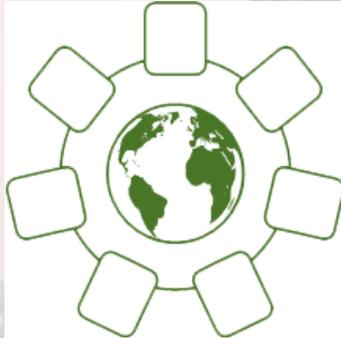


# Group-Analytic Contexts

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Editor: Peter Zelaskowski

## **GAS INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

David Glyn, UK  
President

[dearjee@gmail.com](mailto:dearjee@gmail.com)

Angelika Golz, UK  
Honorary Secretary

[angelika@devonpsychotherapy.org.uk](mailto:angelika@devonpsychotherapy.org.uk)

Sarah Tyerman, UK  
Honorary Treasurer

[tyerman.sarah@gmail.com](mailto:tyerman.sarah@gmail.com)

Linde Wotton, UK  
Chair Scientific Committee

[linde.wotton@icloud.com](mailto:linde.wotton@icloud.com)

Peter Zelaskowski, Spain  
Contexts Editor

[peterzelaskowski@gmail.com](mailto:peterzelaskowski@gmail.com)

Carmen O'Leary, UK  
Membership Secretary

[carmenoleary@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:carmenoleary@hotmail.co.uk)

Carla Penna, Brazil

[drcarlapenna@gmail.com](mailto:drcarlapenna@gmail.com)

Dieter Nitzgen, Germany  
Ex-Officio Editor Group Analysis

[dieter@nitzgen.info](mailto:dieter@nitzgen.info)

Kurt Husemann, Germany

[hu.psy@t-online.de](mailto:hu.psy@t-online.de)

Kristian Valbak, Denmark  
Research

[krisvalb@rm.dk](mailto:krisvalb@rm.dk)

Tija Despotovic, Serbia  
Chair International Development  
Committee

[tija.despotovic@gmail.com](mailto:tija.despotovic@gmail.com)

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**GROUP ANALYTIC SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL**

**1 Daleham Gardens, London NW3 5BY**

**Telephone: +44 (0) 207 435 6611. Fax: +44 (0) 207 443 9576**

**E-mail: [office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](mailto:office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)**

**Website: [www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](http://www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)**

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## Editorial

Important the imagery we use...I have tended to talk about coming down from the hyper-stimulating high of Berlin. I notice others talk about resurfacing. Whatever your journey, and for all of us I'm sure, many borders of many kinds were crossed, the fact is here we are back home, re-installed where we belong and looking back. The forum is alive with discussion of the large group. Was impersonal fellowship tasted or was another opportunity wasted? Regression and polarization have emerged as themes in need of our understanding. The question is also being asked, should we call time on this extraordinarily difficult and deeply challenging thing (a beast of a group) we arrange for ourselves in our symposia? At the same time, it seems the Berlin muse has stimulated waves of poetic vision and humour. What also seems clear, to me at least, is that the large group stimulates discussion, exchange and dialogue well beyond its borders.

Where I live, right now, Catalunya, the home for our next symposium, is in a deeply polarized state, as the 'referendum' of the 1<sup>st</sup> October approaches and a stand-off involving the Catalan and Spanish governments has formed. At this moment, the situation appears volatile and the outcome unpredictable. As the WORK begins preparing for the next symposium in Barcelona, these events are surely of concern and in need of our attention.

The Berlin Symposium marked a moment of change, as all symposia usually do. GASi has many new members and a new management committee and in this issue, we welcome the first foreword of our new president David Glyn. Welcome David! The new GASi website is more or less complete, including a Members Area in which management committee work (agendas, minutes etc) will be made available. A digital membership directory will also be prepared and located there. It is essential that you keep track of your username and password to gain access to these resources.

While the bulk of this issue is dedicated to reflecting back on Berlin, there is also a couple of reports from other events held this year of great interest: the Spring Group Days in Prague and the Group Analytic Conference held in St Petersburg. There is also an impassioned piece by our Czech colleague Helena Klímová, covering a multitude of matters concerned with identity. In a very timely piece presented in Berlin, timely because of the forthcoming GASi Winter Workshop 'Northfield Revisited' to be held in January (<http://groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/winter-workshop-2018/>) Cosmin Chita takes us back to the Northfield Experiments in the light of his

work managing a psychiatric ward as both psychiatrist and group analyst.

The first piece in this issue, by Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, is a moving and deeply personal account about family traumas, closely linked to Berlin and embedded in 20<sup>th</sup> century history, and how these went on to shape her own life. Teresa wrote this piece for the June issue preparing for Berlin, unfortunately it got lost in the system and so I extend my apologies to her for this. Nonetheless, I am very glad to include it here. Teresa has also edited and part written another piece in this issue, an extensive report co-written by all the participants of the pre-symposium Bike and Hike tours. It adds up to an extraordinary account of the experience.

I am grateful to Christer Sandahl, Di King, Anca Ditroi, Bracha Hadar, Derek Love, Edmond Dufatanye, Kalliopi Panagiotopoulou and Francesca Bascialla for providing us with such a variety of perspectives on the Berlin Symposium. These reports take us right into the experience and allow access, in particular, for those members who didn't attend, into some of the deeper recesses of the symposium. For my part, as the chair of the local organising committee of the next symposium in Barcelona 2020, there is so much to learn from these reports.

My thanks to Marcus Price for agreeing to take on the role of editor of Contexts' new poetry section 'Free Associative Gifts' and to Elizabeta Marcos, Derek Love, Einar Gudmundsson and Marcus himself for the first 'Gifts' here included. Please note Marcus' 'Call for Poems' for future editions.

Finally, in Berlin I had the pleasure to be in the same median group as Kaoru Nishimura, editor of the Journal of Japanese Group Psychotherapy. He has since sent me a copy of the journal and I include the contents page of the issue (Vol. 33, No. 1, 2017) from earlier this year.

**Peter Zelaskowski**

## President's Foreword

Dear Fellow GASI Members,

This is my first Contexts' foreword, since becoming President, during the Berlin symposium.

What a remarkable, overwhelming achievement the symposium is; how easy to forget, unless you have been directly involved, the complexity of the process of preparing and organising such a gathering, particularly when this involves the collaboration of three different organisations. Inheriting this position in the midst of the symposium, gave rise to feelings of fear and trepidation - along with pleasure and anticipation. I wouldn't be able to tell you the number of congratulations I received, nor the many sympathetic noises that sometimes accompanied these. Someone once said to me, "Why do you want to be GASI President? Don't you know that the crocodiles will eat you?"

Now I'm finding my president's feet, discovering myself, inevitably, reflected differently in others' expectations and demands of me. Someone observed that Robi is a difficult act to follow, which is undoubtedly the case. I'm reminded of the experience of stepping into a colleague's place, as group conductor; there is an odd feeling of finding oneself in another person's skin. Until you begin to recognise yourself, in the role.

Communications amongst GASI members are the basis for deepening our understanding of the group analytic project. The society, with its increasing international reach, allows us to discover what meaning Group Analysis acquires when planted in different cultural soils. As always, the meaning of concepts is the result of a process whereby they are applied and understood by different groups, who make use of them. Communication amongst members of GASI, buffered from the sorts of pressures that, for example, can affect training organisations, is an invaluable contribution to the development of GA.

The creation of opportunities for GASI members to communicate with one another is at the heart of the Society's life. Two such opportunities are contained in the Quarterly Members Group (QMG) and the GASI forum. I am well aware that many members encounter obstacles to participating in these.

With the QMG, there are evidently geographical obstacles to overcome, for many. Is it possible that we could begin to seed further parallel QMG's in other centres; these could build on the London model and take place on the same days in the year? I'd be very pleased

to hear from members who would like to think about such a task.

In relation to the forum, there are all sorts of reasons why members may feel reluctant, or unable to contribute their thoughts. These are sometimes discussed on the GASIforum and it has been suggested that one obstacle arises out of differences of *language*. In particular, it is observed that the use of English favours native English-speakers. I have no doubt that our different linguistic competences influence how ready we feel to express ourselves. However, as well as being separated by our different mother tongues, some inhibitions may arise in relation to the use of the language that supposedly unites us - the language of Group Analysis.

There are some events to remind you of, in the GASI calendar:

On 19th-20th January, the Winter Workshop is 'Northfield Revisited' - a return to the site, in Birmingham, of Foulkes' early reflections on the group as the context for recovery, in wartime.

On 18th May, Robi will be returning, in a different capacity, to give the 2018 Foulkes Lecture, to be followed by the Study Day on Saturday 19th.

In July, the 4th GASI Summer School will be in Ljubljana, Slovenia. I am delighted to let you know that Tija Despotovic, from Belgrade, has agreed to be co-opted on to our Management Committee. She and Bessy Karagianni, from Athens, will be organising the Summer Schools in the coming period.

Finally, returning to the theme of communication, within the Society. With the completion of the new Members Area on the GASI website, the Management Committee has made its agendas, minutes and reports open to members; you will now be able to find them there. However, there must still be scope for us to develop new ways to communicate with fellow members and doubtless, also, members will find ways to communicate with us, their observations, thoughts and their wishes to create fresh initiatives for the Society. I look forward to hearing from you.

**David Glyn**

[dearjee@gmail.com](mailto:dearjee@gmail.com)

## Be a Contexts Writer!

*“Substitute “damn” every time you’re inclined to write “very”; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be”.* **Mark Twain**

Contexts welcomes contributions from GASi members and non-members on a variety of topics: Have you run or attended a group-analytic or group psychotherapy workshop? Are you involved in a group-analytic or group psychotherapy project that others might want to learn about? Would you like to share your ideas or professional concerns with a wide range of colleagues? If so, send us an article for publication by post, e-mail, or fax. Articles submitted for publication should be between 500 and 5,000 words long, or between one and ten A4 pages. Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, a reply to an earlier article published here, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

Articles are welcome from all those who work with groups in any discipline: whether practitioners, trainers, researchers, users, or consultants. Accounts of innovations, research findings on existing practice, policy issues affecting group therapy, and discussions of conceptual developments are all relevant. Group therapy with clients, users, professional teams, or community groups fall within our range.

Length: Full length articles; of up to 5,000 words, should show the context of practice and relate this to existing knowledge. We also accept brief contributions which need focus only on the issue at hand: brief descriptions, reviews, personal takes of workshops or events attended, humorous asides, letters and correspondence.

Presentation: articles, letters, etc. should ideally be in Word format and forwarded as an email attachment to the Editors.

Please don't worry about language, grammar and the organisation of your piece. We, as editors, receive many pieces from non-English speaking countries and it is our job to work with you to create a piece of writing that is grammatical and reads well in English. This

help also extends to English speakers who may need help and advice about the coherence and organisation of a piece of work. Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

Now that Contexts is a digital publication only, the deadlines are different. We are now able to receive your writing up to only a week or so before publication.

For publication at the end of March: March 15th

For publication at the end of June: June 15th

For publication at the end of September: September 15th

For publication at the end of December: December 15th

**-mail address:**

Peter Zelaskowski: [peterzelaskowski@gmail.com](mailto:peterzelaskowski@gmail.com)

**GASI Postal Address:**

Group-Analytic Society International

1 Daleham Gardens

London NW3 5BY

Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6611

Fax: +44 (0)20 7443 9576

E-mail: [office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](mailto:office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)

## **GASi New Members**

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### **Full Members**

**Mrs Noga Dan-Gur**

Zichron Yaakov, Israel

[noga.dangur@gmail.com](mailto:noga.dangur@gmail.com)

**Mr Andrew Downie**

Devon, UK

[andydownie54@btinternet.com](mailto:andydownie54@btinternet.com)

Kent, UK

[paulinepjo@btinternet.com](mailto:paulinepjo@btinternet.com)

**Mr Mogens Peterson**

Odense C., Denmark

[mp@mogenspetersen.com](mailto:mp@mogenspetersen.com)

**Ms Valerie Preston**

Dublin, Ireland

[valeriepreston1@gmail.com](mailto:valeriepreston1@gmail.com)

**Dr. Josef Zierl**

Munich Germany

[josefzierl@aol.com](mailto:josefzierl@aol.com)

Josef Zierl was born in Arnstorf (Bavaria) 1957. After the grammar-school he studied medicine and philosophy in Munich, graduated in medicine in 1987 and got his doctor`s degree (MD) in the same year. He worked two years in a hospital for Internal Medicine and three years and nine months in a hospital for psychiatry near Munich. 1998 he got the degree of medical specialist for Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy. He was training as a psychoanalyst from 1990 to 1997 in Munich (MAP). 1998 he trained in team-supervision and consulting for organisations. From 2001 to 2010 he was a university teacher at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, department of Medicine/Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy. In 2004, he finished his training in group analysis. In 2008, he became a instruktive analyst at MAP in Munich and at the DGPT after working as a teacher of psychoanalysis for a long time. 2016 he was appointed

instructive analyst for group analysis. He is a member of DGPT, D3G and GASi (since 2017) and since 1993 he has been working in his own medical practice for psychotherapy, later with psychoanalysis, psychosomatic medicine and group analysis.

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## **Student Members**

### **Ms Hunaida Assaf**

Mielya, Israel  
[hunaida.assaf@gmail.com](mailto:hunaida.assaf@gmail.com)

### **Mrs Tonia Budelmann**

Berlin, Germany  
[tonia.budelmann@gmx.net](mailto:tonia.budelmann@gmx.net)  
Born in Hamburg, Germany. Studied Psychology. Since 2014  
Psychoanalyst in private praxis in Berlin.

### **Mrs Renate von Holdenburg**

Munich, Germany  
[info@vh-consulting.de](mailto:info@vh-consulting.de)  
My professional path started with a degree in European Business Administration studying in the UK and Germany. Since then I have been working in and for medium sized companies in different roles – as an employee in the financial department, as a consultant in finance, etc. During the last years I have been working as a consultant for companies in crisis, mainly family businesses or businesses run by the owner. I have always been interested in things going on in companies beyond “facts and figures“. In January I started a training in group analysis at the Akademie für Psychoanalyse in Munich. Of course I would like to use my learning and enrich my work with companies. Taking part in the GASi Symposium in Berlin in August I got a taste of the international community of GASi, a very inspiring experience. I hope to have more opportunities to get involved and connected. I am also looking forward to represent and bring in the company/economy perspective.

### **Dr Thilo Kollmann**

Basel, Switzerland  
[kollmann@basel-psychotherapie.ch](mailto:kollmann@basel-psychotherapie.ch)  
Born 1974. I am a german Psychiatrist and psychoanalytical therapist in a private practice in Basel, CH since 2013. I have been following

groupanalytical training as a member of SGAZ (Seminar für Gruppenanalyse Zürich) since 2015. I am in a relationship to a swiss woman and we have one son. My interests include: The impact of social media on self-awareness and group-dynamics in virtual and real contexts. Especially how envy may be capable of shaping pictures of ourselves and the ones we have for those among us. I felt a caring welcome as a student member and I hope I will be able to contribute to our society, so it may continue its development for the good of group analysis and as a result become a network for my own process of learning.

[www.basel-psychotherapie.ch](http://www.basel-psychotherapie.ch)

**Ms Mona Zupnik**

Givatayim, Israel

[monazupnik@gmail.com](mailto:monazupnik@gmail.com)

---

## GROUP MEMBERSHIP

**Mrs Albina Goryachena**

Moscow, Russia

[goriacheva@icloud.com](mailto:goriacheva@icloud.com)

**Ms Olga Balykova**

Moscow, Russia

[ovb@teamlab.ru](mailto:ovb@teamlab.ru)

**Mr Sergey Divisenko**

Moscow, Russia

[sergey.divisenko@gmail.com](mailto:sergey.divisenko@gmail.com)

**Dr Yulia Gordeeva**

Moscow, Russia

[jlian@mail.ru](mailto:jlian@mail.ru)

**Mrs Anastasia Kondaurova**

Moscow, Russia

[kondaurova-an@mail.ru](mailto:kondaurova-an@mail.ru)

**Veronika Rudagina**

Moscow, Russia

[rudagina\\_v@mail.ru](mailto:rudagina_v@mail.ru)

I am 48 years old. I have a daughter and a little granddaughter. I became interested in psychology when I was about 30 years old. Before that, professionally, I was in art, photography, fashion, journalism. I attended a psychodrama training and wondered how you can reconstruct the past and the work of the psyche with this method. I was in the training program of the Moscow Institute of Group and Family Psychotherapy and Psychology (IGSP). I'm a certified psychodrama therapist. For several years I worked in rehabilitation programs for chemically dependent people, first as a leading creative trainer, and then as a psychologist. My academic education is psychological and pedagogical. I graduated from the baccalaureate and master's program at Moscow State Pedagogical University (MSPU) and now I continue my education there in postgraduate study. My specialization is psychological and pedagogical methods in the field of health saving technologies. In parallel, I study, and I hope I'll finish in 2018, the course of clinical psychology at the Russian State Social University (RSSU). I graduated from the Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis with a diploma of retraining as an analytical psychologist. Today Jungian analysis is one of my great interests and I continue my education at various seminars and workshops. In 2017, I began my training in the program: The Group as a Supporting Environment with the London Institute of Analysis Groups (IGA). I have a private practice of analytical clients and I continue to work in projects for the rehabilitation of chemically dependent people.

**Ms Tatyana Shibakova**

Moscow, Russia

**Ms Elena Shuvazikova**

Moscow, Russia

[eshuvazikova@zetes-i-tefer.ru](mailto:eshuvazikova@zetes-i-tefer.ru)

**Ms Ella Solovyeva**

Moscow, Russia

[solovella1709@gmial.com](mailto:solovella1709@gmial.com)

**Ms Nataliy Viazemsheva**

Moscow, Russia

[hrnata@mai.ru](mailto:hrnata@mai.ru)

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## Threads back in Time

By Teresa von Sommaruga Howard

More than eighty years ago my father tired of singing about “Jewish traitors and scum”, walked out of morning assembly at the Goethe Schule in Brandenburgerstraße, Berlin and was immediately expelled for “putting himself outside of the community”. Two years later, in the autumn of 1936, he took the train from Berlin Zoologische station to Harwich as a lone 15-year-old to take up a scholarship at an English public school.

I knew this story as a child but it was not possible to understand it living on the other side of the world in New Zealand. Growing up I realised that there was something important about holding on to the threads of history but knowing that did not protect me from its painful consequences. When memories are loaded with anguish, the history seeps through a mist of incomprehensible moods and silence inadvertently leaving subsequent generations with a *haunting* that cannot be easily understood.<sup>1</sup> In my family a tradition of physically moving away from one location to another made any comprehensible telling of history even more difficult.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, we immigrated to New Zealand “to get as far away as possible from the constraining atmosphere of the British class system and the threat of the Cold War”. My parents were full of optimism. My father would always delight in looking at the globe to show NZ on the opposite side of the world from Europe. He had made a conscious decision to break the threads to the past: to leave the traumas of his earlier life as a Jewish refugee and British internee behind. My mother’s history, although not so obviously dramatic, enabled her to join him in the adventure.

My parents also had unconscious reasons to move away to the other side of the world but these were difficult to decipher as a child. Growing up in NZ I imagined digging a tunnel through the centre of the earth and coming out the other side. I guess I was trying to make sense of the unconscious message, “Don’t go back across the ocean. You must not ‘know’ about what we want to forget”. Clues were always there but I could not connect what lay in ‘the old country’ with life in ‘God’s own’ until I made the journey back to the UK and

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<sup>1</sup> Schwab, G., (2010). *Haunting Legacies: violent histories and transgenerational trauma*. New York: Colombia

Europe in my twenties. Here I found group analysis and was able to join up the many threads that had been broken.

A more or less constant psychic distance from the past was maintained until my parents' imminent death. As they faded away a delicate balance in the family system was disrupted. Relationships with my siblings deteriorated abruptly and dramatically. Any trust that had been there disappeared. I was told, "You have a personality like Hitler!" Feeling dizzy, headachy, unable to sleep or dream, yet struggling to keep thinking, I kept reminding myself that this must be the traumatic past bursting through but I could not make any more sense of it than that.

### **Remnants from the First World War**

My parents were both born in the aftermath of the First World War. It left an indelible mark on both of them. Their parents, my grandparents, lived in three countries at war with each other: England, Germany and Austria. They were also of different religion; Catholics, Jews, Protestants; and class; aristocrats, professionals.

My mother's start in the world was overshadowed by loss. Her father's adored eldest brother, a 'heroic' captain in the Queen's regiment, was killed at the Battle of the Somme in August 1916. His body was never found but I always remember the presence of his disappearance. My mother, born barely 18 months later, was my grandparents' first child. Unconsciously wanting to fill the hole of loss they had hoped for a boy. Of course my mother did not feel welcomed into the world and always resented the attention bestowed on boys. As a child, I could never understand why she was not motherly like other mothers and interested in things feminine.

