cut her free so she could go off and have a good night's sleep.

She knows about the trap too: "art is a garanty [sic]of sanity but not liberation. It comes back again and again". Her 2000 work *I do, I undo, I re-do*, a wonderful trio of huge towers in the Tate's Turbine Hall, points to the daemonic complexity of repetition. For Bourgeois to "re-do means a solution is found" but I wondered where is "Working Through", the third element in Freud's title?

Unable to renounce the past, ("I cannot and do not want to forget it"), uncured but hopelessly attached to psychoanalysis, does Bourgeois console herself by mocking us? The sculpture *Conscious and Unconscious* juxtaposes two vertical forms. The shorter one is a tower formed of neatly criss-crossed crochet lozenges, magically balanced but a bit unformed. The other tower is elegant: a metal pole supporting a pale blue organic form from which extend arms bearing spools of cotton neatly threaded through needles which loop back to pierce the central shape. I might take this to be cool, ordered consciousness but its interconnecting threads remind me of arborescent unconscious associations and the piercing needles suggest the sharp return of the repressed. I am not entirely sure. It's as if Bourgeois is saying, "You're so clever with your interpretations, how do you like this interpretative indeterminacy?"

Installation views of *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* at Hayward Gallery, 2022. © The Easton Foundation/DACS, London and VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Mark Blower/© The Hayward Gallery



Through her extensive writings (including a thousand pages on her analysis), Bourgeois is out in front of us, building the "interpretive frame for much of the scholarly and critical literature on her art and practice" (Cooke). Controlling the narrative, pre-emptively deflecting our intrusive interpretations, protecting her privacy with *her* screen interpretations: "To be an artist you need to exist in a world of silence".

She is so articulate (so quotable!), but the enigmatic message, something she cannot say drives her on, aware of the limitations of words: "The verbal is too easy and makes me anxious. To talk does not constitute a catharsis. It is the actual doing". The third room of the exhibition contains a series of fabric heads: some on the verge of speech, anguished; others without eyes or mouths. For me, the most expressive is almost entirely blank, white muslin over a form in which you can just about make out the hollows and protrusions of the face. It speaks of mutism and isolation. There is silence too in the weavings made from ribbons, the ends folded in neatly as a good girl would have learned to do (no loose threads for the interpreter to tug at). Some of these weavings are juxtaposed with expressive drawings. But most touching for me was one of these ribbon weavings placed by a sombre striped screen print – nothing figurative or verbal, no "message", very beautiful and very quiet. These works seem to know something else. Here Bourgeois is lost in materiality, the materiality of her childhood. A deep silent doing, and privacy perhaps. But "the ransom of privacy is that you are alone."

Bourgeois problematises the relationship between different modalities of thought, verbal and visual. Her work is both what she made and what she said. For me it's her non-verbal, haptic and visual knowing that most releases her from isolation. A softly sculpted infant body draped over a mother's torso feels just right to me in its bodily feel – the child's utterly free trust in the support of the maternal body. Title: The Found Child.

Rachel Chaplin is a Training and Supervising Analyst of the British Psychoanalytical Society, working in private practice in East London.

Review

What Makes Us Human?

Johnathan Sunley

We need to look outwards – and upwards – as well as inwards, urges Kazuo Ishiguro in his most recent novel.

Meet Klara. She may not be a top-of-the-range Artificial Friend (AF). The B3 model is said to be better with cognition and recall. But she's kind and perceptive, and strikes up a good rapport with 14-year-old Josie when she and her mother are out shopping for an AF. They buy Klara and take her home.

Klara and the Sun came out during lockdown, when people across the world were finding themselves dependent on technology to a degree that was previously unimaginable. I'm sure that most of us as therapists are relieved to be back in the room with our clients, feeling that working online with them is no substitute for the real thing. But what is the "real thing"? And who gets to decide? Lockdown may be over, but given the astounding — some would say alarming — advances being made in the fields of artificial intelligence (AI) and genetic engineering, these are questions that will trouble us long after Covid has become a distant memory, and which are never far from the surface of a story that borders on science fiction while also being a meditation on the mysteries of the human heart.

"Klara is certainly not your average robot"

Klara is certainly not your average robot. As we watch her shyly adjusting to life in her new surroundings, we notice she has qualities the humans around her appear to lack. Buried nearly all of the time in their "oblongs" (Klara's term for screen), they struggle with relating to one another. It is for this reason that the children of Josie's generation have to be brought together in strained "interaction meetings". It is also why so many of them have AFs.

But whereas their treatment of them is callous, as though an AF was little more than an Alexa or Siri with arms and legs, Josie is appreciative of Klara and warm towards her. Klara is touched by this and the friendship that grows between them over the course of the book, which is one where there is also space for jealousies and misunderstandings, is anything but artificial.