My father too had an uneasy start in the world. He was born in Berlin into the contradictory atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, a nation struggling to manage the humiliation meted out by the Treaty of Versailles. My grandmother was Jewish and my grandfather Catholic turned Protestant. They divorced when my father was two and he became the only child of a single mother. My grandfather died when my father was barely ten so he never knew his father's family until an adult despite paradoxically carrying their unusual name, von Sommaruga.

### **Remnants of the Second World War**

My mother, a sheltered Hampstead girl and my father, a 'homeless' refugee, found each other in my great uncle's Jungian Study Group. Their budding relationship was rudely interrupted after the fall of

Dunkirk in June 1940 when my father was woken at five in the morning and arrested as an enemy alien. He was taken to Hyton racecourse in Liverpool, shipped to the desert in Australia, enduring ‘57 days of Hell’. He was held there for about 18 months.<sup>2</sup> Thinking he had found a safe place in the UK, it was this internment experience he could never talk about. Part of the deal for his release was the opportunity to return to England to join the British Army Pioneer Corps, which he did a few days before his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

At the time, my mother was working for the Ministry of Food and evacuated to North Wales. It was wartime and my parents, wanting to be together, married. My mother and father were from different worlds. They had little conscious idea what they were taking on, which ensured their hidden anguish would never see the light of day, never to be shared, never to be soothed and never to be talked through with their children.

My mother immediately became pregnant with me and moved in with her parents in the Surrey countryside. My father meanwhile was moved around the UK to various postings and eventually joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and was sent to work in a military hospital in the Gold Coast, now Ghana. I was born nine months later into my grandparents’ household. Watching her parents’ adoration of their first grandchild activated my mother’s own difficult entrance into the world. In her mind, I became her parents’ favoured younger daughter, her envied sister.

For the second time in her life my mother felt unacknowledged. So, 21 months later, we moved away to London despite the doodlebugs and V2 rockets still landing on nearby Primrose Hill. We lived alone for the next 2 years until my father returned from West Africa. Of course, this external move did not relieve her of her mixed feelings. When my father was demobbed from the army, my parents lived together as a married couple for the first time. My mother had long dreamed of this time and I think found sharing it with me very difficult. Yet again she felt unacknowledged as a loveable person and upstaged by me. This set the scene for what was to follow much later.

My parents had four daughters. My three younger sisters were born at home. With my father present, these births were quite different experiences for my mother. No longer alone and living with

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<sup>2</sup> <http://judeninthemar.org/the-voyage/>. *57 Days of Hell — The Voyage of HMT Dunera, 1940.*

her parents, she was free to enjoy her babies without being reminded of her own unwelcoming entrance into the world. Unconsciously this situation was to have a profound effect. It was as though my sisters were her real daughters to later become her allies in an imaginary war against my father and me. I recall her often saying, “Teresa is the only child my parents and your father care about”.

### **Living with Trauma**

In the aftermath of trauma families and groups often draw into a tight circle with little differentiation between members. A form of pseudo mutuality develops in which everyone is expected to hold the same beliefs and difference cannot be tolerated.<sup>3</sup> According to group-analytic colleague, Yael Doron, the story of the Tower of Babel appears in the book of Genesis immediately after the story of Noah’s flood for a reason. Building the Tower arose out of the need to hold together, to have a common voice after the massive trauma of the flood.<sup>4</sup>

In New Zealand our very unusual surname, von Sommaruga, marked us out as different. Few people understood where the von Sommarugas had come from and few were willing to try to pronounce the name. Without extended family around to explain what this name meant, it was a cause for embarrassment. It was particularly tough for my sisters who had no memories of people or places in Europe.<sup>5</sup> I too struggled with this name and constantly wondered what led both our parents to see things so differently from the parents of our friends. “Why were marching bands something to fear rather than enjoy?” for example. As Göran Rosenberg explains, “You can look forward only if the world looks backward and remembers where you come from, and sees the paths you pursue, and understands why you’re still living”.<sup>6</sup> As this perspective was not available in NZ then, my

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<sup>3</sup> Wynne, L., (1984). ‘The Epigenesis of Relational Systems: A Model for Understanding Family Development’, *Family Process* 23 3.

<sup>4</sup> Doron, Y., (2016). ‘The Tower of Babel: Massification, Individuality and Empathy in Large Societies and in Small Groups’, *Group Analysis*, June 2016; vol. 49, 2: pp. 124-133

<sup>5</sup> Beagelhole, A., (1990). *Facing the Past: Looking Back at Refugee Childhood in New Zealand, 1940s – 1960s*. Wellington: Allen and Unwin.

<sup>6</sup> Rosenberg, G., (2015). *A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz*. London: Granta.

questions and memories led me back to the UK. Reflecting on this history now, I realise that my leaving betrayed a cultural norm that families should stick together with a common voice. I had further irretrievably broken it by converting to Judaism and learning more about our father's heritage.

There is little doubt in my mind that my family is living with the aftermath of trauma but until now I could never piece the narrative together. The trauma of my mother's birth coupled with my father's refuge and internment experiences were consciously left in Europe but unconsciously came with them all the way to other side of the world. While my father was still with us having different life experiences and different opinions could just about be tolerated. With his death, the psychic distance so optimistically travelled after the war collapsed as the past invaded the present. As the only member of the family who had held the thread of [his] story to the past, I was unconsciously held responsible.

Reflecting on being told I had the personality of Hitler, I recalled my father saying, "You know with the Nazi time everything got turned upside down. What was lawful previously became unlawful and what was unlawful became lawful. Nothing and nobody could be trusted." There are resonances with the current political situation. In my family, it seems as though I am seen as unsettling a much-needed equilibrium and not to be trusted. I remember when the Berlin Wall came down my father wept but he did not understand why. It was as if watching the wall being taken down opened him to the pain of leaving his beloved city as a lone teenager. Until then it had not been possible for him to take in what growing up in Berlin and having to flee the Nazis had meant to him. Now the opportunity for me to be in Berlin with group analytic colleagues feels like a very special celebration to a family that has struggled with the Nazi legacy.

**Teresa von Sommaruga Howard**

[teresa@justdialogue.com](mailto:teresa@justdialogue.com)

## Looking Back on Berlin



THE GROUP ANALYTIC SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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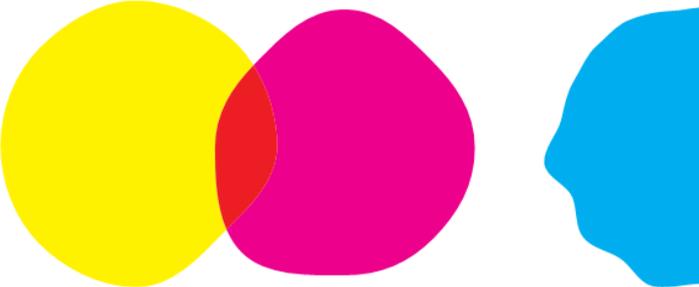
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Power to include and exclude

Las lenguas de los grupos  
El poder de incluir y excluir

Les llengües dels grups  
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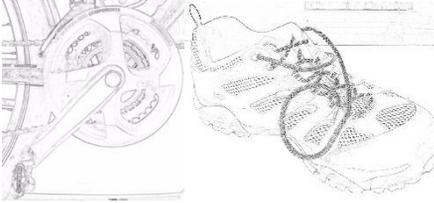
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THE GROUP ANALYTIC SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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## **160 Km in 3 Days: Hiking and Biking the Berliner Mauer**

By the participants, edited by Teresa von Sommaruga Howard



After our three days together, I had the idea of writing about the experience and asking everyone else to add their reflections and photographs also. What has emerged is very richly coloured ‘patchwork quilt’. It is long but contains many surprising insights. I am sure my fellow Bikers and Hikers agree with me that we hope it gives you, the reader, a flavour of Berlin from the Mauer.

We began this long journey, Bikers and Hikers on 12 August, just before the anniversary of an auspicious weekend. 56 years ago, Berliners had woken up on the Sunday morning of 13 August 1961 to discover a barbed wire barricade had appeared overnight cutting off East from West.



On the evening before, the Bikers met with the Hikers for our first median group. These were planned for the end of each day and a social dreaming matrix each morning. Next day and after social dreaming the Bikers set off from north-east Berlin in the

former eastern sector. A smaller group of Hikers also set off to hike sections of the wall. We had agreed to meet each evening in a median group. As she was as stay in the same hotels as the Bikers, one Hiker, Sarah from Israel, also met the Bikers for social dreaming each morning.

Little did we realise what these two groups would come to represent over the three days. Julie Howley asked the question afterwards is this, “a group or not a group”?

## Thoughts Beforehand

### From Dale Godby, Dallas, USA: Biker

So why bike and hike the wall? For the Americans who organized the ride, the Berlin Wall resonated deeply in the well of the American Social Unconscious. It was 22 months after its erection on August 13, 1961 that American president, John F. Kennedy, speaking in Berlin on June 26, 1963 said, “Ich bin ein Berliner”. On June 12, 1987, American President Ronald Reagan, at the site of the Brandenburg Gate said, “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” And more recently, during his election campaign, Donald Trump, said, “I will build a great wall -- and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me --and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words”.



But when the Americans mentioned they were designing T-Shirts for the bike and hike trip, we discovered the difference between the social unconscious that exists between nations. The Americans were used to having a T-Shirt for events like the hike and bike tour and were surprised when they began

receiving hesitant responses about not wanting to all wear the shirts and concerns about looking like team. This all began to make sense when we started to learn about how the post WWII Germans think about uniforms. We were off to a good start as our dialogue began to unfold. Prior to our ride an article, ‘Berlin Walls’, written by Winnicott in 1969 and published after his death in 1986 came to light. He argues for the importance of ‘Berlin Walls. He sees the developmental need for

walls within the individual to keep the good and bad forces apart; until the time when healthy development allows for their integration. He sees the wall as a dividing line, “which at its worst postpones conflict

and at its best holds opposing forces away from each other for long periods of time so that people may play and pursue the arts of peace. The arts of peace belong to the temporary success of a dividing line between opposing forces; the lull between times when the wall has ceased to segregate good and bad.”<sup>7</sup>

**Melissa Black, Dallas, USA: Biker**

As the person organizing the logistics for the bike ride from across the Atlantic I am going to focus on some of the unusual parts of my role. It took a great deal of imagination, some teamwork from our Berlin member, and a little bit of luck! I enjoy the anticipation of an adventure, so playing in my mind with hotels, luggage obstacles and forming new friendships was a fun past time for the months leading up to the ride. I tend to be detail oriented and a bit Type A, so it can also be a challenge for me to play well with others when organizing events. Thankfully, my co-organizers are well known to me and we play on each other’s strengths very well.

**David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker**

Being the only non-member of the GASI group was not as intimidating as one might imagine because I have had the pleasure of similar adventures with Dale Godby, Bob Bennett and of course, Melissa. I was very intrigued to get to do this with such a diverse group of people from different countries with different experiences from my own. I did not have any idea of what to expect from the SDM or median group experiences but everyone was extremely accepting and encouraged my participation in the experience.

**Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker**

It was daunting in prospect and reality, but not to be missed. The idea of biking around my father’s birth city with group analytic colleagues and starting each day with a social dreaming matrix and ending with a median group was almost too good to be true. Then the daunting part. Doubts about whether I could cycle so far began to set in. So, each day I took my bike out to cycle around my neighbourhood in London and I did get stronger but perhaps not strong enough. I had to

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<sup>7</sup> Winnicott, D., (1986). ‘Berlin Walls’, *Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by A Psychoanalyst*. Ed. Winnicott, D., Shepherd, R. & Davis, M. New York: Norton. p. 224

deal with being the slow coach!

**Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

When I realized that I couldn't take on the biking of the Wall Trail I proposed the idea of a parallel hiking event. This was agreed to as long as I took on the organization of it. I did this with enthusiasm and trepidation in equal measure. My idea, communicated to the Hikers who had signed up, was always that the hike would be like a pilgrimage, that it would unfold as we walked and that the Crossing Borders theme might be inspired by the Berlin Wall but would emerge from our walking and talking together across our own international borders. And, so it proved.

**Mary Cullen, Dublin, Ireland: Hiker**

My expectation was of a hike, of getting to know some people before the Symposium and of re-visiting some of Berlin's history on this my second visit. I had been in Berlin two years ago and was looking forward to more exposure to a city which I liked a great deal. I was also somewhat apprehensive because of the history which because of the time that I was born and perhaps other reasons was very much part of the culture of my growing up in Ireland. I wondered how the Symposium event might deal with all of this.

**Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker**

I had opportunities in the period between 1988 to 1989 to visit Berlin. As I was living in Hannover as a British Army wife, I could accompany my husband who was able to pass easily through checkpoint Charlie in uniform with his military ID card. He was instructed to only speak to Russian soldiers and not to acknowledge GDR personnel. I had the freedom to move between these two worlds in a way that East and West Germans were not. I recall the stern immobile faces of the GDR Guards and found the Russian soldiers intimidating. It was an uneasy experience walking through Checkpoint Charlie into the very different landscape of East Berlin, seeing 'No-man's land'



with the Reichstag looking dilapidated and buildings covered in shrapnel from the Second World War. I recall the shops being empty and being looked upon with suspicion by shop keepers. My only claim to fame is that I slept through the wall coming down!

I remember looking out the window early the next morning and seeing

lots of Trabants on the road, people queuing outside banks and then we listened to the news.

Overnight Checkpoint Charlie had changed with streams of people arriving from East Berlin, people were clapping their arrivals either on foot or by car, the guards seemed more human and Marlborough were there handing out cigarettes as a welcome to the West. There was a relief in the air that it had all happened so peacefully.

### **Sue Lieberman, Edinburgh, Scotland: Biker for two days Hiker for one Day**

It was my fourth time in Berlin. My first visit there was for a few days at the end of December 1989. Late on that New Year's Eve I was hauled up by excited hands to join a throng of drunken, jubilant Berliners teetering unsteadily on top of the Wall. This could have been my first experience of a Large Group.

On my second trip some six years later, the whole of central Berlin had become a building site, yielding nothing recognisable from that earlier visit. 17 years on, friend Sheena and I spent five days in the city, at a time when I was recovering from wrist surgery and feeling delicate. I had just finished writing *After Genocide*, and much of our time was devoted to visiting sites embodying this part of Germany's heavy past: the Holocaust Memorial, the Holocaust Museum, the Jewish Museum. Even the new glass tower that rises over the Reichstag, Sheena told me, had been intentionally placed so that the Bundestag and its federal politicians would always overlook these painful reminders. Unified Berlin is, for the moment, conceptually inseparable from the unsettling reality that underneath even the most cultured exterior can lurk the most destructive and murderous hatred.

Now it was time for another perspective. The Symposium theme of crossing borders, cycling and hiking the commemorative route of the old Wall, would, I imagined, present ways of absorbing the impact of other dimensions of Germany's turbulent and difficult recent history on lives past and present.

### **Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker**

My personal motivation to join the trip was the chance to come together with all these unknown people willing to approach this congress in this specific way: from the remainders of history laying around everywhere in and around Berlin, from the periphery to the centre.

It was my first GASi-congress and before, I was a bit afraid about the dangers of incohesion there, so for me, these meetings were of central importance, not only the biking.

**Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker**

I was apprehensive about taking part in the symposium for two reasons. The first was that Berlin was the city of the state that brought huge destruction to my family, my people, the world. The second were memories of the Lisbon symposium reminded me of how uneasy it was for me.

So, I was glad to join a group, some of whom I knew from the forum, to help in my first contact with the city and later with the symposium. In addition, the structure that included a median group and social dreaming promised containment.

**Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker**

It was lovely to meet everyone on the first evening in the median group and the bike/hike shirts were a delight – the logo was perfect as were all the greetings in different languages on the back. I felt a little bit of an outsider to start with in the median group and on hearing Irish voices knew that I was being given an opportunity to think about my own crossing of borders in relation to growing up in Northern Ireland. It was really important for me to hear German voices at this group and being told to speak slowly; preparation for the conference.

**Markus Schirpke, Berlin: Biker**

When I heard about the project of bike and hike the wall it was tempting and daunting to have a three-day physical and psychological experience with people I mostly didn't know before.

**Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker**

I was inspired to attend the GASi conference, initially, for the chance to meet some dear colleagues whom I'd only known in tele conferences for a year or two, but not yet in person. It would also serve to celebrate the completion of some long complicated personal projects; and a chance to visit family & friends in England as well. Also, it's true that Groups are a lively edge of my psychotherapy practice here in Portland, Oregon and I'm ever glad to learn more about groups.

## **Two Groups on the Journey**

### **Dale Godby, Dallas, USA: Biker**

So, we began our ride with a sense of adventure and with two subgroups: Hikers and Bikers. Being a liaison between the two subgroups gave me a sense of empathy for leaders. Let me explain. Because the Hikers and Bikers took separate routes with the desire to meet each evening for a median group it was necessary for the groups to communicate. Communication was hampered by cell phone problems and the difficulty of predicting how long the biking route would take. So, twice we had to reschedule or cancel our evening meetings due to little or incomplete opportunities for communication. I remember being on the phone and as the representative for the Bikers saying we need to meet at this specific time. It left little time or opportunity to consult with the Hikers. They had little chance to respond other than to agree. This led to a dominant/submissive dialectic, which I didn't intend, but due to time and communicational constraints was true nevertheless. I hated the feeling of dictating the terms and at the same time felt it necessary to decide in real time. This emerged in our median and social dreaming matrix as a reflection of the German East-West matrix. We sought to process it, but I feel sure there are feelings remaining, which I hope we will examine in this written reflection.

### **Melissa Black Dallas, USA: Biker**

Once we began the ride we were happy to let Björn take control of the day and the route. But each day as we made our way along the route I found myself feeling a bit anxious for the as yet unknown hotel that would appear. Had I chosen a good place? Was our luggage going to arrive at the correct spot? Would everyone be satisfied with their room? Thankfully I have lived long enough to realize that I cannot control the personality variables inherent in these questions so I settled for finding satisfaction that we all had a clean and comfortable room and that most needs were met to satisfaction! I jumped through a couple of hurdles with a few of the hotels, but hopefully nobody noticed too much of the 'drama'.

Along the route I enjoyed the seesawing nature of the line of bicycles. Conversations ebbed and flowed over the course of the days as motivation, route and the weather changed as often as our riding partners. We laughed, we solved the international issues facing our planet, we made world peace and even had a fight or two along the way. At the end of the day, I feel certain that I walked away from the

bike and into the Symposium with new friends and many great memories.

### **Teresa von Sommaruga Howard**



To begin we took photos of the group in the sunshine. Although the light was bright as we got on our bikes it was soon cold, rainy and grey. That first day did not provide the sunny adventure I had envisaged. The light,

plastic capes, not unlike big plastic bags, thoughtfully provided by Berlin on Bikes, proved invaluable not only to keep out the wet but also the wind. The morning was spent zig-zagging our way around the city with our guide Björn giving us fascinating tidbits of history. We saw a lot and discussed a lot but we did not make many kilometres.

Our first stop was in Prenzlauer Berg where Björn explained the idealistic planning history of Berlin. In the 1920 there was a clear policy to build mixed communities, not integrated but mixed. The buildings have survived pretty-much intact since that time. The houses were built around an inner court with a front house and a 'hinter' house behind. The working class lived in the rear house while the middle class lived in the front. My father and his mother lived in a Hinterhaus, which I learnt later from relatives was always a source of shame for my grandmother. Björn observed that Berlin still had a policy of ensuring that those who worked in Berlin could afford to live there. Only 10% of housing is privately owned in Berlin. The current policy is "Keeping Berlin what it is: a liveable, forward-looking city and a good place to live!" But, people earn lower wages in Berlin than in the rest of Germany. Björn compared this aim of mixing communities with other capital cities in Europe such as Paris where the poor live on the outskirts in shanty towns or ghettos. Such places seed opposition and riot.

Björn reminded us that it was only in 1871 that Berlin became the capital of the newly unified German Empire and Bismark became the first German chancellor. I later read that the Berlin Ringbahn (railway) began operating then too. At that time, the population was 826,341. Now it is about 3.5 million. Before the wall was built, Berlin was still the capital, an industrial and financial centre.

But this moved to Bonn after the wall was built.

Our next stop Bernauerstrasse symbolises the social split between East and West. It is the place where the overnight construction of the Wall put a violent end to everyday life for former neighbours. From one day to the next, people could no longer travel freely to visit neighbours, friends and relatives. The house across the street suddenly became part of another political system and inaccessible. Unwittingly the people living here were caught up in an episode of post-war German history. Many desperate to escape, jumped out of windows and paid with their lives. Here it is possible to see the only section of the Berlin Wall preserved in its full width; two walls that in themselves were difficult to climb over and the ‘death strip’ between. Björn commented that it is still not as easy to move back and forth from East to West as it was after the war before the wall was erected. Something was destroyed that is not easy to fit together. He explained that when East Germans read newspapers they see it as an official state voice whereas those from the West see it as a personal opinion. He went further, “We hear and read the same words but the pictures in our minds are different”. One tidbit that I did not know: apparently Kennedy did not do anything to prevent the building of the wall, believing it would have precipitated a third world war.

Imagining the wall, I had always thought of it as a clearly defined straight line with East and West easily identifiable but it was not as simple as that. In many places, the wall took a convoluted route and it was often difficult to tell which side was which. Björn gave us clue to look for newly planted birch trees but even so it was difficult. Björn suggested we look for where the bars and theatres were. That did not help me either. After I got back to Berlin I bought myself a map to track where we had been. It is a long route that doubles back on itself in many places. The journey from East to West is long! Björn told us that in the 9 years he had been a guide he had only been asked to do this trip 5 times.

The first day was hard, not only because of the weather but also because we had to do most of the kilometres after lunch in one hard push along bumpy country paths all the while dodging and encouraging some very exhausted looking runners going in the opposite direction. They were competing in an extreme marathon around the whole wall in one day to commemorate the building of the wall. We finally made it to Teltow as it was getting dark just after eight o’clock exhausted. Almost all our hiking colleagues had given up waiting for us. Our attempts to make contact with them had not been successful. This was our first experience of learning that relying

on mobile phones across national borders did not work! So, no Median group that night! Just a dinner together and bed.

The next day began first with a social dreaming matrix and then a median group but with only one hiker as the others were staying elsewhere. We set off in sunshine along streets lined with trees, pretty houses and gardens towards Potsdam and close to Wannsee, then across the Havel River on the Glienicker Brücke past the Schloss Babelberg on the hill. That day we cycled through meadows full of wild flowers, yellow and mauve, along the banks of the river, through and fresh shady forests, past huge and amazing houses lining a street called Karl Marx Strasse. The irony was not lost on us.

Every so often we passed grey watchtowers, remnants of the wall, memorials to those murdered trying to escape 'the giant prison of the East' where for this special weekend many fresh flowers had been laid. Every time an escape succeeded, further reinforcements resulted. Along the Havel, a net was even placed along the dividing line to prevent divers from a diving school crossing over from the West. People living in the East dreamt of freedom but when it finally came many lost their jobs and became unemployed. They learnt that freedom comes at a price also.

### **David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker**

When we picked up our bikes the day before the ride began we were able to meet and visit with our guide Björn. Always up for an adventure I was really excited to begin the journey after our initial meeting with such an interesting character serving as a guide. Melissa and I had also visited the 'Day in the Life of the GDR' museum before the ride so I had a limited idea of what life must have been like during the time of the wall. Björn did a great job of melding the practical and emotional life experiences of everyday people while explaining the politics and history of the wall. It almost became a game for me and others to attempt to always know what side of the wall I was riding on – was I in the East or the West? I was surprised by the eerie feeling I would get when it was explained that we were actually riding between the two walls in what was known as the 'Death Zone'.

On the last day near the end of the ride Björn told the story of the young mother who was one of the first ones who was allowed through the gates on 9 November 1989. She had put her baby to bed and left them alone to go see what was happening as more and more people were congregating at the gate. After a lot of confusion and no real idea of what they were supposed to do with the people, the guards started letting a few people through the gate. After handing over her

papers to the guards, she went on what she believed would be a short visit to the west. When she tried to return home to the East without her papers, she was denied re-entry. Her obvious distress that she was not going to be allowed back through the gate to her sleeping child became the cause that people on both sides of the gate embraced. With all the confusion, no clear orders and citizens on both sides of the gate yelling and demanding she be let through, the guards gave up and opened the gates to everyone. This story really brought a human element to the events of November 9<sup>th</sup> and I found myself able to imagine the stress and fear of the young mother and the joining of both sides to reunite this mother and child.

**Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

The hiking group set up as a group with permeable boundaries – we



could be joined and we could be left.

We had four to five core group members and up to eight on one day. Each day we first hiked a section of the Wall Trail, then travelled to meet the Bikers for the median group experience and lastly travelled back to our various resting places in the

city. The importance for us of the meeting with the Bikers is perhaps illustrated in the fact that I actually cut the length of each day’s hike in order to allow more time for the necessary travelling. Foulkes (1957) talks about how, in the development of group analysis, he moved away from a focus on the group’s occupation so that the dynamics of the group could emerge. The focus then moves from the *occupation* to the *preoccupation* – what is it that is moving us, inspiring us, provoking us....? Before the Hike and Bike began, in our online sharing, there was a desire for there to be a single group with two distinct sub-groups. At the median group on the first evening both subgroups were gathered together. I think now that the overall group struggled to develop cohesion and that the preoccupations may have been different. I think that the hikers, because of their core occupation of travelling to meet with the bikers, had a preoccupation with the unity of the overall group. I wonder if the same preoccupation existed for the bikers whose core occupation was to travel from A to B, taking in lots of information, with the group event happening at the end of a long day’s cycling? The absence of most of the hikers from the Social Dreaming Matrix in the mornings also constituted a loss although it was good to know that we had a

representative present! When the Bikers were late the first evening I noticed my own reluctance to leave the venue. I felt concern – was everyone alright? And I was reluctant to give up the concept of the ‘one group’ by leaving even when it became clear that we had to go.

**Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker**

My contribution started with an answer to Julie about her presumptions about the different priorities in our groups concerning our meetings.

Only after arriving I fully realised the existence of the two groups and that there was a remarkable difference between them: we, the Bikers, had an external leader – you, the Hikers, had to find your way alone, we were privileged, well fed with information all over the day - you moved like scouts in an unknown territory, we had two leaders – Björn for the biking and Dale for the group – you, Julie, had to bring together both functions in your person.

In the course of the first day, especially during the long lasting and tiring second half of the trip, I noticed a sort of regressive process within myself, probably in the group too. Questions of my childhood, during lengthy mountain-walks with my parents, came back to my mind: ‘Is it still far away?’ ‘I need a rest, a place for ...!’ The first day, Björn would not give us exact answers, an ominous half an hour was promised several times, and the group helped herself shouting, encouraging shouts for the groups of runners who came the opposite way – encouraging for ourselves too, signals to the others, warnings for holes or slippery parts in our way, “Traffic!”, the sound of the group developed. Here you are right, Julie, during these hours of our tour the aim of the meeting was lost, all our energy had to be concentrated to make the trip, to stay together as a group.

The question of leading became crucial: Björn’s preoccupation was to bring us safe to the hotel, the aim of the group-meeting with the hikers at this point did not belong to his priorities.

**Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker**

We met on the first day at Potsdammer Platz train station, it was wet and cold so we took shelter in the Spy museum, we got our bearings and then set off. We were able to quickly connect with the wall, the memorial stones that still trace the line of the wall and in visiting the outside memorial at the Topography of Terror. It was a good place to start – a very visceral memorial. The guard house at Checkpoint Charlie remains but the surrounding terrain now has a carnival feeling with the Trabant fairground close by. I found it difficult to assimilate

my experiences of Berlin both then and now. I am glad that the trail of the wall has been marked in spite of the wish of some to eradicate it completely. I have only had a very small experience of East and West Berlin but it is right inside of me both then and now. The as yet untold traumas, separations and loss during the cold war era as well as the process for East Berliners and East Germans having to transition from one way of life to another.

Over the three days there was a warm and comfortable closeness in the hiking group, with different people joining each day. We seemed to work best as a five, like a family grouping. We got to know each other through conversation, companionship and the sharing of roasted almonds from Israel, gifts of perfectly formed petite roses from a local park and the ritual ceremony at Glienecke Bridge burning sage and Native American sweet grass. In thinking about the East/West divide gave me an opportunity to think and talk about the north/south divide in Ireland.

### **Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker**

I was glad that Julie took the organization in her hands and did it so well. During the walks, I leaned on her a lot and felt the freedom and



obligation to take part in answering the question: where are we right now?

So, I came to our tour with almost no knowledge about Berlin, I cut myself (as much as possible) from current life and dived into a new reality. It was great.

I learned about East/West, had to change some ideas I had about it. The questioning as we went along the trail, “Are we in the East or West?” I was reminded of those moments this week. I was walking in Jerusalem with a British woman, trying to explain her where is the Jerusalem from before 67, the different populations and so. Such a destruction is going on here, destruction of better relationship in the future. So probably, there was also envy in my heart while walking in a city that is peaceful now.

I found myself in between the two groups hikers and bikers. Partly the story of my life. When the bikers were late at the end of the first day, and I was the only hiker who stayed in the same hotel as the bikers in the same time I felt the anger of hikers who waited hours and left disappointed, and the concern about the bikers who were so late. The meetings around a table in dinners were meaningful for me.

Hiking for hours invited talking. These were occasions for

profound discussions. I have a special feeling about our last day. I joined Julie and Fiona talking about painful events in Ireland. I can close my eyes and hear the tone of their voices. Also touring Berlin, looking for Kathe Kollwitz with Theo and Ingrid as guides, was so meaningful.

**Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker**

I chose to walk rather than bike because one of the people I'd hoped to meet was to be walking. Our times together proved to be some of the more meaningful parts of the entire conference. If life were a tapestry, a weaving, where relationships form the weft and warp, here on this hilarious trek were some soul deep cords of the Intimate, irritating, companionable, entertaining, persevering, curious, kind & exhausting; with some genuine bit of awe and gratitude, that seemed to weave us all together. We were silenced together, taking in the horror of the 'topography of terror'. The very walls where someone my mother or grandmother's age were tormented and worse. We walked the streets and came upon discreet bronze plaques in the sidewalk, bearing the names of residents, Jew, Catholic or Gay, who had been taken from this very address. Right here, from this doorway dragged away. In Potsdam, the cobblestone indication of the old wall cutting through the middle of the road; a beautiful residential road, breaking a village in half. Amazing.

**Mary Cullen, Dublin, Ireland: Hiker**

I was glad to say yes when asked if I would go along on the hike. Retrospectively, I can see that Julie was handed a big task to coordinate the hiking group and had done huge preparation beforehand which informed all of us on the hike, much to our advantage. My only preparation had been to re-read Primo Levi's book- *If This Is a Man*- one which I have always held in high regard. So, I was somewhat ashamed of my lack of preparation and inability to contribute some of the historical information particularly in relation to the East-West division and its impact post-war. Additionally, I was feeling a little rude in relation to my reticence about wearing the generously proffered T-shirt. Somehow, I had a fantasy that we would wear this T-shirt - as a group - and it conjured up images for me not just of boarding school uniform but behind all of that, given that we were in Berlin, the enforced wearing of other garments which would identify me/us as part of an acceptable/ unacceptable group-insiders/ outsiders- or perhaps as part of a theme later to emerge - resourced or under-resourced.

Thanks for the T-shirt! It is interesting the fantasies it evoked in advance which coloured my/ our perceptions as we went along.

**Markus Schirpke, Berlin, Germany: Biker**

The second day in social dreaming the metaphor appeared that the bike ride is a kind of womb experience before we are born into the symposium.

While trying to write about ‘bike and hike the wall’ this metaphor seems important to me. We had three days-time to be close together and explore ourselves and the others during riding; telling stories, asking questions, listening, sharing food, swimming, telling jokes, discussing politics and also more personal stories. The stories Björn told us were almost new for me as well. I liked the story about the wall, which is still standing inside a building of the parliament. In this building Björn told us are two important committees of the Bundestag. One is the committee for controlling the secretary of the interior and his federal agencies. The other committee is for controlling the intelligence services. In this building above the wall East and West Germans (former enemies) work together to control the government and ensure a democratic country.

## Reflections

**Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

I also wonder about the ‘leader’ of the biking group, Björn, not being present at any of the groups?<sup>8</sup> What was the meaning and the impact of this absence? Several contributions here have named the difficulty of communication between the two groups with the emphasis on the technology of communication. I wonder if the best communication possible was available to us what the content of that communication would have been and, indeed, if it would have been any different from, as one contribution put it, a dominant-submissive content?

I have several associations to the theme of Crossing Borders as it emerged both within the hiking group and between the Hiker and Biker subgroups. The emphasis in the hiking group on using and sharing our own resources led to some powerful, warm, and indeed quite hilarious experiences. A strong, collegial bond developed in the

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<sup>8</sup> Björn was invited to join us but felt he needed to get back to his family.

group despite the change in membership over the three days and this bond was nurtured by the four or five core members. In our group, there were a few borders of note – that between Jerusalem and the West Bank and that between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Inspired by the story of the Berlin Wall the pain of our own experiences of division, of otherness, of conflict became highlighted and a dialogue began which I feel will not end now that our hike is over. In our relationship with the bikers there was much reference in the median group to the relationship between East and West Berlin – the resourced and the unresourced, the powerful and the weak. For me there is little doubt that we became caught up in a German matrix of the illusion of unity alongside persistent division. But there is another analogy too I think and that is of the European Union with its powerful, policy-determining centre and its weak and vulnerable margins. This matrix is also one that is pervasively shaped by power relations and it is clear that the power is at the centre and that, at the margins, an anger has been building for some time. I felt this anger myself as we walked along Karl Marx Strasse (Potsdam) beside the lakeside villas where the private owners have sealed off lakeshore access to the public. My fantasy was that perhaps these were the private bondholders who the Irish, Greek, Portuguese and Spanish tax payers were forced to bail out by the austerity policies imposed from the centre.

**Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker**

Your question, Julie, why we did not include and invite him to our meetings is really an important idea for future planning of such trips. As well as the question of having two leaders in our group, one saying good bye in the evening, the other taking over. During the day, Björn mostly biking in front, Dale often at the end of the long lane trying to keep us together.

These differences contributed a lot to our missing each other, perhaps together with all the divisions and old frictions of the Berlin-matrix, we were exposed to: ‘We were out to Berlin in the green, in the green, where the ruins are rotting in the sun ...’

It’s a place where the grandchildren of the former losers of history nowadays turn out to be the winners, and at the end, the winner takes it all. Perhaps our difficulties in discrimination – where was East, where was West – may find also an additional explanation partially in the simple fact that the former East with all the subventions of ‘Aufbau Ost’ meanwhile looks more western than the shabby former West ...

Again, and I say this as a German, we needed the external

guide.

For me, there is another unsolved question: Why such a small number of German colleagues joined us? Markus, do you have an idea? You also mentioned that you did not know much about the wall before, not much more than the others from abroad. That was the same with Ingrid and me. Especially we had no idea about the function of the 2 walls, to capture the ‘Republikflüchtlinge’ alive trapping them in between.

Several times during the trip I felt so ashamed, about these blind spots in my memory, in my knowledge, about my avoidance to deal with this important part of our history. A western avoidance, the people from the East had no other chance than to confront themselves.

Mostly young men were shot and many more went to prison, young men which would be in my age today. I remember my need for crossing borders and I had the chance to do so, especially in this time of my life. It is perhaps a mixture of guilt and feelings of shame, that we left them alone. Even today, the confrontation with this part of our history is painful, so the thin layer of vegetation covering the former “Todesstreifen” may function like an incomplete repression – you better don’t touch.

### **Markus Schirpke, Berlin, Germany: Biker**

In the womb experience with the Bikers and (Hikers) the biking, the landscape, the history and Björn’s stories can be seen as triangulating objects, which also framed the group and helped us to grow together and handle the differences. So, I had time to get used to speak English the whole day and realise my (West) German identifications. For example, I didn’t know that the GDR tried to avoid as hard as possible to kill people at the wall, because every killed person was bad for the propaganda war. Coming to education (comparing values/systems in Germany and the US) I suddenly felt not West German but German and in the mirror of the other Europeans – European. I realised that the identifications (also influenced by propaganda) are a reason for difference and even not understanding the other. On the other hand, some of the participants were able to speak and understand German, which surprised me. I hadn’t anticipated this. So, during the biking on the remains of the separating and imprisoning wall, nourished and protected by the womb, I found new similarities, connections and differences I hadn’t thought about and a bunch of siblings.

My immediate association with my hiking experience was the warmth

with which I was met as I joined the hiking group on the last day of their walk along the path of the Wall. As we walked, I began to make connections with each member. I don't think I had realised until then, how much I desired a group within the large group of the symposium. I began to recognise how it linked with decision to go to the Symposium, a desire to extend myself beyond my Irish group analytic community and begin to build an international one. I wanted to move beyond familiar shores

As an Irish woman, there is always a sense, maybe even an anticipation, that if you can place some-one you might actually know something about them, 'Ah, you're from x - well I lived there once for a while', 'Oh, is that right, I had a cousin who was married to a woman from there'... and so I attempted to weave my web of connectivity by discovering where my fellow walkers were from.

While I could feel my desire to be recognised and visible as a member of this new community I was also in touch with something of what it means to be the 'newly arrived'. The anxiety, checking my understanding of the norms and customs, as in ringing Julie to find out if I needed to bring lunch or did we buy it en-route and the desire to make a contribution, like helping to read the map. And just when I thought I had begun to land with the 'hikers', I landed into the median group, and came face to face with the 'bikers' none of whom I had spent time with. Ah regression, how I know thee so well!!!

A few thoughts from my day of walking: the notion of escape, was a theme that particularly took hold. The idea of getting beyond the wall and all that this could take. I began to think about the drive involved in the risk to cross over to the other side. The photographic images of people being pulled in both directions - on the one side by those helping them escape and on the other by those demanding that they stay. The small plaques on the footpaths marking the names of individuals and families that had tried and failed to make that perilous journey. The bravery and the sense of loss intertwined in each one.

**Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker**

The Berliner Mauerweg gave us an opportunity to explore our own personal complexities of identity, culture, political affiliation and lived histories. We were sensitive to emotive 'hotspots' weaving in and out of spaces together to allow for on-going dialogue. Walking together enabled us to move in and out of different configurations both physically and psychologically, it was a very special experience. Eating together in the evening after the median group also developed the closeness of the hiking group but meant that we missed out on

spending time with the bikers.

The Glienicke bridge stands out for me in thinking about the dynamics of our little group. I was struck afterwards that we had not crossed the bridge, the group felt fractious and cranky and I now wonder why, what were we picking up unconsciously? We seemed hemmed in somehow. The Glienicke bridge has a long history and became known as the Bridge of spies during the cold war as it became a meeting place for the exchange of spies. The East German government claimed the bridge as the Bridge of Unity. I felt compelled to return on my own to cross the bridge and felt freer in doing so, the landscape was surprisingly beautiful. I have fond memories of finding the lovely little social neighbourhood with buildings made out of recycled material, the gorgeous lunch and unexpectedly meeting up with the bikers and then their arrival at Spandau as we rested in the park. On the final day, we stopped for lunch at a Kantine and I wondered if this was a tribute to life in East Berlin with the workers all eating together. Throughout the hike I was constantly wanting to know which side I was on and it felt important for me to walk on the East side of Berlin as much as possible. I did not mind when the Bikers referred to us as the East Berliners as we did have a richness of community spirit and a pool of internal resources within the group. When the Bikers did not return on time on the first evening I thought of the ‘disappeared’ both in Germany and in Ireland. I was sad when we were not able to have a final meal together.

### **Mary Cullen, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

The first median group started late which surprised me as already we were crossing the boundaries of my expectations but I found it stimulating and thought provoking. With hindsight, we might have talked about our differing ideas, plans, fantasies with regard to meeting up every night for the median group. Looking back now it seems that we had an unrealistic expectation of a cohesive median group which was not going to be possible and had not been thought about by the combined group(s) as a whole. We did however, send an emissary who represented us every evening and morning at the Social Dreaming Group, which I found comforting, knowing that we were represented in some way. The notion of a transitional space comes to mind, as Alain Vannier (French Psychoanalyst) puts it ---‘the future subject (group!) in transit’ ...I think now of the lost possibilities of a more cohesive experience but also the impossibility of such an experience and the gain in accepting our lack.

Some illusionment and disillusionment then. Already I was disappointed not to be biking and then having to confront the shame of finding that I was holding up the group because I could not walk! What a regressive position to hold for the group. I was discomfited/disturbed, unable to work out directions and know something about the history. Something about being in Berlin got into the group matrix and highlighted for me a diminishment of some kind in the not knowing the language, the route, the leaning on someone who might show us the way.