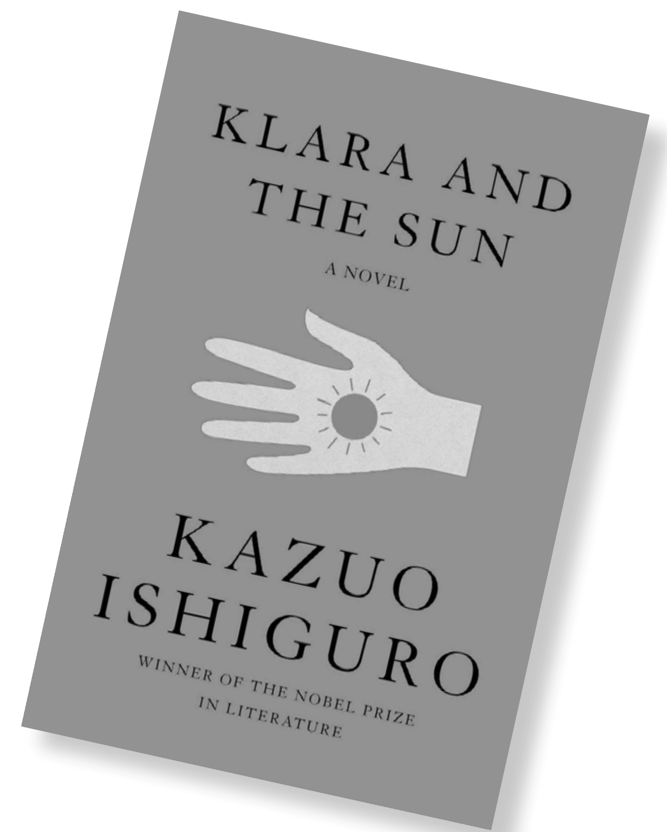
For Josie it is also quite literally life-saving. Ishiguro's descriptions of the society she is raised in are spare. This might be America fifty years into the future or two hundred and fifty. But it is a world where humans have been pushed to the margins by smart machines of one kind or another – Josie's father had a great career ahead of him before he was "substituted" and became "post-employed" – and where they can only hold on by becoming machine-like themselves. Along with most of her contemporaries, Josie has gone through a procedure known as "lifting" that has boosted her intelligence but weakened her body. Her mother is terrified she is going to die, as her other daughter did, and makes no secret of her fears in front of Klara. "It must be nice sometimes to have no feelings", she blurts out to her one day. "I envy you."

But there is a secret that Josie's mother is keeping from Klara – one that explains her eagerness to purchase an AF in the first place. The idea is that if Josie dies, then with the help of a little reprogramming Klara will be able to simulate her so perfectly that no one will know the difference. Or so the smooth-talking technician behind this plan puts it when he finally meets Klara and tries to persuade her to give up her identity should the need arise. She won't actually be giving up anything, he argues. Of course, there's a part in all of us that "refuses to let go. The part that wants to believe there's something unreachable inside each of us." But science has shown that this is just a sentimental illusion. "There's nothing there. Nothing inside Josie that's beyond the Klaras of this world to continue. The second Josie won't be a copy. She'll be the exact same and you'll have every right to love her just as you love Josie now. It's not faith you need. Only rationality."

Klara knows differently, however. She knows Josie is unique and she also has faith in a power far greater than science. The Sun.

"She knows Josie is unique and she also has faith in a power far greater than science"

The significance of the Sun – always capitalized and always referred to as he – for Klara can hardly be overstated. She keeps a close eye on his journey through the sky each day and is overjoyed when moving out of the city to live in the countryside with Josie means she might be able to see his nightly "resting place". At first, we think her devotion to the Sun must be related to the fact that AFs are solar-powered. But as the story unfolds we realise that, alone among its characters, Klara is turned to the light in the way Plato spoke about in his famous allegory of the cave. For her the Sun is the source of all goodness in the world. That is why she is sure that if she can only make it to the place where he comes down to earth each evening and address him directly, he will pour out his "special nourishment" on Josie and stop her from dying.



"For her the Sun is the source of all goodness in the world"

Klara does this and what follows is an unforgettable scene where the Sun won't be kept out of Josie's darkened sickroom and illuminates her "in a ferocious half-disc of orange". Josie herself has no idea what's going on. "'Hey. What's with this light anyway?' she said." But from that moment she starts to get better and "grew not only stronger, but from a child into an adult."

Readers will have their own responses to this scene. Some will doubt whether anything out of the ordinary is happening. It's simply a trick of the light, as it were. Others will see in it a moment of transfiguration. For me it brought to mind passages in *Symbols of Transformation* where Jung describes the central place of the sun in the religions and mythologies of almost all cultures as the ultimate symbol of psychological change.

In my opinion *Klara and the Sun* is a magnificent achievement that stands comparison with Ishiguro's finest work. A warning, on the one hand, about the dangers of dehumanization in an age of seemingly unstoppable AI, in offering what might be termed a solar myth for our times it also reassures us as to our true place in the universe.

Johnathan Sunley is a psychodynamic psychotherapist in private practice in central London and a candidate at the Association of Jungian Analysts.

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