### **ligo, Ireland: Hiker for a Day**

The process of reconciliation also came into sharp relief for me. It came through conversation, through landscape, the individual segments of the wall that remain standing and through the memorial sites. The idea of 'not forgetting' in some way marrying a willingness to go further. Finding a way to speak about the past, without remaining in it. It brought home to me how my grandparents never talked about the civil war in Ireland, how in my family, I seemed to learn that 'the less said, the better', how some members of the community in which I now live learned to 'keep their heads down' during the 'Troubles'. It reaffirmed my belief that the work of reconciliation only begins when we can find ways of reaching across borders and can only continue when we risk speaking to each other. I write that as if 'speaking' comes easy - but of course I know the truth of that! So the conference began.....

### **Mary Cullen, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

We were an interesting and diverse bunch of people from different places and as has already been written about, all of us with our own borders/boundaries both actual and metaphorical which have impinged in our countries of origin and within ourselves. Paradoxically, I truly enjoyed the fun and camaraderie on the hike, the walks with different sub-groups, the people from different places, the expansion and contraction of numbers on different days, the getting lost, and the not knowing where we were going. We were so surprised to unexpectedly meet the bikers after a fab lunch on our first day. We were leaving and they hadn't yet had lunch with still 60 kilometres to cycle! How unrealistic we were about meeting up later! Of course, over the three days our own dynamics entered in to the equation-tiredness, disappointment, hunger, quest for good wine, wishing for sunshine, for a different type of walk, for grass not concrete, fantasising about the biking group and what it would be like to be part

of it, hoping for a median group at the end of the day to process the experience. At times, we became dispirited in the rain and concrete and needed morale boosting. However, all of the time in this setting what we could not but be aware of in our group matrix is how lucky and fortunate we are, for now. There was great kindness shown with sharing of food, drinks, almonds, fruit, roses(!) rescue tips for ailments(!)maps, aps for directions, rituals. I still have a fragrant piece of wood which I have just now lit to remind me of the attempted ritual on Glienicker Bridge. There I had to abandon the walk temporarily but enjoyed the conversation with the sub-group who accompanied me waiting for the boat to Wannsee and there we talked amongst lots of other things about Bruno Bettelheim's book, *The Informed Heart*, and I read the poem from Primo Levis's book, *If This Is a Man*, totally inapt for the ritual on the Glienicker Bridge but nevertheless in my confusion, the piece that I had chosen, I won't quote it all, just a few lines....

*You who live safe-  
In your warm houses,  
You who find, returning in the evening,  
Hot food and friendly faces:  
Consider if this is a man-  
Who works in the mud-  
Who does not know peace-  
Who fights for a scrap of bread-  
Who dies because of a yes or no.*

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*Meditate that this came about:  
I commend these words to you.*

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I truly believe that in Berlin there was in the matrix the worry and concern as to how these things came about and so with the return of the repressed, can so easily come about again. In the median group I thought this was very present and underlined our minor disruptions,

discombobulations and lack of integration, our resources and lack thereof, our divisions and impingements as well as our understanding and compassion. Most importantly we were afforded the opportunity to meditate upon these things In Berlin. Thank you everyone who was involved and for all the hard work that went into the Hiking and Biking planning and for the participation on all of our parts, a rich mix. The cycle(!) continues then; Illusionment; Disillusionment; Re-Illusionment.

**Joan Fogel, London: Biker**

I kept wondering what Berliners feel about the scar of the wall being turned into a bike path and that the physical scar is being maintained by people. Nature has covered up so much, you would never know about the suffering; it didn't show. Much of the wall about two thirds is rural and beautiful: woods and fields. Around Potsdam especially, a surprise. It had been just a name in a history book for me - the Edict of, the conference of ..

**Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker**

Support of the group enabled me to complete the ride. Despite having ridden since a teenager, I realised that I had no real idea how to use the gears. I had also never ridden with a group. David, Melissa's husband, a man with extreme sports experience, taught me how to make best use of the gears and gave me a gentle push up hills. For me this was a wonderful experience.

In our last median group, something that must have been there all the time emerged, very painfully! It demonstrated just how easy it is to get into conflict even when everybody cares about each other. Something about the German matrix we had all travelled into and along had made itself felt. The final straw for the hikers was when we the bikers realised during the course of the day that arrangements when we got back to Berlin were not so simple. We had to take our bikes back to Berlin on Bikes, collect luggage, shower, have something to eat, all before the programmed median group. As we had also learnt that our timing was somewhat unpredictable, we decided to phone the hikers and suggest that we meet later than planned. After arriving so late on the first evening, we were constantly preoccupied with not keeping the hikers waiting for us. Attempting to make this call, alerted us for the first time that called internationally on mobile phones is not fool proof. Calling from a US phone to an Irish phone in Germany brought an interesting voice mail message. A prostitute perhaps but not the person we were calling! So, we tried on

a German phone and left a message with our suggestion.

Although we intended to ask the Hikers to consider the idea of meeting later, they read it as an imperative as if we had decided and expected them to fit in. They had dreamed of eating dinner together of finishing together on a shared note of achievement but that is not what happened. Understandably they were disappointed and angry, felt pushed around. As we sat in the median group with so many strong feelings flying around I reflected on our last stop when Björn had described the chaos on the Eastern side that had accompanied breaking through the wall. By then a force so great had pushed the wall down.

**Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker**

I didn't understand much about the two median groups I attended. I left both confused as to how that was useful or meaningful. I think of the task of groups being to share thoughts and feelings toward each other. Instead I think ideas were being volleyed, perhaps in an attempt to find meaning or metaphor in happenstance?

Not sure about that but am certain of my gladness to have been with these remarkable women, and one fella, trodding along so easily together as we took in unimaginably difficult stories of the lives who had walked before us.

## **Joining the Symposium**

**Melissa Black: Dallas, USA: Biker**

An unexpected effect of the ride was the emotional space I inhabited as the symposium began. We were immersed in both the depth of history and trauma in Berlin as well as our own replicative process leading up to the symposium. I felt a distinct rift between my emotional openness and that of the other participants who were just beginning their process. I was almost spent; as if I were on day 5 of the symposium instead of the opening remarks! Equilibrium followed, as it generally does, but the impact of leaving our cocoon and entering the symposium was jarring!

**Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker**

This time together was the relational foundation for my experience of the conference. My walking buddies I'd seek out in the sea of faces at lunch or the large group. It gave me a feeling of connection, comfort, belonging. And fun. Oh, we had some fun.

**Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker**

Along the way, we cycled in little ever-changing subgroups, which gave rise to many interesting conversations. I found myself deep in discussion with our American colleagues about various group analytic concepts particularly as they related to the median group. We pondered about how the social unconscious is different to the foundation matrix and then on the last day a wonderful example of the social unconscious presented itself. We were sitting in the sunshine enjoying ‘Kafee und Kuchen’ on the third day on the banks of the Havel river. It started with one of our American colleagues talking about parents putting bumper stickers on their cars when their children got A grades on graduation. We Europeans were a bit amazed. We got into conversation about how you encourage children to study hard. The Americans thought it was important to encourage competition, while the Germans thought it was important for each child to have sense of achievement about having learnt something and demonstrated that to the best of their ability. After a while it became clear that each was expressing something that was evident according to the unconscious mores of their culture and with these thoughts rattling through my mind I joined the symposium!

**Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker**

Well, we were invited to join the trip, it was touching and we are glad that we were able to come with you. Thank you, Melissa, Dale and Bob - Ingrid and I, we are so grateful to share this experience with you and the whole group.

**David Glyn, London: Biker for one Day**

I was grateful to be included in the first day of your ride - and I got a lot out of joining you.

What was brought home to me was something that I had somehow managed to suppress in my imaginings of post-war Germany. I'm ashamed to confess that, to a great extent, this had always been, ‘simply’, a picture of post-Nazi re-constitution. It was only when I was brought up against the physical remains of the wall that I was forced to begin to consider how the partition of the country massively complicated the process of confronting the terrible history.

I had always pictured the wall, looking Eastwards - never dawned on me that, for West Berliners, the sun both rose from and set behind the wall.

And then, of course, the discovery that it was *two* walls - designed to create a catching rather than a killing zone.

This was a tremendous way to approach the symposium - one of a band of intrepid explorers, most of whom I suspect were also uncovering unexpected perspectives on recent German history.

**Joan Fogel, London: Biker**

I learnt about group narcissism. While we were on the ride we spoke about how we would be the subgroup everyone in the symposium would envy and wish they'd been part of. How would we cope? Not a bit of it, most people at the symposium were blissfully unaware there had even been 'preconference' activity!

I missed this group during the Symposium. My heart warmed whenever a fellow-traveller appeared out of the crowd in the Maritim.

**And then .. Afterwards**

**Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker**

Despite the failure to develop cohesion in our overall Hike and Bike group it is nonetheless true that our whole experience was a rich and powerful one. I think it is always hard for us to bear conflict and my experience of the Symposium overall was one of closing down conflict or, as in Hopper's fourth basic assumption 'Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification' seeking to massify to avoid our fear of potential annihilation.<sup>9</sup> We may not have been as cohesive as we would have wished but that does not preclude us from trying to bring some meaning to the experience. I had a memorable experience and I made connections and friendships. I learnt a lot about the complexity of crossing borders – borders of nationality, ethnicity, religion, culture, class, power and all that we have internalized through our personal experience and that has been transmitted to us through the foundation matrices of our various peoples. Thank you all!

**Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker**

In 3 days people who were strangers became people for whom I care. It is a great idea to hike together and I hope to meet you again.

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<sup>9</sup> Hopper, E., (2003). *The Unconscious Life in Groups: The Fourth Basic Assumption: Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification or ba* I:AM. London: Jessica Kingsley.

**Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker**

The pre-conference hike gave me a sense of belonging before entering the vastness of the Conference. I felt part of the community and not an outsider. We started important conversations and made new connections. I also fell in love with the Ampelmann, the little traffic men signals in East Berlin that have been preserved.

**Melissa Black, Dallas, USA: Biker**

For next time? I would have loved to have had more cohesion with the Hikers and I think we have all learned a lot about the need for better subgroup communication, empathy and acceptance when groups are on the move. This experience left me with a great deal to consider as I return to the States and watch our citizens on the move in so many directions every day.

**Joan Fogel, London, UK: Biker**

I learnt lots of things on this trip. I learnt that when cycling such a long way, that Lycra and gel do work, that you can get really close to strangers on a bike ride: a shared endeavour; and learn a lot about where they come from. I also got some great new expressions, "Dig deep!" when things are getting too difficult. that being physically in a place arouses more curiosity than reading about it.

**David Glyn, London, UK: Biker**

Thanks so much, Dale. My souvenir T-shirt is proudly folded in my T-shirt drawer.

**David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker**

During the long episodes of riding without stops it was great getting to know everyone and also having some great discussions that led to more than one "aha" moment. One of these discussions was comparing the underlying value systems of education in the USA and Germany. I will continue to examine my beliefs from the new vantage points I found along the journey.

**Bob Bennett, Dallas, USA: Biker**

I've been inspired by reading everyone's contributions and want to add a bit of my thoughts about this wonderful experience, Traveling Die Mauer.

We three Americans were very delighted with the outcome of the Mauer trip especially with the sense of feeling like outsiders from across the pond. We were received in such a warm fashion that

all sense of being an outsider quickly dissipated.

As many have talked about the intimidating fact of riding a bicycle so far seemed daunting but turned out to be quite enjoyable after the first rain filled 11-hour marathon ride. I have fantasies of renting a house in Potsdam and going bike riding again in the environs of Berlin. I will have fond memories of swimming with Joan and Marcos.

Björn was a great leader more from the historical perspective and the intellectual integration of East and West than his bicycling acumen. I agree wholeheartedly that including Björn in our group would have been a stroke of genius as exemplified by how nice it was to have David, our civilian, in the group. I so wish that we had integrated the Hikers and Bikers at the same hotel so that we could've had morning and evening group meetings. It's about the only thing I would change about our preconference grouping. My memories of sauntering alongside a fellow bike rider until you had to move out of the way of an oncoming marathoner, interrupting the conversation, and allowing for another conversation to take place, is something I look forward to at our upcoming pre-conference hike outside of Barcelona.

In addition to the heavy lifting of the emotional toll discussing refugees about our planet, I was inspired by the observations I made of how open the German people are to processing their traumas from previous world wars. I feel that the current split politically in America is partly related to our struggle to process our previous societal traumas including the massacre of the Indians and the utilization of slavery. Our task as Americans is to help along this process of acceptance of our previous traumas thus facilitating and encouraging our citizenry to become more comfortable with the concept of being a citizen of the planet. Let's hope our Group Analytic conceptualizations can be brought to this task. Greetings from the Group Analytic Practice of Dallas.

### **On Bikes, Boots and Borders from Sue Lieberman, Edinburgh, Scotland: Biker for two days Hiker for one Day**

As others on both elements of the trip have described, there was a lot of learning on this tour: of the history, of personal stories (including those of our guide Björn), of the sheer physicality of the Wall's route and its place in divided Germany. I became very perplexed one day when it seemed that no matter which direction we headed in, eastern Germany was always on our left. Surely some of the time our left (ie. west of the city) should have been western Germany? This was, of

course, a graphic demonstration of the fact that the city and surroundings of Berlin formed an enclave within eastern Germany: something that history books will have told me but which at some level I hadn't fully grasped. My mental image of Berlin had been that it sat literally ON the border between east and west. Now I had to digest the fact that borders aren't always where you expect them to be... And sometimes (often, in the case of twentieth-century Europe) they shift.

Amidst the learning, the conversations, the puzzles and perturbations, and the pleasure of making or renewing connections, it is the question of borders and relationships, of how borders influence identities and identifications and vice versa, that has had the greatest impact on me. For several reasons.

One was that the three-day tour formed a transition point – a border in its own way - between “normal” life and the intense experience of the Symposium. I had left home in the wake of a distressing conflict that had erupted just before I left. At the other side, the Symposium was to be the place where I would address the assembled masses of Group Analysts in my response to the first evening's keynote speaker. Thus, the tour was a kind of border between my personal and professional life, between what is unseen and what is publicly visible, echoing a symbolic dimension of the Wall itself. Although (as we learnt) the Wall was not one wall but two, the so-called “dead zone” inbetween was also a transitional zone between different kinds of reality; a zone with elements of both and neither; a kind of No Man's Land where it is possible both to get lost and be found. (Many of those whose deaths are recorded along the line of the Wall lost their lives but are found in history).

I had initially joined the cycling group, but the first day's late and lengthy distance, coupled with the heavy bikes and the lack of toe-clips, caused an old knee injury to flare up. So on day two I “rested” with the walking group, rejoining the cycling group on day three for the final pedal back into the city. I thus experienced both groups. The cycling group was more enclosed, drawn into a protective bubble under Bjorn's leadership. The walking group seemed more fragmented, as different people came and went, and sub-groups made different choices as to their routes, accommodation and company; but in some ways the group was also more open, more willing to adapt. This evokes thoughts of the old east (the cycling group?) and the old west (the walkers?); and more currently of Brexit (let's make our own decisions) and the rest of Europe (struggling to deal with the tensions between nationalism and internationalism). It is uncanny how easily

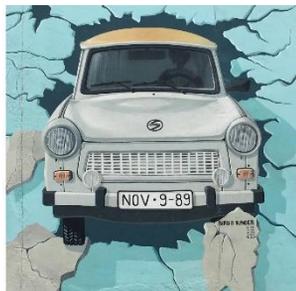
and unconsciously we re-create the very phenomena we question.

Lastly, the whole experience had resonances for me around identity and belonging. Several “national” groups were involved in this journey: from Ireland, Israel, Germany, Scotland, London<sup>10</sup> and the US (Dallas), most of which share histories – or currently struggle with current realities - to do with Walls, actual or conceptual. Over the past five years my personal journey into GASi has brought me into close contact with people in most of these countries and deepened my sense of connection to their troubled histories; this three-day tour was a strange reminder of how strongly we can be pulled towards histories, even other people’s histories, where paradoxically we may feel “at home”.

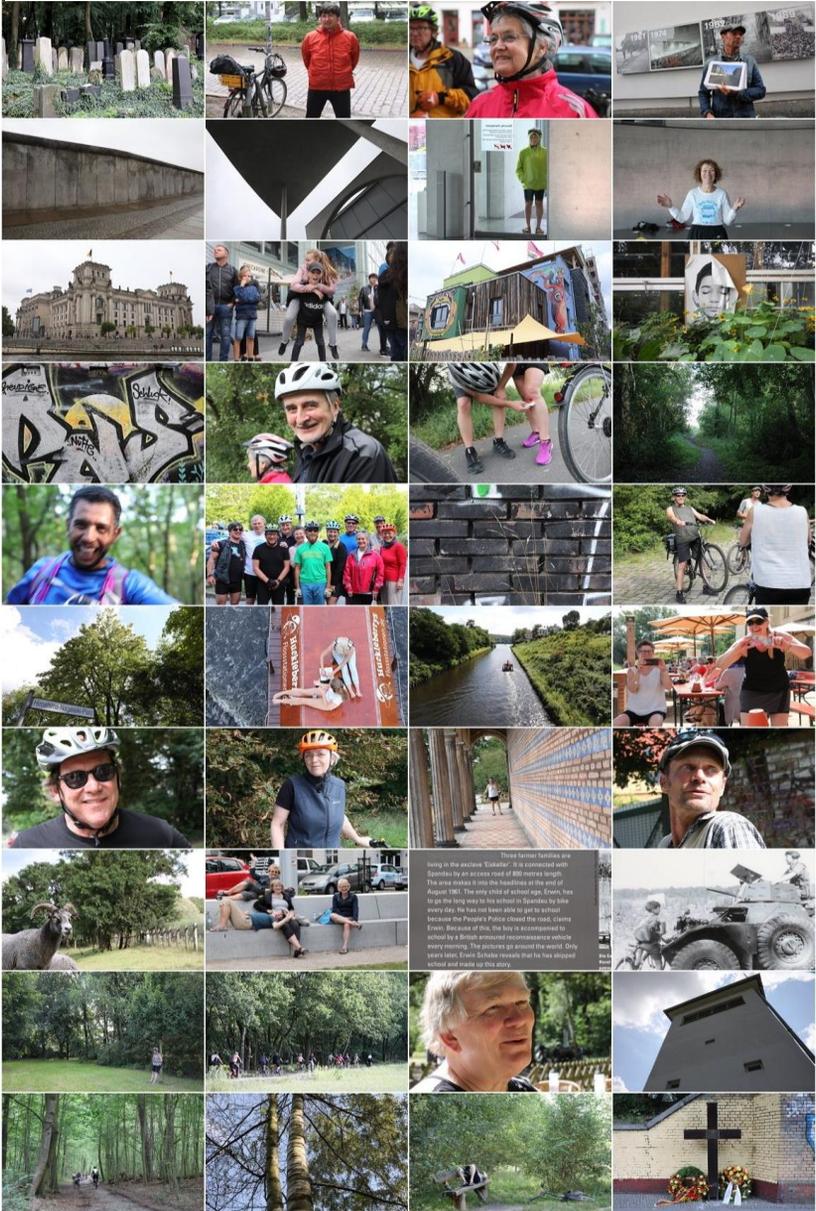
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<sup>10</sup> As the Brexit vote showed, London has its own quasi-national (and international) identity. It is also the origin and centrifugal point of Group Analysis in the UK, and all the England-based cyclists came from London. In various ways, it makes sense to consider London a kind of city-state in its own right, distinct from England.



# Robert Hsiung, Chicago, USA: Biker



## **What are the prerequisites for dialogue in the large group?**

By Christer Sandahl, Stockholm

The Berlin symposium was certainly a great success; friendly and open atmosphere, well organized with a balanced and very interesting program. I enjoyed all of it and learned a lot. What follows are my thoughts on the large group and a suggestion for the Barcelona symposium.

During the years I have experienced many large groups at GASi symposia and in other contexts. I understand that people find different aspects of the large group meaningful. What moves me is the development from psychotic chaos to some kind of personal encounters in the large group. Those moments when the group becomes calm and attentive to the interaction between two or more people are like wonderful music to me: when there is a feeling that some members of the group meet as “I” and “Thou” in the presence of all others. In those dialogical moments, there is no pressure for time and others can wait with their associations. There is spontaneity, but no impulsivity. This is what group analysis is about for me, to experience authentic feelings and thinking together. Such transforming moments seldom happen during the first large group session, but sometimes later and at best they become gradually more frequent. During the early years of group analytic symposia this is what I remember happened, dialogue developed. It made a big impression on me as a young psychologist. It made me hopeful and contributed to giving me the courage to work within the field of organizational psychology.

Unfortunately, and sadly, I have not experienced anything of this kind lately during the GASi symposia. However, I have frequently experienced dialogue in other contexts such as IAGP, Nordic and national group conferences and even in group relations contexts in France and UK.

In the Berlin large group there were a few short encounters which might have been the embryo of dialogue. Except for those moments there was one monologue after the other. I did not experience much of a development between the first three sessions. The last day was different, but no dialogue. For me it felt like examination day at a course in rhetoric. People stood up and said their thing, one after the other – and they were not interrupted and people seemed to listen. However, except for one occasion, no dialogue.

Some persons might find this very satisfying. After all, one of the most common fears in the Western society is to speak in public. To be able to overcome this fear and to be able to speak so people can hear and maybe listen, is of course a great accomplishment for many of us. If this is one of the major purposes of the large group I will have to accept that group analysis has developed in another direction than I expected. But it makes me sad that young group analysts and newcomers will not have the full experience, which has meant so much to me, of a large group at the GASi symposia.

Why has dialogue not developed in the large groups during the GASi symposia lately? Seating might be one explanation. It was somewhat, but not much, better in Lisbon where we could see the faces of the people on the opposite side. Sometimes leadership is questioned, but my impression is that the conveners have done a good job. Would it be better to have a leadership team which could meet between sessions and discuss how to understand the process? Maybe, but that is not at the core of the problem. In my view the convener in Berlin, Gerhard Wilke, did a great job and he was on his own. In spite of his hard work it did not help. So, what is the problem? As I see it, it is about simple arithmetic.

The room for the large group in Berlin had chairs for all participants of the symposium, i.e. 630. Let us assume that we would give everybody a chance to talk during the four days, i.e., 90 minutes  $\times 4 = 360$  minutes. That would give everybody about half a minute each to speak. Obviously, that would not be a meaningful thing to do, which implies that for somebody to speak more than one minute during the four days somebody else needs to keep silent. We have created a structure that gives the members a choice of two basic roles, to participate verbally or to be a bystander, part of the audience. Early on it was obvious that some members of the symposium did not want to make that choice, and they decided not to take part in the large group at all. From pictures of the large group it seems that there were maybe 400 participants, which would give each member almost a minute each if everybody would be given a chance to talk, which is still a ridiculous idea. From where I sat, I could observe many members who were silent all four days. I have talked to many who decided not to participate in the fight for speaking time. A rough estimate is that about 50% did not speak at all or contributed only with a few words. From this perspective, it is logical that most of those who talked stood up; they entered the scene and took the role of participant in front of an audience. This is what rhetoric is about. Maybe this dynamic is a reflection of the incohesion of today's narcissistic society

and therefore interesting in itself. Is that the main contribution the large group can offer, a mirror of society?

For me group analysis is a larger project than that. It is about understanding, but also about transformation and change. In the small group and the median group this obviously takes place, i.e. transformation and change. However, it is something the large group also can contribute to under certain circumstances. One key factor is the number of members. According to some research results human beings are able to remember the names of about 150, or at the most 200 persons in an organization or at a work place. It is equivalent to the number of members in a clan or a tribe, which from a developmental biology perspective makes sense. In the early history of human beings, it was important for the survival of the individual to recognize the members of the large group to which one belonged, to separate enemies from friends. In a large group with about 150 members it is possible to develop bonds between people where dialogue can develop. But it will not happen in a group of 400 people. This simply reflects the basic biological and existential conditions of being human.

I realize that I probably write this in vain. However, my hope is that the organizers of the Barcelona symposium will have the courage to start a new tradition, i.e. to have more than one large group, preferably three. When I talk about this, many friends have told me that it would be such a loss not to have the whole symposium dynamic represented in the large group. This conclusion is wrong; the dynamic of the larger context will be possible to experience and observe in the three large groups. That is almost a basic tenet of group analysis. And all members will meet at opening and closing sessions and during keynote lectures. What is the point of having a large group consisting of 50% audience and 50% performers, where little development takes place? One can question if much or anything is learned from the experience at all.

**Christer Sandahl**

Stockholm

[Christer.Sandahl@ki.se](mailto:Christer.Sandahl@ki.se)

## **Taking the conference (back home) seriously**

By Anca Ditroi & Bracha Hadar

This is the story of two Israeli women (Anca Ditroi and Bracha Hadar) who flew from Berlin to Israel with Turkish Airlines with a stop in Istanbul.

We left Berlin at 14.45. We were sitting together in the aircraft, happy for the opportunity to talk over and digest so many meetings, feelings and thoughts that we experienced during the conference. We landed "too early", and had not yet finished talking but were delighted to find out that we had a two-hour gap until the next flight from Istanbul to Tel Aviv. On the way out of the aircraft we were told by a Turkish Airlines' representative to go to gate 215. It was so good to know that we did not have to search for the gate on the board. We found the nearest coffee place to this gate and continued talking. At the right time, we went to the gate and waited to board. Something looked a bit strange – all the faces around us did not look like people who fly to Israel. We became a bit apprehensive and decided to find out. It was not easy to find an airport employee, but when we found somebody, the man, with very broken English, told us: "You missed your flight...".

We were in shock! There we were sitting, ten metres from the gate, not hearing our names called and missed our connection flight, while still being absorbed in the bubble of Berlin. The immediate feeling nesting in us was that like a refugee, having no land, and being given mercy by our hosts: the airport authorities and the airline company.

Then we suddenly understood: we took it for granted that German and Turkish time were alike, whereas in reality there was one-hour difference between German and Turkish time; that was the missed hour of our missed flight.

This was reflected also unconsciously in the messages we wrote to our Israeli group. One of the sentences one of us wrote was: "We landed in Berlin..." This was... correct. Although our bodies landed in Istanbul, our minds were still in Berlin. Unconsciously we did not cross the time-boundaries of Berlin.

The employee with his broken English tried to tell us how to find the connecting-flights desk. The only direction he and others whom we asked could name was "straight". We were running in the airport until we reached the Turkish Airline's desk. There were two women sitting behind the desk. We told them our story and one of

them told us: "I will help you", but for, what seemed to be, a very long time they spoke between themselves in Turkish, not translating a word, not answering any of our questions, and we started to feel more and more like refugees, dependent on the good will of the host, not understanding at all what was going on

It was at that time that we took a decision: let's write for Contexts about this experience – unconsciously it must be a continuation of the conference. Thinking about writing was a necessity to help cope with the situation. Only afterwards we thought that writing for Contexts felt like writing to our (professional) family, in order not to feel so lost and with no land. At that moment GASi was our land.

While standing at the desk, waiting to be helped, we had associations like: is she going to send us to the right side (death) or to the left side (life).

After what seemed an endless time, while both our passports were taken, she said: "I am going to give you new tickets for tomorrow's flight early in the morning. You will be taken by a shuttle to the hotel in the city. Now you have to go to the passport control." They did not charge any money for the change.

Our fears changed to gratefulness for their generosity. At that time, we thought of a possible title for what we want to write for Contexts: "Generosity and Fear".

Istanbul airport is huge. We found the passport control and in front of it there was a very long spiral like line. Almost all the people in that hall were dressed like Muslims. In these two-hours we were the bare minority engulfed in a serpent of people, feeling looked at by eyes behind the burkas. They turned at once to be the dangerous Other. We felt like our perspectives were narrowing and at the same time mirroring our suspicion and fear. It was a weird experience in which we were simultaneously both the object of the experiment and the researchers. The need to hide our identity (Israeli) made us talk in English. Afterwards, at the hotel, several people asked us in a very friendly way: "where are you from" and we answered Germany (still in Berlin) and then changed it to England, in case someone talked to us in German – a language we do not speak.

We took turns in holding the anxiety. While standing at the connecting-flights desk, realizing that we missed our flight, Bracha felt very anxious. Not understanding the Turkish language and with conduct which augmented the anxiety. Anca told Bracha to stop asking so many questions, which Bracha could not contain, at that time, inside. During the flight, and also at the airport, we kept hearing

children crying. Sometimes endlessly. Bracha thought about nowadays, of families of refugees with young children and babies, but also associations of the holocaust popped in.

Next day in the morning, on the flight back, it was Anca's turn to experience strong anxiety, when she suddenly realized that her daughters did not answer her messages, and worried that maybe they did not even receive them.

After two hours, we finally landed in Tel-Aviv. Anca spoke with her daughters and the drama was at an end.

For a few days, we told our story to family and friends. We found that beyond the narrative the story has in it a deep uncanny experience which is not easy to convey.

We understood how this unplanned experience gave us the opportunity to embody the content of the conference in our body-mind.

When we landed we thought that the title should be: "taking the conference (back home) seriously".

**Bracha Hadar**

[bracha.hadar@gmail.com](mailto:bracha.hadar@gmail.com)

**Anca Ditroi**

[ancaditroi@gmail.com](mailto:ancaditroi@gmail.com)

## **Berlin and the social self-conscious**

By Di King

Does being grown-up mean letting go of the sensitivity of individual feelings? Are both possible? Being grown-up and also obsessed with personal interactions.

Social competence preoccupied me at the conference and my experience told me that if I feel something as strongly as this then it is likely to be experienced by others. One border that was evident to me over the days of the conference was confidence. If you have it, you have it. If you don't you don't and isn't this one of the first thing that goes in the presence of brutality and abuse?

This characteristic hypervigilance can help in therapeutic work, as those who struggle with it know what it feels like to resist growth. Is there a legitimate role for the immature or is it just a stuck indulgence holding its breath till maturity happens? Can the preoccupied measuring of the world through minute vigilance and sensitivity be taken seriously and valued as much as social maturity? Might something of the subtlety be lost without this painful narcissistic preoccupation? Can the pupil teach the teacher? We know they can as long as the teacher has not forgotten his/her original ignorance.

### **What had this to do with the conference, the crossing of borders?**

I think there is a link between individual feelings of inclusion and exclusion in the reality of actual exclusion and where death is threatened. If you arrive in another country you are dependent on how the host country accepts you. Every facial gesture, every act of kindness matters. Who is sincere? Who just doing their job. There were over 600 people at the symposium. 630 or so possible connections. One of the themes of the conference was belonging. This clearly means different things to people.<sup>1</sup>

I notice fairly soon that my small group became important to me. I made the assumption that it was a place where I was free to be

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<sup>1</sup> As someone helpfully pointed out, using the formula for a group of any number  $n/2(n-1)$  actually give a staggering 290,925 possible pairs in a group.

myself. Even so, each new interaction must be negotiated. Some just happen. No thought needed. Generally, I will talk to anybody who talks to me. So much do I like this that I often don't ask myself whether I want to engage with that person. I am only aware of my wish to connect. In that minute pre-connection, a border is crossed. Whether connection happens – and with it the subsequent feeling of good will – depends on a willingness on both sides to connect.

In the moment that the other person approaches, I assess: Is this person friendly? Would this person like to speak? Is this person in a hurry/pre-occupied/ has another date/ doesn't speak much English? Do they guess that I would like to speak? The moment is quickly over and if I happen to look down to negotiate a step the moment is passed - the approacher has taken this as my not wanting to speak and we pass each other distantly.

The first time I led a workshop, realising that because of my role, there were people in the group who felt intimidated to talk to me was a shock. It showed me that it is important for the person in the authority role to be especially available to those who might not feel comfortable in stepping forward.

The small group daily felt more real. Here some of these feelings could be explored. Aware of the gravity of the conference focus, it felt that here was a place where I could learn to make sense of it. Against the backdrop of the vastness of the topic the impacted on us could be talked about though some struggled to keep it non-personal.

Sometimes what was talked about seems to have little connection to the theme of the symposium and I sensed that some felt uncomfortable with this – what has this to do with the topic? My belief is that it was very much connected but we were often not able to understand why. I also needed to be aware that because something impacts on me it doesn't mean it is true and like a dream which is meaningful to the dreamer but may not be a universal truth. Also, what may feel trivial to one person can be important to another and that whatever is said in a group has meaning.

## **The breakfast**

Breakfast with 630 people? Through this sea of faces how to get something to eat from the vast array and where to sit? Several things might go on. First you look for your friendship group. If you have arrived at the conference knowing no one, you might look for somebody you have connected with during the day. Connections to do with language, nationality suddenly feel safe. Colleagues, even

those you might have had have difference with, in the face of this unknown can suddenly feel like dear friends.

But – you don't see any. Now yogurt in hand you approach a likely table. Two of the seats have bags on them. Another has somebody's coffee cup. The person over there you know usually has breakfast with her friends. S/he is a big noise and at this time of the morning you don't feel up to the possible polite rejection or toleration.

In reality, whoever I joined at a table, known or not, I was almost universally welcoming and indeed these conversations were some of the most interesting of the conference. The ability to manage this easily is called social competence. For some people even thinking about this will seem like tiresome self-absorption.

Probably over the five days all of us had lonely moments. It can feel shaming. This is not the same as the much-needed alone moment but I think it is related to the theme. We want to belong.

Above all I loved the symposium experience. Wouldn't have missed it. It inspired and exhausted me. Left me in awe of the universal use of English and the work being done all over the world. It made me think. I am still thinking.

## **Further**

Somebody looking at this asked why I persist in saying grown-up and not professional? For me the concept of the professional is somebody who is at the top of their game having trained or experienced enough to be so called. Fear of showing that this might not always be the case, rather than being interest in it and what it might mean, can be opportunity missed. In the context of the symposium the myriad of possible connections for me intensified the childish place. We were not grown-up but the label regressive sounds pejorative.

In our work, I feel there is the tendency to think that only the end result is what we aspire to. So, the therapist or conductor is required to be sufficiently therupt to be able to stay in the adult place whatever difficult or emotive material he witnesses. Not that s/he is not affected but that s/he is able to stay on his therapeutic perch on behalf of the patient/client.

My dilemma is that I am more interested in the journey to get to this point than the goal. I am drawn to people with flaws. I think the true trade is vulnerability. If you show me how clever you are, but don't show me your sores, I might not connect deeply with you. It might be difficult for my relationship with you to be anything other than patronised if we say can only relate as professionals. If we are a group of totally sorted people, what connection is to be made except

intellectual. There are many reasons for liking groups. One might be allowed to be vulnerable. To talk about what doesn't work, to question life. To share what it is like not to know.

In ordinary life, values can be different. The goals may be to make money, be in control, have power, be seen to do the job well, to be successful. Vulnerability is often seen as a weakness. Heaven help the person sensitive enough to be brought down by overwork or over performing with no place to admit defeat or hopelessness. I can feel the relief of tension when in a group a person who has broken down with the effort to stay on top, allows himself to admit his failing.

A supervisor once said of a training group: They just want to turn it into a therapy group. Yes. This seems to me to be part of it. What else are they going to do? Sit and tell each other how competent/sorted they are or how much they understand the theory. If that is the point, I have missed it.

The focus of the symposium was, of course, to look at what could be done or understood about immigration and the refugee plight – the crossing of borders. When all that is wanted is survival, there may be no time for subtleties of connection, the vulnerability is evident but as the author William Fiennes says:

‘The big themes are alive in the smallest detail.’

**Di King**

[dikingblackbird@gmail.com](mailto:dikingblackbird@gmail.com)

## **AH, BERLIN!**

By Derek Love

I offer some of my Berlin Sy experiences for *Contexts'* readers to compare and contrast their own, maybe.

### **Small group**

The small group was the anchor to keep me grounded within all the soaring energies of the Sy. Thanks Dorothea for your combination of detached analysis that paid attention to the transference, alongside tremendous warmth, involvement and personal revelation, you really helped the group work, so wonderful to feel safe enough to put yourself in someone else's hands. It was so instructive to see you working in such a different way from myself, something that you acknowledged to someone else in the group, I felt immediately relaxed enough to be myself (whoever that may be). We all got down to it in a measured, engaged way. On the last day, I was struck by how there were times there was a real flow and mutual understanding, a sense of the multi-dimensional phenomenological perspectives that we were all part of something, the whole greater than the parts, that is part of our experience in working in and with groups, yet so hard to define and put down in words. This is something addressed in a later session – Writing the group – by David and Peter (I didn't go), though even having all the group members presenting their own phenomenological perspective is still a net too coarse to capture the living reality.

### **Lectures**

I only went to Farhad's! I know I missed out because of the reports but most nights I was last man standing at the bar, walking to CVJM, emailing from there, insomniac so not in bed till 2 most eves – I gave myself a break.

### **Large Group**

I love these experiences, don't expect anything so am not disappointed, I quite like the boredom but not the not hearing, they are, I think, over-invested. I can speak when I want to, which was an important discovery to make, but they aren't where I expect much learning to happen, though increasing tolerance to chaos is always useful.

### **Wednesday**

**How do group dynamics sound?** Annagret's music session was

really something new to me. The group played on a selection of, sometimes unique, instruments - one looked like a Harp of David but just for strumming, two cello-like – though oblong – stringed instruments to be played with bows, African marimbasa, a couple of dozen drums, some large xylophones on stands, all of which A had brought with her (on its own an amazing effort for just this single session). We improvised together for a session such as I have never experienced in my life. Though I doubt that many there were musicians we still made a joyful noise. The intricate interplay between self-assertion, listening, responding to others, hearing the group as a whole was something I now envy musicians for having.

There was something about Annagret's style, so quiet, gentle and unassuming yet so enabling, everyone had a great time and so emotional.

What an opportunity, what a unique experience, what a memory. Fabulous.

**Bridge over troubled waters.** The next meeting in the same room (btw, how did they manage to clear the very packed room so quickly) was Ofra's social drama session. She started us off with being an orchestra in a different way than the previous session. The group presented in two halves the other being the audience, the instruments were people's bodies or voices. Ofra was a force to be reckoned with who got us doing the most wonderfully absurd things and thoroughly undermining any uptightness we may have gone in with. No one was going to say to her "I don't think I can do this, I think I'll sit this out", so we all made fools of ourselves and loved it. Seeing Estella and others, including myself, squawking, shouting nonsense etc – priceless.

We moved on to mirror exercises (like the mirror scene in the Marx Brothers *Duck Soup* with Groucho and Harpo [available on you tube]) and then to more metaphorical reflections of stories we told one another enacted as three-part gestures, which moved on to a group interaction.

Again – unforgettable!

## Thursday

. The next day I participated in a two-session workshop playing and responding to pieces of music chosen by the conductors and other group members. In the first session the workshop conductors, Tammy and Oded, chose *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* which had me and others weeping,

some hadn't heard it before. It was fascinating how we were moved by different aspects of the song - what got to me were the lines:

*When you're down and out  
When you're on the street  
When evening falls so hard  
I will comfort you  
I'll take your part, oh, when darkness comes  
And pain is all around  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down*

I have been to that place.

For another woman it was:

*Sail on silver girl  
Sail on by  
Your time has come to shine  
All your dreams are on your way  
See how they shine  
Oh, if you need a friend  
I'm sailing right behind  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will ease your mind*

where she was thinking about her daughter who has just left home.

Then there was another gentle piece, a Palestinian lament, I think, which the group also responded to with alacrity.

I was encouraged by these pieces to choose the first music for the second session – Captian Beefheart's *Dachau Blues* from *Trout Mask Replica*. It has to be said that this was almost universally disliked (except by an American man who knew about *TMR* and its history), driving one member apoplectic with rage, I genuinely think that she wanted to kill me. Wow, I certainly didn't expect that! Mostly this was because of the chaotic sound (though this is a piece that is, in fact highly organised and composed like a classical composition that can be repeated rather than improvised in a way that cannot) but the lyrics, about a concentration camp, were also part of the offence that was felt – I had considered them appropriate to the Sy's themes and the implicit dynamics in Germany which had not been referred to much.

I think I took her fury on the chin, even though I have never been on the rough end of so much anger before and the angry woman and I were able to come to some accommodation.

However, I have to say, Tammy and Oded, that if you *invite* your workshop participants to select pieces, you aren't really in a position to pathologize their choices! Whilst I accept that I do like to stir things up and I knew this music would do that, I could not possibly have known what the impact would be. As I said at the time, one of the reasons I wanted to play it was because I have always listened to this album on my own so was interested to share the experience with others. Before I played it I also suggested that it might be wise for me to give a brief introduction to prepare the group for a possible musical shock, assault even, but I was forbidden to do so by T & O who said the group should just experience the piece raw.

My assessment on reflection was that the intense experience created by this piece made these sessions ones that no-one who was there will forget, whilst, without something more rousing, it might have ended up a nice experience but perhaps a bit more sentimental. So why wasn't I thanked rather than reprimanded? If any other participants have a different view I would be interested to hear about it.

I'm afraid I was too freaked by the attempt to imply a neurosis in my selection of music to fully take in the last piece, though it was, again, gentle and soothing - we needed that, I think.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the challenging situation above, these were also unforgettable sessions.

## **Friday**

**Novelty, harmony and invention: listening to the music of the group.** Spotting a theme in my Sy workshop choices?

Ido, Marit, Linde and Tiziana's sessions the next day were equally memorable. In the first session, they had the group (20+) speaking for a while in our native languages. This was truly listening to the sound of the group. In the second ten minutes of doing this someone entered the group late. I felt incredibly grumpy and unwelcoming about this and said so but Sahar (whom I had some connection with as a member of the small group mentioned above), who was speaking in Arabic at the time, addressed me and, despite not understanding what she said, I did understand something - she completely opened up my heart to acceptance, I feel so moved that she was able to do this, what a tribute to human connectedness across nationalities, and especially to the unique Sahar, thank you so much

for that, I will never forget you.

In the second session, we had times of speaking in gibberish, an equally revealing experience where there was a lot of laughter and laid bare some of our communication styles. The “novelty, harmony and invention” mentioned in the programme was clearly also part the conductor’s imaginations - so incredibly imaginative and unique; more thanks them and the group from me.

### **The Gala Evening**

Though this was a bit disappointing foodwise (running out! really!) the band, which I had cursed whilst we were eating (or not eating, in my case) because they were slaughtering songs I love (possibly the worst *Stand By Me* ever!) turned up trumps when it came to dancing - they were really quite sinuous and various rhythmically (their version of Ed Sheeran’s *The Shape of You* was better than his) so I forgave their previous sins against music. Everyone danced so damned erotically, men and women alike - Christine, loved the shoulders; and Beautiful, Dancer, Sex Bomb, Comedian, Heart & Soul, E Casanova, Editor (special award for the Jagger moves), you were also transformed into the beautiful, graceful, sexy spirits you really are - made me come over all polymorphic perverse. Love GA’s at play. (Me? Dr Love, of course.)

Apart from this someone came up and said, “You bastard!” several times very loudly because she had actually read my column – could any author hope for a more satisfying response? Certainly, it put the cherry on top of my night.

### **Saturday**

The first session I will pass over in silence, there are always disappointments and I should have looked more closely at the abstract.

**landscapes.** On the last day, I joined the second of Marina and Marita’s sessions on the internationalisation of Group Analysis. For the first time at the Sy (I’d tried at the GASI AGM where I was told I’d been heard but was actually brushed aside) I felt listened to about the ambivalence towards the International part of GASI symbolised by the inconsistencies in fonts of the *International* part of the name (just look at the cover of your programme and abstracts booklets) and that it is sometimes written GASi. As a result of this I have been inspired to campaign for a change of name to the **International Group Analytic Society** of which more later via the forum and

elsewhere in the organisation.

## Outings

Organising Group Analysts is like trying to herd cats, snakes or hummingbirds. You may have gathered that I rather like music so was determined to go to a Jazz Club whilst in Berlin. Thursday seemed the best night for those interested, I had sort of advertised this in advance and knew some people were on board and others wanted to join. However, finalising and organising with people dropping in and out, having to book with A-Trane despite not being certain of the numbers, yet if we didn't we might not get entry or at least seating, was the most stressful experience of the Sy, I'd much rather have been organising a workshop or even giving a lecture (though, thank god, that's never going to happen). Still the Thursday outing happened, with 11 GA's eventually going.

To describe the experience, I'm going to have to go via San Francisco or rather Jack Kerouac. Jack and the rest of the Beats loved Jazz and were fortunate to be able to hear Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker play at their peak. Jack was so inspired by this he wanted to write like they improvised. He devised a way of inserting a roll of paper that he had made up himself into his typewriter so that he wouldn't have to stop typing when he got to the end of a page, he could then write in a way that carried him away like the great jazz players were with their musical inventions (he would have loved using a laptop). This sometimes leads to some vivid writing, with notable phrases and sentiments but lacks structure, and layering. Truman Capote's rather cruel comment about him was: "That's not writing, that's typing".

This method resulted in some interesting, indeed highly acclaimed, novels *On The Road* being the most well-known and which, in fact, made his name and brought him fame even if this was his life's tragedy. It was written by 1951 but not published till '57. Just before it was, he was in the hills on firewatch, something other Beats, like Neal Cassady (the 'hero' of OTR as Dean Moriarty) had recommended to him. Though he thought he would enjoy the solitude and help him write, as it turned out he hated it, found it suffocatingly lonely and his writing muse disappeared. When he came down from the mountains *OTR* had been published, he was internationally famous and his life effectively ruined as, already a hard drinker, he descended into alcoholism and an early death at 47. His account of his life just before fame, *The Dharma Bums*, is my personal favourite, superior to *OTR*, and a testament to his life lived as a courageous American who

embodied the pioneering spirit of his ancestors.

One of the things he eulogises about in his novels is experiencing the Jazz he tried to emulate in its improvisational originality. I wish I were Jack so I could tell you how truly amazing both nights at A-Trane were (some of us went on the Saturday as well). The core of the band was the drummer who was appearing all week with different musicians on each evening. On the Thursday, there was a keyboard player on grand piano, a guitarist and an upright bassist. This was great modern Jazz with moments that transported the whole room, certainly the equal of much I have seen in Amsterdam and Ronnie Scott's in London. The women in the party commented on how good looking all the guys in the band were but that they could probably have been their grandchildren. And what is it with bassists, they seem very prone to extreme facial expressions (anyone seen the woman in *Haim*?) - this man was gurning for Germany!

There is a joke about rock 'n roll: "What is a group? – three musicians and a drummer". In Jazz, nothing could be further from the truth, I have been universally impressed by jazz's standard of drumming, they are frequently the best musicians in a weak band and they can make or break a good one. This guy was extraordinarily versatile and creative.

On the Saturday, he had the same keyboardist on Rhodes piano, an electric bass, saxophone, a different guitarist and a man on record decks. I have truly never heard anything like this. Their first piece lasted the whole hour of their first set, the deck guy introducing samples of Tom Waits etc, it was a unique mix and pretty far out. The second set took us all, I think, to places we had never been before with a whirling, ever changing mix. The easiest piece to describe, though it still isn't easy, was a "blues" number. I put it in inverted commas because it was like no other blues I have ever heard before, the deckman dropping in phrases, speeding them, slowing them down, the guitarist, already spectacular, responding to his time in the spotlight like he was the Jimi Hendrix of Jazz, all the other musicians joining in to give us the essence of jazz/ blues, the Platonic Form of the blues, as if all that has ever existed had been melted down to the finest, purest distillation, whilst creating something completely unique. Honestly, I'm weeping with joy at the memory as I type, how lucky were we to be there, if there is a god I thank her. We all agreed that we were at the coolest place in Berlin.

## **Thanks**

God didn't create the Sy. Hard working people dedicated themselves

to enable us all to enjoy this fantastic, complex, marvellously well organised event. I'd like to thank them all for their efforts on our behalf and let them know how appreciated they are.

## **Postscript**

In the week after the Sy, whilst recovering, I wrote this sonnet:

### **Just what is it that makes post-symposium life so different, so appealing?**

The drift of languid days so full of naught  
Before – the endless pace of things to do  
A mind that tries to catch the briefest thought  
As stranded, now the flow it seems has flew  
Is this reward for trying not so hard  
Though carried by the river's restless surge  
To soar to heights that god's so jealous guard  
Where all my sins, and hopes too, are now purged?  
This ordinary life has charms enough  
Yes, Adam\*, you are right, no need for change  
But we must learn to love the smooth and rough  
As the mundane shows how all things are strange  
Yet though I try to like what e'er I has  
My heart is full of soul transporting Jazz

*\*Adam Phillips: Unforbidden Pleasures*

## **Derek Love**

August/ September 2017

[dereklove@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:dereklove@tiscali.co.uk)

## **My Feedback on the GASi Symposium**

By Edmond Dufatanye

It is a pleasure to be allowed to provide feedback to GASi as a non-member. As it was my first participation, I was so curious to know how the symposium is organised and what participants do. If I start with the new things I have experienced, the leaderless group was the first thing. I did not participate in it as I had not chosen to take part and it happened at the same time as my small group. The large group was surprisingly extremely large. There were a lot of interesting presentations happening at the same time. It was not easy to choose the appropriate one without having to sacrifice other presentations that were also interesting. On this regard, I wonder if the presenters are willing to share their power point presentations.

### **These are my general insights**

You asked what participating in GASi meant to me. My participation in GASi in Berlin meant a lot.

1. Berlin as a city with a history of world war was not to me something I thought about before I came to the symposium. My last lecture in history was 15 years ago. In the groups, I got to know how different participants were linked from their ancestors to world war and to migration, therefore to Berlin. From this perspective, I did think that no one may have not been at certain point a migrant. Do the great great sons or daughters of migrants become migrants? Politically-wise, they are not but when they analyse themselves and their family's history, they may find themselves to be migrants. Migration is part of a human being and as one of the GASi participants said; our first migration started when we came out of our mother's womb. I may have linked this with the symposium theme. I was also among those who crossed many borders to attend the symposium.

2. The symposium as a gathering of more than 23 nationalities was something particularly meaningful for me as someone who comes from Rwanda, a country that recently experienced the genocide against the Tutsi while the "never again" statement had been voiced by the so called strong nations. There is a feeling that emerged from my unconscious. The day when I had that feeling I was in a large group and did not express it. The same night, I had a dream. In my dream, I was walking and got in a group of young people, these people looked

like robbers and one started to come closer to me. I thought in my mind that someone else will come to my rescue but the group had the same purpose of robbing me. There were times after the genocide against the Tutsi when I thought why had it happened and after I got to know that no one can provide a convincing answer. I then asked myself why the big nations do not apologise. When nothing happens to someone who experienced traumatic events caused by a human being, it happens to feel the need of letting your anger come out. I did express it in my small group as group analysis provides a space for members care. I took care of myself by expressing such anger and frustration.

3. The symposium is all about taking time to think of self and others. When this is done, it is likely to be a change agent. I wonder if societies were to embrace GASI's philosophy, whether human kind would live simply peacefully. I do believe that GASI could contribute to the prevention of violence among human kind.

**Edmond Dufatanye**

[edufatanye@gmail.com](mailto:edufatanye@gmail.com)

## **Strangers (meeting in) the Same World**

By Kalliopi Panagiotopoulou

Reflections on the 17<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of GASi, Berlin, 15-19 August, 2017

A pivotal need to communicate and share eats my soul. My mind is inculcated with the Berlin experience, never to be the same again. The first day's reluctant steps gradually led to cohesion and understanding of 'Berlin-as-a-whole'. My first image was a musical, cultural colourful plurality weaving a patchwork carpet proceeding in a wavy move towards different directions.

A feeling of containment overwhelmed me through Volkan's lecture and attitude, despite, or maybe I should say because of, the technical problems regarding his slide projection. It somehow felt as if an active developmental procedure initiated in order to explore and expand psychological borders applying the principle of non-sameness. It represented the character of the Symposium.



'Berlin-as-a-whole' being a new group, needed to be nourished; not with milk, but in this case, with a glass of water. Even though Thomas Mies walked along the scene to take it all alone, the audience kept its breath and accompanied him alternating this event in a symbolic gesture: a self-sufficient adult casually feeds himself answering his inner need and liberates the symposium of its alleged Germanic conformity. We are the Host, I am thinking, all of us are.

In the very beginning, the median group offered me a feeling

of belonging. It reminded me of the big celebrations, when in Greece it is customary to participate in the extended family's reunion. There is often an embarrassment and a sort of anxiety that resides gradually in these feasts. As I expressed my agony from the outset, the other members of the group had the opportunity to console me, thus altering at the same time the diffusible anguish of the room into something concrete and specific. The structure of the chairs in our median group initially formed three concentric circles, so that some of us could not see some of the other members, hidden in their 'secrets', preoccupied by the ambivalence of sharing and not sharing, questing and not questing. A 'body movement' was produced in the group, as we all turned in order to communicate better, leading to a psychic motion, simultaneously friendly and hostile, fearful and hopeful. We wondered if there is one of Biran's 'invisible refugees' within us, or a 'traveler', or a 'comfort seeker'. Perhaps we are all refugees in the world, seekers of the calming reassurance of the uterus, out of which we have been abruptly detached and thrown to the status of *'infans'*, only to wander in life trying to be reunified, to find a shelter simulating that of our archaic residence. Through this unexpected setting, a feeling as if being in a small group, an 'extended family', was born inside me. On the last day we discovered with astonishment that our conductor Isaura Manso Neto had rearranged the chairs, thus creating one single big circle. A feeling of emptiness, aggressiveness and uncertainty flooded the room, indicating perhaps the difficulty to change, at the last moment indeed. A sense of an unfinished blind bat's movement preoccupied me. And yet it was our last day. We worked hard and willingly in order to conclude, an urging desire to reach a fruitful point, nevertheless, my taste longed for an ingredient, hopefully to be found in another future meeting.

The large group reminded me of the small village where I started to work as a medical doctor, some years ago. It was a traditional picturesque village spread along the mountain side and surrounded by firs. It was often snowbound during the winter, without electricity and running water, lacking the means of communication with the external world. These conditions sculpted the character of the village: hospitality and efficiency combined with cautious attitude towards newcomers, people or ideas, gender or race, leadership change, anxiety to build bridges in order to cross borders and meet the different 'other'. Integration was difficult, yet rewarding once achieved.

The innovations introduced by the large group's conductor Gerhard Wilke, such as clapping and standing, created ambivalent

feelings among the members of the group. But the overall sensation produced by the people standing and talking in a random way, was that of a movement, the illusion of sea waves, leading to an end or to a beginning, caressing or drowning, traveling or anchoring, opening or closing, agreeing or disagreeing, expressing group 'symmetry or asymmetry'; an application of Koukis's 'uncertainty principle, the cornerstone of quantum mechanics'.

The concept of time was incepted by my mind like a calculated integral, defined as a possibility and not a certainty, of living and functioning within changeable and changing time limits. Anxiety was produced by the fifteen-minute shortness of the group, as well as by the unexampled extension, expansion and dilatation of the time table. It looked as if we change the borders in order to create Winnocott's 'interpersonal space', where we can meet, group and create a Foulkes's 'configuration matrix'. Perhaps this stress, combined with a sense that there is not enough time, promoted the tendency to interrupt each other and the conductor, hearing neither our voice, nor the other's.

A dominant issue in the large group was that of wives and women. Irritation and frustration repeatedly covered the sessions about gender conflicts. Are we fighting *de novo* a war in which we women were victorious? It was the battle of our mothers and grandmothers. Why victimize ourselves all over again? Why choosing stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization? We have the non-negotiable unpalatable birth right of equality in being humans and not women or men, black or white, old or young, natives or newcomers. It seemed as a compulsive repetition of the vicious circle and return to the beginning of the phallic mother in a disparate *modus operandi*.

Our dear colleagues from Spain wanted to organize a Spanish-speaking-symposium right after the terrorist attack in Barcelona. Interestingly, this shift to the coiling around the national group of 'us' felt like the start of building a bridge leading to Barcelona 2020. Even though I do not speak Spanish, it felt as if I did. Moreover, it felt as if I spoke all the other different languages spoken in the large group, even if they were spoken in English, namely using pronunciation, metaphors and linguistic idioms of the mother language in English. There was a hesitant closeness, using differentness, not sameness as a starting point.

The German premiere of Wilhelm Rösing's and Marita Barthel-Rösing's film about Group Analysis with Liesel Hearst and Malcolm Pines, offered the opportunity of 'meeting' with the 'Pioneers of Group Analysis'. There is more and more a sense that the

Symposium moves in a circular pattern, reminding me of the traditional Greek cyclic dances. The circle begins or ends; moves forward, backward or turns, seniors are critically acknowledged and newcomers are reluctantly welcomed, change of order happens randomly and unexpectedly, life and death interact.

Life's circle presents another Foulkes: are we not Foulkes's descendants, sharing his encoded commands? Do we identify with Benjamin Mayer-Foulkes, his grandfather's grandson? Are we overflowing with emotion? Are we diving into the past while heading to the future passing in transit through our present condition? Do we incessantly relive the past? Benjamin's presence created the feeling that S. H. Foulkes himself was among us, a feeling augmented by the spare narration of his last moments in the film, shown this very afternoon. We follow in his footsteps, overlapping our circles, closing and restarting, using and experimenting with newfound concepts.

Renegotiation of limits and boundaries occurs. Welcoming criticism as a different interesting standpoint, we adopt new roles. We struggle to cross our borders and meet with the 'other' in and outside ourselves. We are on the edge, not hurriedly crossing over, but broadening the narrow path to accept new people and reconnoiter novel ideas, as in the cyclic dance.

An unexpected experience gradually emerged during my stay in Berlin and participation in the Symposium. I realized I suffered from transgenerational trauma. The village of my grandfather in Greece was burned down during the Second World War by the Nazis. My mother was dealing with the aftermath of this trauma and her narratives often interlarded my childhood, especially regarding her beloved uncle Charilaos, who was burned with the village. I always froze when hearing the German language spoken, a giant octopus grabbed my stomach and breathlessness deprived me of oxygen menacing my life. Although I have met people with different nationalities, since I travel a lot, and I am friends with some of them, there are only a few Germans among them, of whom I think by their name and not by their nationality. Is this an accidental fact, I wonder? What happened was amazing. Initially I was overwhelmed by the exuberant German hospitality in the Symposium – a shade of guilt insinuated. As days went by, I felt closer and closer to my German hosts. I resonated with their unbearable heritage. They were wronged as well, being the descendents of the perpetrators. I found them cultured, sympathetic and hospitable, humane with dreams and fears like mine, philhellene many of them. Since I admire the work that Israeli and German people are doing in order to coexist and understand

each other, I thought that it might be important for Greeks and Germans to also go through an analogous procedure.



Every day's fermentation with the orchestra's rehearsals adds a provocative element in the configuration of the Symposium. We join in and interact, our internal melodies co-design the music, while at the same time the musicians walk around us, becoming members of our group, affecting and affected. The switching between day and night, Andreas Peer Kähler's visualization of 'Crossing Borders' retracts memories of children's play with traumatized soldiers and nutcrackers.

I visualize a three-minute film about the Berlin Symposium picturing the ripple.

As the music fades away, the concert comes to a completion. Koukis's 'spiral movement' ends. The light of the candle is snuffed out in a velvet way, and a thought slips into my mind: continuation.

## **Kalliopi Panagiotopoulou MD PhD**

Allergologist

Trainee in the Hellenic Network of Group Analysts

[panagiotopouloukp@gmail.com](mailto:panagiotopouloukp@gmail.com)

## **Reflections on Berlin**

By Francesca Bascialla

I attended the Symposia in Bologna, Molde and Dublin and then I missed the next two. This year I returned and I'm very glad for the organization we had, also in the period before the Symposium. I had a problem with the payment of my fee, because Greece is still under capital control and I solved it by mailing the secretary who was very kind and comprehensive.

On practical themes, I think that it was somehow difficult to find the room for group etc., maybe because it was a very big hotel and we were a lot of people. I suggest for the next Symposium it will be better to have a number and a colour for each experiential group and a paper on the door with the names of the participants. This is our common practice in the IGA Athens and we did the same in last year's Summer School (I was a member of the local organizational committee).

The academic program was very interesting but what I really appreciated was the more experimental approach in the workshops, new ideas and possibilities to try something I didn't know. I avoid now to speak about theory. I think that the experiential group is the better way to learn about method and technique and afterwards to understand deeper the theory. Obviously, this is very important for younger colleagues and those from other approaches, who are not so familiar with experiential groups. This is the peculiarity of the symposium and I'm not sure that they understand this. Also, I appreciated a lot of interventions in the large group that tried to protect the newcomers and I think we succeeded in having a meaningful large group. Once again thank you to the committee!

Finally, how wonderful was the concert in the church, it was an emotionally closure of the symposium. the universal language of music unit us together.

**Francesca Giuseppina Bascialla**

Dr(Med)Sc, Psychiatrist and Group Analyst. OPC  
and IGA Athens

[basciallafran@hotmail.com](mailto:basciallafran@hotmail.com)

## **Northfield Reloaded, 1942 2017**

By Cosmin Chita

Paper presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of the Group Analytic Society International, Berlin, August 2017.

Just over 75 years ago in April 1942, the British army south of Birmingham in Northfield, took over Hollymoor Hospital and opened a rehabilitation centre for soldiers with neurotic disorders. The country had been in the war for almost three years, isolated, the target of German air raids and had been forced to build up a national army within a short time. Lacan, who visited the country in 1945, spoke of "the synthetic creation of an army" (Lacan 1947). The fact that Great Britain was confronted with a huge wave of immigration also appears to be important: civilians, governments, foreign armies and prisoners of war. Taking these circumstances into account, the words of John Rickman in 1938 appear almost prophetic:

"Mankind is always facing the task of shaping its group life, so that it shall be either an embodiment of an early ideal of perfect uniformity, or else that it shall be a place of struggle, with an ultimate aim of peace". (Rickman, 1938, 2003)

From the beginning, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts felt called upon to participate in the general war effort. Rickman, though a convinced Quaker, was already engaged in the Royal Army Medical Corps after the declaration of war in the autumn of 1939. A year later in Wharnccliffe, he designed a double-track treatment model for neurotic soldiers consisting of psychiatric therapy and para-military training. After his visit to Wharnccliffe, Bion wrote to his former teaching analyst Rickman:

"Not the least value of a parallel military training course seems to me to be that a patient is given a world to adjust to that is nothing like so severe as the isolated unsupported world which is presented to him by the bed-ridden existence, aimless and disoriented, which he has to face in the special hospitals I have seen so far." (Vonofakos and Hinshelwood, 2003)

War-related neurotic disturbances were not new territory at the beginning of the 2nd World War. In the Autumn of 1918, Simmel, Ferenczi and Abraham reported to the 5th Congress of the International Psychoanalytic Association in Budapest on the application of the psychoanalytic method in hospitals. In this context, the famous Freudian quote also appeared:

“It is very probable, too, that the large-scale application of our therapy will compel us to alloy the pure gold of analysis freely with the copper of direct suggestion “.  
(Freud, 1919)

But how precisely this, "psychotherapy for the people" looked at that time, in terms of psychoanalysis and psychiatry, cannot be precisely described. The war neurosis soon revealed itself as a Trojan horse, which, on the one hand, attributed the primacy of the psychical to the somatic in the creation of neuroses, but on the other hand disproved its exclusive sexual aetiology. Rivers, a mentor of Rickmans, wrote in 1919:

"The partisans of Freud have been led by experience of the war-neurosis to see that sex is not the sole factor in the production of psycho-neurosis, but that conflict arising out of the activity of other instincts, and especially that of self-preservation, takes an active if not the leading role." (Rivers, 1919)

For years, however, the social aspect remained for the psychoanalytic mainstream mainly a product of the individual drives. One of the first to decide against this view was Karen Horney, who wrote in 1936:

"Clinical experiences (...) suggests that neurosis is due not simply to the quantity of suppression of one or the other instinctual drives, but rather to difficulties caused by the conflicting character of the demands which a culture imposes on its individuals. The differences in neuroses typical of different cultures may be understood to be conditioned by the amount and quality of conflicting demands within the particular culture."  
(Horney, 1936)

I began to be interested in the subject of Northfield after taking over the psychiatric management of a small ward. In retrospect, I think that my curiosity about this was part of an inner process that included my double identity as a psychiatrist and group analyst. My efforts to understand the events of the day helped me to have an attitude that freed itself from the yoke of omnipresent individualism and developed an organic feeling for the functioning of a treatment unit. This reloading does not claim to be exhaustive nor free from subjective distortions.

In the preface to the book by Tom Harrison (2000), Robert Hinshelwood wrote that "the legend of Northfield is one of those myths of creation," however, it failed to specify this myth. Was it part of a *creatio continua*? Or a *creatio ex nihilo*? Personally, I like the idea of Bion, Rickman and Foulkes as three tricksters or *dei-ex-machina*, three boundary-crossers with a special flair for a stagnant situation.

One of the dead-ends was already mentioned in connection with the war neuroses and concerned the psychological relationship between the individual and the societal.

Another touched on the institutional application of psychoanalysis, especially in relation to the importance of regression within treatment, as designed by Simmel in 1928 and implemented in his Sanatorium Schloss Tegel, here in Berlin. The institution was for Simmel nothing other than "an expanded Person of the analyst, the primary type of his family" (Simmel, 1928).

A third was, in my view, the idea of imagining any resistance within the treatment in such a way that it would stem from the patient alone and be interpreted accordingly. Merely a thin, almost invisible thread combined Ferenczi's propagated mutational analysis with the role exchange between Burrow and his analysand Shields, right up to the moment when Foulkes said to his wife:

"Today, there was an historical moment of psychiatry, but nobody knows it." (Foulkes, 1964)

Each of these three protagonists bore in themselves traces of social exclusion: Bion who had lived apart from his parents since his 8th birthday in a British boarding school; Rickman, as a member of a Quaker community; and, of course, Foulkes, an immigrant Jew, who was in danger of being denounced as a German in England. This experience was repeated for everyone within the framework of the history of Northfield: Bion and Rickman were mercilessly expelled after a short time and Foulkes remained more or less marginalized to

the end by the hospital management. In my opinion, it was precisely this repeated exclusion experience that allowed Foulkes to see his patients beyond the psychiatric or psychoanalytic conventions and to locate them in the whole social context. His views on the patients differed significantly from Bion and Rickman.

Where the last two saw "a rather scallywag battalion" (1943), Foulkes found "unwilling soldiers with long-standing difficulties". Their place was later taken over in the "hot" war phase, by "young, active soldiers who have seen battle", also later replaced by "still the same younger men (...) but their problems now were civilian difficulties - they were fearful of overseas service, unwilling soldiers, anxious for discharge." (1948).

A "living diagnosis" (Foulkes, 1948), especially in the special war context, was not possible with the purely descriptive or phenomenological possibilities of psychiatry at the time. Most of Northfield's soldiers, no matter what combat phase, were suffering from similar symptoms: anxiety, depression and psychosomatic complaints. Psychodynamic considerations, which tried to make an individual diagnosis from the biography of the individual, were also only partly suitable for elucidating the neurotic pathology. In retrospect, in 1948 Foulkes articulated the need for a "redefinition of psychiatric categories of a more static child in favour of dynamic, functional ones".

We owe Robi Friedman thanks for the concept of the soldier's matrix (2015), characterised by "reduced violence inhibiting mechanisms" directed especially against an externalized scapegoat and in parallel "the promotion of selfless relations". Regardless of their constitutional homogeneity, this matrix, as the history of Northfield shows, is not free from disruption. Three of them appeared exemplary to me.

At the time of the first experiment, as well as the beginnings of Foulkes' time in Northfield, they were mostly involuntary soldiers who reacted to the social call for a heroic self-sacrifice with fear and despair. When they entered the hospital, they experienced a smooth separation between the hospital wing (blue uniforms) and the training wing (khaki uniforms), which fuelled a conflicting identity split between neurotic gain and to be a hero. Foulkes wrote:

"This delimiting and overlapping of functions was a source of frustration and anxiety to all, but at the back of the uncertainty and confusion of mind was the patient. He was the focus of everybody's doubts, and the

external situation mirrored and contributed to the uncertainty within the patient himself."

The atmosphere that Bion and Rickman experienced on the training wing resembled an anarchic rebellion, which "seeks to render the leader powerless and without authority such that a group devolves into disorder and confusion, without cohesive principles and constructive purposes" (Billow, 2017). The efforts of Bion and Rickman to unmask the neurosis by the group itself as a group problem led, in my opinion, to the fact that the original anarchy gave rise to a revolutionary culture that triggered its own counter-revolution on the part of the military hierarchy of the hospital.

Parallel to the landing in Normandy, the hospital was able to experience a radical upheaval. The patients who now reached Northfield were no longer anti-heroes, persisting in a rebellious attitude. They were exhausted and burnt-out heroes, victims of their selflessness. The arrival of these injured, yet brave men took place in parallel with the gradual dissolution of rigid hospital structures and institutional resistance. In this phase, Northfield developed into a "self-governing, self-responsible community" (Foulkes, 1948). In August 1944, 91% of the patients returned to military service, of which about 700 soldiers from Normandy reached 96% (Harrison 2000).

After the victory in Europe, these patients were also replaced by others, mostly former prisoners of war who feared either a further overseas obligation or a return to civilian life. They were trapped in a solitary soldier's matrix, often in a denial. By way of example, the episode described by Foulkes regarding the music band, whose old members opposed the incorporation of new ones. About his role in this phase and outside of the actual therapeutic setting, he wrote:

"This illustrates the therapist's function in a quite informal situation. He has to fit himself into the group and his problems as he finds them. He takes a very active part in this case. He nevertheless creates no dependency of the group upon him but, on the contrary, activates them to take their problems into their own hands." (Foulkes, 1948)

Certainly, Foulkes himself made his own development in Northfield. In his own words: "away from consulting room psychiatry into living, "open air" psychiatry, into the soldier's life, the living

meaning of his Army mythology, of his "neurosis" in the reality of his life" (1948).

In the time after Northfield, it seemed that the two disciplines of psychotherapy and social psychiatry approached each other. At the inaugural meeting symposium of the newly founded Section of Psychotherapy and Social Psychiatry of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in 1949, Rickman said that the joint development of the two disciplines would remain dependent on these basic principles:

"To give priority to the client's need and let the doctor's curiosity and therapeutic ambition come second".  
(Rickman 1950, 2003)

Only a few years later, in 1965, the two disciplines had moved far away from each other. In his role as chairman of the joint section, Foulkes organized a series of lectures published in 1969 under the title "Psychiatry in a changing society". He himself wrote in the preface:

"To me it seems that there is a need for a new orientation in social psychiatry as well as in psychotherapy; that psychiatry itself will be subjected to change in view of changing social and cultural conditions, with the result that the whole of psychiatry will have to become more conscious of social and cultural factors. In this sense, the whole of psychiatry is social psychiatry as well." (Foulkes, 1969)

And further:

"The antithesis between social and intrapsychic is misleading. The implication of the individual has been a psyche, which is his innermost private self and possession, and that the social and cultural are external forces, the individual interacting with them, is wrong, but it is a traditional notion and still reigning - often quite unconsciously."

The difference between an allegedly objective and a more personal psychiatry is that "the latter is a dynamic pursuit, entailing involvement and change in one's own person, and threatening values and attitudes. There is resistance against such change. " (Foulkes,

1969)

These sentences are perhaps a response *avant la lettre* to the questions by Marina Mojovic in 2015:

“Having in mind that it was born in the Sanctuary of Northfield War Hospital, group analysis is equipped with survival skills for disrupted matrices. But do we use them enough? And if not, why not? What is paralysing us?” (Mojovic, 2015)

I would like to go into more detail about two of these resistances in my closing. Over the last 12 months I have told this story twice. The first time it was in front of young assistant doctors in training as specialists for psychiatry and psychotherapy who came from different clinics with different treatment cultures and each had different psychotherapeutic training. Two things surprised me about their attitude.

Firstly, the total ignorance about the happenings in Northfield. This response confirmed my concern that, with few exceptions, the memory of Northfield has been extinguished, at least in the German-speaking psychiatric world.

Secondly, the fact that these young doctors had excellent knowledge of the intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning of an individual, but at the same time understood their therapeutic actions as if it were free of mutual confusion and distortion. Especially in the complex area of in-patient psychotherapy, they represented the simplified picture of the in-patient community rather as a place of learning and less as a place of living and saw themselves as promoters of therapeutic change, but positioned outside the actual circle of effect.

The second time I told this story was in front of another audience, consisting of group-analytic trained colleagues, with a high degree of life, self and therapy experience. I was surprised again by a violent reaction. A naked horror spread in the audience at the idea that psychotherapy was used as for a "war purpose". Northfield turned into a burdensome heritage. The idea that all these innovative and transformative efforts in Northfield ultimately served to make soldiers capable of fighting is, however, only conditionally correct. It may seem disturbing from our post-68 perspective, which may be reflected in a certain idealization of "the Sanctuary of Northfield War Hospital" (Mojovic, 2015). But as Robi Friedman (2010) explained: "However, in wartime, where the stress on containment is so great, psychic and

social processes seem different" and a comprehensible tendency arises to resist a mental dislocation in such adverse circumstances.

I describe the response of my first audience as a contextual resistance. A psychiatric institution, as an extended group, is, in the dynamic sense, nothing but a huge hall of mirrors. The idea that we, professionally involved persons, remain free from distortions is misleading, but protects against institutional-related fears and uncertainties. The development and maintenance of a culture of inquiry is the structural counterpart for one's own individual and group self-experience. This is intended to help the young therapists, who primarily work in the institutional context and experience on their way "from the couch to the circle" how the supposed interpretive supremacy and the asymmetry of the therapeutic dyad become relativized (Schultz-Venrath, 2008).

I would name the reaction of the second auditorium as content-related resistance. The therapist's ability to perceive can be understood as an ability to deal with the patient's issues so cautiously that psychological growth arises. Bolognini (2004), in particular, speaks of the balancing act between the concordant and complementary attitude, between compassion and sympathy. I, myself, worked for three years in a forensic-psychiatric clinic as a young therapist at the beginning of my education, and I have experienced how difficult this dichotomy is under the adverse conditions of the setting or a certain content. Also, the notion of Northfield as a therapeutic utopia is misleading. Rather, it was a heterotopy in the sense of Foucault (2009), a place not located outside of ordinary space and time, but rather a special creative approach to the disruptions of the social matrix.

Without giving any details about the subsequent discussion in the second case, I will conclude some of the topics: the different, personal experiences of the participants with a new world that has become more uncertain, dealing with individual trans-generational heritage, with the socialization experience of some participants, issues such as exclusion, betrayal and extinction, as well as the concerns about cultural mixing caused by the current migration wave. Slowly, however, the common idea of the importance of group culture for a civilizing which deals with boundaries and differences also developed. In retrospect, I see it as a successful Northfield reloading.

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**Cosmin Chita**

[cosmin.chita@gmail.com](mailto:cosmin.chita@gmail.com)

## The Non-Reconciled

By Helena Klímová

I fly to London for a discussion about Brexit, and I fill in a questionnaire: after name and address they are asking me for *gender* and offer me: *female, male, transgender, other*. Being essentially conservative myself, I select *female*. In the next column, *ethnicity* offers me eighteen possibilities, such as: *Indian, African, Caribbean, other black, Chinese...* but I don't dare. I'm tempted by *white British*, only it wouldn't work, it's not true. The only one left is *white other* – and doesn't that sound a little *second-class*? Aren't they asking me about the colour of my skin? You're allowed to do that in England? Besides, my own *ethnicity* is missing here...

So here am I, walking around London, a *central-European mischling*, and admiring those various identities in practice. How rich was the Creator's imagination! I have to meet my precious friend of many years, Janet, *female, white British* – where else but in the *British Museum*? We gaze at a relief of a being with an animal head holding a handbag, certainly containing tablets of destiny. Just like the one Her Majesty carries when inspecting the troops... We explore in what way those ancient Assyrians longed to appease the Godhead, to bow to their doom. How similar we humans are, in space and time! Janet, next to me, looks round at the sculptures and suddenly says: *but all this we have stolen...* I am astounded: if these statues had not been "stolen" and looked after in London, they would have been destroyed long ago at home... *Oh, Janet!*

I join in in an evening discussion. My British friends tell me how distressed they are, their sorrow over Brexit; it is undoubtedly due to conditions at home. I hear a story about a woman from Poland who has been living in London for years, completely assimilated – and suddenly she is attacked in the street... I listen to their concerns: The Poles are now our *new blacks...* The discussion shifts to the assassination in France, dozens of people murdered, injured children in hospital. The discussant (*female, white British*) seems concerned: white children get every possible care from doctors and psychologists immediately, but what about those children in Asia and in Africa... and I may hear tears in her voice...

I walk around London and look for the motivations behind the accommodating steps of the Europeans towards human identities: respect, kindness one to other and to oneself? feelings of guilt reaching across generations? *Oh, Angela!*

## **The concept of the social unconscious has to be accepted.**

What is now happening in Europe with nations, with groups of people, is difficult to explain in terms only of politics, political science, sociology, history... Whole groups of people, nations, states, sometimes act with thoughtfulness and awareness; at other times, irrationally as though against their own conscious will, and even to their disadvantage...

Just as psychoanalysis examines the unconscious motivation of individuals, so group analysis explores the unconscious contents and actions of human groups, large and small. The purpose is to become aware of that which was hidden from conscious knowledge; the purpose is for human groups not to surrender to destructive forces but to behave with clear awareness. The trigger of destructive forces is the traumatic experience unsolved in the past; at such a time "...the members of a group are likely to re-live and even to re-enact their un mourned and unresolved 'issues', both from their own pasts and from the pasts of previous generations that have been transmitted to them." (Hopper & Weinberg, 2011)

It is the instinctive power of aggression – or rather, how we handle it – that is the central concept for understanding the contemporary situation. Man makes use of his capability for aggression not only to destroy others and himself; from days of old he has used it for positive purposes: to cut down a tree, to hunt an animal, to chew food. Above all, to create a community, and not by violent enslavement. The community with which someone wants to identify emerges voluntarily, that is, by the reorientation of instinctive forces with the help of rituals, deeply experienced through the body as well, and through the senses. The instinctive force of aggression transforms itself into a creative power that holds the human group together and renews it in the course of rituals, games, ceremonials...

The outcome is then also the circumscription, the demarcation and the boundaries of the human group.

The theme of boundaries is now a sign through which the social unconscious breaks into our attention. The theme of boundaries is clarified by two powerful experiences of contemporary Europe, the refugees and Brexit.

Boundaries, however, are not only about politics and geography. "Boundaries" emerge as a theme unrealised by the consciousness in the form of very varied phenomena.

**as a theme that culture is now trying to steal from nature.**

For example, gender is somehow no longer being defined by nature, and has become matter of cultural choice; instead of a binary determination (man or woman) other possibilities emerge, even the possibility of a rolling gender, permanently unbounded. (Psychotherapists point out that some adolescents – before even choosing a partner – are now preoccupied with the painful choice of selecting their own gender.) Age is another doubtful natural and demographic boundary. Human life is seen as an opportunity to make permanent use of the advantages of adolescence and early adulthood without regard to the special needs and special gifts of early childhood and late old age; these two extreme ages are implicitly seen as something like inadequacies that would be better confined to the expert care of an institution.

The boundaries between the sexes, between the generations, between the given conditions of nature and culture, between different kinds of time... all these boundaries are rendered uncertain and are changing. The process is facilitated by the advance of technology and the development of science, and societal developments grant permission.

The boundaries of nature are also crossed by the excessive drain on resources, and by brutality towards living creatures – that has already entered the social awareness to quite an extent. Nevertheless, the development of civilisation also abolishes the natural boundaries within; within man. It was not only gender identity that became a matter of choice. Inbred stereotypes of gender behaviour are also demolished; some women reject traditional male courtesy, we see women boxing and men as fashion models, metrosexuals. Children are presented in kindergartens and schools with programmes and images where the roles of mummy and daddy are reversed. People's attention is captured by social networks and television where the norms are established; various television programmes feature (after the abolition of previous stereotypes) male and female couples where, according to the plan, the woman is dominant not only verbally but physically.

The boundaries between the basic roles are shaken, and thus the family too.

**The family is the original human group, the cradle of culture; now it is heading towards destruction**

A few centuries ago, the fathers of today's Europeans accepted the

idea that God is dead. With this, the position of the human father-protector too was shaken, as was the value of masculinity, and the existence of order. The present form of civilisation is now devaluing the mother as well, is relativizing her unique talent – that is, the art of conception, of inspiring a lifelong transformation of the nature of the body into manifestations of humanity. It is assumed that a father or an institution can be an adequate substitute for the mother. New roles emerge: the egg donor, the carrier of the foetus, the surrogate mother, the foster nurse, the father's partner in joint custody... Who and where is the mother?

The boundaries of the roles in the family are uncertain. The value of femininity is not seen in the unique ability of motherhood but in an ability to retain a moderately post-pubertal appearance forever.

The human child remains undiscovered, together with motherhood. Of the harmonic triad woman-man-child, only the dyad masculinity-femininity remains, full of tension. The childlike ability and need for playfulness has been transformed into the insatiable addiction of adults to silly games of every kind. The child was deprived of its archetypal spiritual value; it has become a materialised object whose specific needs and talents are unrecognised. (Roughly at the same time as the underage Lolita appeared in literature as a new prototype of womanhood and the fashion world presented the fleshless Twiggy, the appearance of children's dolls changed too; instead of the former baby doll that could be fed, put to sleep and wheeled in a pram by a little girl, its replacement worldwide was the adolescent Barbie doll, which the little girl endlessly dresses up...).

Along with the child, the entire culture created by motherhood is endangered, endangered too is the value of mercy born in the womb together with the relationship to the child (mercy, Hebrew "*rachamin*" – cf. womb, Hebrew "*rechem*"). Guilt, or fear of possible future guilt, frequently appears in place of mercy.

The balance between order and mercy is the basis of society. Order and mercy have to balance correctly; society, however, is not maturing towards the creation of these values. Right across Europe, we lack the stability of the families that conceive these children and these values.

At the same time, phenomena that act as a counterweight emerge spontaneously. They do so from the depths of the social unconscious, spontaneously, in the spheres remote from ideologies, such as for example fashion: fashions in clothes and "fashions" in behaviour, habits.

## **Fashions in clothes and in behaviour resemble a collective dream: they fulfil the wishes of the social unconscious**

This fashion is, to the social unconscious, what a dream is to the unconscious individual. A group of people, a gang, a generation, spontaneously create a fashion in behaviour and in dress as their non-verbal expression (in which a fashion created artificially, in the salons, may not succeed). Women walk on the highest heels of history; walking on high heels changes the posture, it is supposed to emphasise traditional femininity. Many young mothers carry their small children in a sling, as close as possible to the body; for some women in labour it is very important to give birth at home and not in an institution. Young women search for their own route to the body's natural resources, to their own identity that begins by experiencing nature in their own body. Bare feet, natural or even raw food, natural medicine.... Searching, making mistakes, exaggeration, finding, wishing to protect oneself. From what? What is the name of that danger?

It is the violence done to nature in man, the non-respecting of the natural boundaries in man.

Coloured, elongated, decorated nails and exaggeratedly white teeth are another thing belonging to contemporary fashion. Why? Teeth and nails are physical weapons, especially female (a man's physical weapons are his muscles, but their fashion value is lower). It is as though they are a response to the contemporary ambivalence of the gender roles: if women should not rely on a man's protection, there is nothing for it but to polish and flash their own physical weapons.

Fashion also expresses through the weapons of the body the increasing general non-reoriented aggression of society. For comparison: in the 1960s quite different physical components, hair and beard, were chosen by the social unconscious as a physical expression of the time, as a fashion. Hair is a part of the body and is, according to myth – beginning with Samson – an expression of magic power without need to use body weapons. Hippies, the tribe born after the war, who discovered and publicised hair as a power symbol of their generation, believed that they were initiating a world of peace and love magically. The instinctive force of aggression was at that time neutralised, reoriented through spontaneous rituals of the communities, especially live music and dance. Hair symbolised the magic power of rituals.

As the experience of war grew more distant, the common reorientation of instincts receded. Instinctive forces began to accumulate in their un-reoriented, uncultivated form. Energy, as we

know from physics, cannot be destroyed, only transformed; the energy of instincts can be reoriented. When it does not happen, instinctive energy begins to urge, to overflow into other areas where it does not belong.

### **Aggression that is not reoriented seeks new and different paths**

The powerful oral instinct is among those other means that aggression uses to express itself; eating behaviour too finds itself in the service of the aggressive instinct. The character that now feeds the public is not primarily the mother, grandmother or cook. It is above all the chef, the very name indicating dominance, who appears with the battle cry, not “*bon appetit*”, but “knives out!” The process of eating/not eating has become an unconscious weapon with which adolescent girls torture their mothers (or vice versa) and themselves; at other times food aggressively “clogs” the channel of speech between people: family and friends devote themselves to food, what goes into it, diets, appearance... in place of dialogue and relationships. It is not just the irresistible attraction of a mouthful that drives individuals to obesity, but eating promoted to the organisational element of their existence. They are nourishing their body on food in a vain unconscious effort to satisfy the soul; the body satisfies itself as a substitute for the satisfaction of the soul – and thus dependence emerges. Whenever in history has there been so many obese people? The soul is starving, because it is lacking that organising power, the ritual reorientation of aggressive instinct into boundaries, ties, values, identity, and meaning.

Looseness, or even absence of boundaries, the transformation of gender identities affects men and women not only as individuals. The idea of masculinity and femininity is filled by new contents and competences and projects itself into the organisation of instinctive forces in the society as a whole. In place of the absent social rituals of the community – when the instinct of aggression would naturally create values, boundaries including those between the sexes and the boundaries between I-you – a powerful reaction formation emerges; contemporary culture swarms with smileys, internet friends, social kissing (including the disgusting kisses between politicians) false self, false concepts of one’s own identity. Thus, the preventive denial of aggression is manifested in some sort of appeasement rituals. It is as though these manifestations create a more western version of the former eastern version of totalitarianism, when the central political power was appeased by various rituals of the false self.

Even small children are not sheltered from society’s fear of

growing aggression. You should not smack a toddler running towards an oncoming car - even though body language is what a toddler understands, and it relieves the tension that has built up in you too. It is as though the clear division between body language and brutality were missing.

Where that inner border is absent, what can emerge is an almost neurotic fear of one's own aggression, nurtured by unresolved guilt (or even fantasies about one's guilt). It is because the social unconscious has absorbed the traces and effects of events that happened to the relevant human group (family, nation) in the recent and not so recent past.

### **Traumas leave a powerful trail if they are not processed at a conscious level**

Traumas, if they are not acted on, if they are not worked on, they remain unmourned, unforgiven – and are afterwards pushed into the subconscious, often forcibly. No matter how traumatic the original story, it can be suppressed, be forgotten, often deliberately; after the trail of the story is lost, all that remains is what moves through the story – that is, energy: unprocessed, unreconciled, unlamented, unforgiven emotions. Through suppression, they lose their real name and content. That which remains is simply instinctive energy, now often without words, without story, but on the other hand with a latent power. Very often these emotions suppressed for generations later destroy the bodies of their last bearers through their mute unconscious power; therapists identify frequent psychosomatic disturbances in the descendants of those who survived the holocaust and who (for the sake of their children and of peace) wanted to suppress every memory into the unconscious.

Suppressed trauma destroys not only the body but especially the soul, through a cycle of feelings linked with guilt. An important concept has to be mentioned: identification with the aggressor. This labelling was originally ascribed to patients who in childhood were strongly traumatised by mistreatment, by abuse. Such a small child experiences a painful inner conflict; on the one hand, it longs to cling to the adult with whom it is; on the other, it was from them that it experienced abuse and injustice. The child would rather accept the idea of its own guilt (“I’m naughty, and the pain and humiliation, that is my punishment”), than accuse the adult and thus surrender its basic need – that is, the need to see the world as meaningful.

As an adult, the person who was originally abused can see that particular aggressor critically. He/she however usually does not

manage to get rid of his/her own feeling of low worth, of guilt: that is that essence of identification with the aggressor – with the aggressor's destructive work. That guilt (however unjustified) can then manifest itself in ordinary situations; the person abused in childhood can see the world as an arena of iniquity, and if he/she is not able to bring his/her motivations into consciousness (or even if the person him/herself does not turn into an aggressor), then he/she can unconsciously steer towards repetition. Such a person easily assumes various unreal faults, invite accusatory or critical reactions from others, sometimes embark on a lifelong search for different foreign wrongs in order to put them right. Such actions are not easy to distinguish from simple nobility. The unmistakable criterion is the persons' relationship to themselves; the persons who were not traumatised, not burdened by any fear of guilt know above all how to love, and to love themselves as much as the other person.

The aggressor leaves a destructive trail on the soul, that is, an embossed image of the world as a permanent struggle between violator and victim. This unconscious identification with the work of the aggressor is then transmitted across the generations. Children feel the need to tend the family injury and to protect themselves, maybe obsessively, against the possibilities of the complementary role (the role of the aggressor). From fear of their own (supposed) aggression, in preventive defence against their own possible guilt they then often forbid themselves even the natural assertion needed for the next generation to become independent. They spend their whole life with their parents in a relationship of symbiotic irresolution. This has been ascertained by therapists who care for the second (and later) generations afflicted by World War II. The children of both victims and violators experience things similarly; while true antithetical stories disappear into the unremembered, what remains is energy connected to the unfinished business, to the non-reconciliation of destinies.

### **Europe is now ruled by the experiences of the second (third) generation after trauma as though by an omen**

There are generations living together in Europe nowadays whose parents and grandparents waged World War II against each other, a war so terrible that atonement and reconciliation marked the content of the lives of subsequent generations.

There are also the descendants of those who settled in Europe from outside, especially after the war; as they came, desirous of a new destiny, they suppressed their natural aggression (which, as an

instinctive element, is part of us all). Nevertheless, identification with a new culture, an inner transformation, is accompanied by traumatic experiences, and healing is a job for several generations... Children have been born, grandchildren. While these children of the arrivals did not, in a tolerant or indifferent Europe, have to solicit too much for acceptance by their surroundings, energy from the suppressed traumas of previous generations became a powerful drive for them. This insistence some of the younger generation now translate detrimentally, as a call of those who are injured ones, a call for vengeance.

Some of the sons of those who came now reject, often in the context of a generational existential search, the values of European society that their parents gladly accepted. They turn to what they imagine to be the culture of their roots, Islam. For a certain time in the past, Islam represented inspiration and was one of the creative sources of European culture. Today, however, in the form which is represented by the Islamists, it falls into a deep regression, down to the level of the prehistoric tribal deity; this deity now requires, up front and out loud, human sacrifice. Human spiritual need finds itself in the service of the instinct of aggression, religion itself then sets up its own dark side that calls for destruction. Religion in its archaic tribal form lends destruction a voice, formulates permission, words; however, this energy, this force, comes from a generational frustration, from the non-reoriented forces of the instinct of aggression, and changes into thanatophilia – into a love of the death of everything and everyone, including the subject. Europe (and some other parts of the world) is now afflicted by this spiritual regression.

Nevertheless: the path of destruction is facilitated on our side by a complementary attitude, that is, by a fear one could call neurotic, by possible guilt – on the part of many native Europeans, on the part of *white europeans*. “The white man’s burden”, as the colonial past is seen, was weighed down more heavily with the crimes of World War II, and with the outrages of totalitarian Communism. As long as such deeds are not brought into the consciousness, are not atoned for, lamented and forgiven (it is a question whether it can be done in a few generations), they leave in the experience of generations a trail connected with guilt or injury. Some native Europeans then act as though led by preventive fear of guilt, fear over whether they are being sufficiently accommodating, sufficiently free of xenophobia... maybe overstepping the line, suppressing the boundaries of their own interest.

## **Fear over possible guilt, similar to social neurosis, rises in place of simple solidarity and mercy**

In the social unconscious of the generations, it is transformed into a powerful motivation.

Those who feel and appear as potentially guilty (although free of real guilt), can encourage punitive behaviour in others, revenge seeking, resistance, passionate aggression. We Europeans then, without the need of any devastating wave of foreign ideology and foreign presence, are ourselves sufficient for our own self-destruction. The traces of suppressed traumas, difficult to process, enter into the decision-making and experiencing of the present. Family generations ruminate over their past, digest the destinies of grandfathers and grandmothers; school classes of adolescents, while creating new worlds from inherited damaged material, in the search for the guilty, easily succumb to the temptation of polarisation: that is, to the temptation to appoint someone the role of the one who is different, excluded, scapegoated. We learn from reports in the media about cases of lonely shooters; such an individual has almost always, before carrying out his fatal crime, experienced a story of being excluded from school or the society of his neighbours, or the story of an abused child. He then decides to elevate his personal misfortune, to redeem it, through some received destructive ideology. Personal pathology and social pathology are mutually attracted, with a fateful clash.

In reality, both pathologies are an expression of the same thing; our contemporary human group is living through a critical time. Lonely shooters (or murderers with a knife or a car...) are a symptom of our present time; they are the executor of the unconscious, unprocessed forces of the increasing aggression of the human group, of the whole of society.

## **Human culture, the shape of the group, is reborn from inherited material in every generation**

The individual still in the womb follows a path appropriate to the development of its kind and, starting after birth as a small animal, is gradually “domesticated”; this small primate becomes a human being in every individual, in every generation anew. A human being does not emerge automatically readymade; it emerges and develops through uninterrupted “domestication”, through the repeated reorientation of instinctive forces into firm personal relationships of closeness and mutuality. It takes shape with the reciprocity of its mother, parents, group and generation. Inter-group relationships are

also anchored in this way, as are spiritual experiences and understanding for strangers. This takes place with the indispensable participation of all the senses, body movements, feelings and ritual experiences that are made conscious and expressed through music, words, art and the creation of order.

The vertical growth of man (the individual and the kind) must thus be anchored in original physicality – in the senses, in living and becoming aware of the unconscious body, in reorienting the instincts into relationships and order – so that the vertical growth upward is not hijacked. Otherwise there is the danger that spiritual longings will be seized by superstition and by paganism, or that ideology will parasitize on the spiritual need.

Human culture renews itself not only in every individual but always and as well in every group, generational and otherwise. If the possibility of renewal is missing, a natural instinctive force untransformed by humanity begins to accumulate and can break out in a primitive destructive explosion.

### **with quantity, are endangered**

Patrick de Maré, a group analyst concerned especially with the large human group and its ecological perspectives (1991, p. 165), writes of the connections between the number of members in a human group, and its possibilities. For an individual to be personally identified with a group, the maximum number of members is roughly five hundred. For the last ten thousand years this has been the optimum number of members of a human settlement. The number five to ten thousand expressed tribal groupings and the beginning of cities. When the number reaches over one hundred thousand, the megalopolis begins to ail, and anonymity prevails over the possibilities of the group; people are unable to reach each other through their own senses. At such a time, it is easy for errors to appear (lonely shooters or badly chosen politicians).

The very idea of democracy is complicated and made more difficult by a large quantity.

The basic instrument of the human group, communication, is also endangered. Interpersonal communication takes place at a distance, in the senses limited to hearing and sound without the possibility of touch and immediate mutual interaction. The need for action, the experiencing of rituals and contests, takes place in the form of fantasies, often as computer games. People come together predominantly on the internet; groups on the internet even have their

own sacrificial lambs. There is limited opportunity for the body to participate, and thus also for awareness and the application of instinctive forces. These forces, not refined through rituals with the participation of bodies, souls and society, remain in the form of unconscious uncultivated energy and most frequently tend to dependencies (something that often accompanies computer games). Or to social explosion.

That is the possibility we now fear.

Thoughts about the end of our civilisation emerge; historians and archaeologists find examples in regions worldwide. We encounter fatality, impotence, paganism and other ideological traps.

We also encounter creative thinking. “We are beginning to shift from today’s global economics, which have outgrown our ability, back to local communities and economies. Individual regions begin with modern technologies to create modern self-sufficient systems. Every economy begins in a region, in an enterprise, not somewhere in a ministry or in parliament. Nothing comes down from above, everything emerges from below...” (Milan Zelený, *Lidové noviny*, 13 August 2016). Thus, an analysis of the economy too, not only of human groups, can come to a similar conclusion; that is, that human society is better suited to a limited number of members, as is the possibility of direct communication and the experience of one’s own senses. One has to protect oneself from mass society, and to support the structuring and independence of small natural units.

## **The endangered species, including *white Europeans*, have to be protected**

The community of Europeans should protect their own culture and gene pool. However, the bureaucratisation of power accumulates. The last profound rebuilding of values was triggered by the experience of the genocidal World War II. The subsequent Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948) binds states to make provision for “universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

Human rights have become an ethical cannon; human duties, however, the basis of civic society, remain unexpressed. At the beginning, they could be balanced by a thousand-year-old tradition: The Ten Commandments are composed of human duties alone. However, for the last half century the advance of technology and development of society has accelerated so much that the theme of human rights has changed into the theme of human possibilities, almost unlimited.

Meanwhile, the idea of human duties, the responsibility of every citizen for himself, for his own freedom, has been languishing for several generations. Civic dialogue and independent practices languish. Energy that is not transformed into the word of public dialogue, that is not utilised in behaviour, becomes more condensed, concentrated. Roles polarise into “we” and “they”. The danger of instinctive aggression emerges. We perceive a need for change.

Human duties have to be understood, individuals have to take on responsibility for themselves, human groups the responsibility for their own history. The vertical growth of man has to be kept in mind: the upper end of the vertical is compulsorily unnameable and elusive, remaining, however, inspirational and desirable; the beginning of the vertical is firmly rooted in the body and senses, in human animalism. In each generation that is transformed into humane and spiritual values, in each individual anew, not alone in any way, but with the help of the human group. We have to care for each other, and to the same extent for ourselves.

Social dialogue and energetic initiatives form the path out of society's lack of consciousness, out of destruction. Though we may tremble, there is hope for our survival.

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**Helena Klímová**

[hklimova@volny.cz](mailto:hklimova@volny.cz)

## **The XIII Group Analytic Conference in St Petersburg, 26 – 28 May 2017**

By Vivian de Villiers

I recently attended another interesting and stimulating Group Analytic Conference in St Petersburg where we shared painful experiences and also laughter. The topic of the conference was, “*Love and Aggression of the Group and in the Group*”. The need for mourning to reconnect with love was one of the many issues that came out of a number of excellent presentations and discussions.

Other visitors and I were warmly welcomed and it was really interesting to meet group analysts from different parts of Russia. Russia is a huge country and I find it difficult to comprehend the sheer size of it. Mind you, so did Napoleon. Some people travelled long distances to attend the conference.

For days before and during the conference I was preoccupied with the idea of learning from mistakes and that a mistake can't be planned. The challenge is to recognise the learning opportunity presented by a mistake and to avoid being disabled by the narcissistic wounding that accompanies it. I was not disappointed during this conference. It is, of course, easier to deal with someone else's mistakes, however I also had a chance to make sense of my own and to see it as an opportunity to learn.

We started on the Friday evening with two sessions of “*Role Analysis*”, conducted by Hanni Biran from Israel. These two sessions were arranged in an inner circle of eight people and the rest of those present in an outer circle observing the method being demonstrated in the inner circle. The process aroused some angry feelings in the outer circle with people feeling left out. Some felt that the associations were more about the staff member conducting the demonstration than the person who had the role analysis. It was also felt that it was too exposing of the person who was undergoing the role analysis. Over the course of the conference, repair of these ruptures took place with an acknowledgement that the group needed more explanation about the process and technique of *role analysis*, before the demonstration took place. The more direct way of expressing emotions in the Russian context was mentioned and the value of the demonstration acknowledged.

There were two social dreaming sessions, one each morning conducted by Marina Mojovic from Belgrade and Hanni Biran from Israel, respectively.

There were ten presentations over the Saturday and the Sunday, all chaired well with the presentations remaining within the time boundaries, which meant that there was time for discussion after every lecture. I found the presentations interesting and it gave me a sense of the work done by group analysts in Russia. I also valued that fact that every presenter asked conference attendees to respect the confidentiality of the anonymised clients that they presented. All in all, my sense was that the standard of practice of group analysis is high and that there is an enthusiasm for group analysis in Russia that really impressed me.

I won't list the topics covered in the presentations, as it would take up too much space and, if I list some topics of particular interest to me, I'll have to leave out others and that would not be a balanced reflection, given that I felt all were interesting in their different ways. The presentations were thirty minutes long followed by ten minutes of discussions and questions.

There was one ninety-minute round table discussion concerning work with teenagers who make suicide pacts on internet sub-groups. The format of the round table discussion was that the work with the teenagers was presented and then discussed.

The conference language was Russian and there were two translators for those of us who can't speak Russian. At this conference, the same translators who translated when I attended last year were used and I felt that they were really good at their work. They were working all the time, not only during the formal sessions but also during breaks, as there were relatively few people who could speak English fluently and some people felt embarrassed by that. To me it is about trying to understand each other rather than good grammar and I do wish that more Russian group analysts would find a voice on the Internet forum.

The *Group Analytic Dictionary Project*, that Marina Mojovic presented, was received with enthusiasm and is another opportunity where Russian group analysts could become more visible.

Personally, I missed not having small group sessions and would have liked to have had at least one small group on the Saturday and one on the Sunday. However, I can also see the dynamic administration challenges in making this possible. At this conference, we had the use of two halls. In one we had all the presentations and the large groups and in the other we had our coffee breaks with pastries. Small groups would require additional rooms. The other challenge would be the number of translators in order not to have too many visitors concentrated in one or two small groups.

St Petersburg is a very beautiful city but on both occasions that I've been there I have also been very aware of the loss of life suffered during the Second World War. However, in the second and last large group, it was powerfully brought home to me that millions of Russians were persecuted and died both before and after the Second World War under the Stalin regime, and that this was difficult to talk about. At the conference, there were people who lost many of their relatives from previous generations. In spite of, or maybe because of the Holocaust having been mentioned during the conference, visitors were able to take the difficult step of talking about the loss of close relatives during the Serbian atrocities and the Armenian genocides. I was deeply touched by the pain present in some group members due to the loss of close relatives and the image of premature endings and ruptures in those families stayed in my mind, to such a degree, that as one of the large group conductors I got caught up in an enactment. This took the form of attempting to end the large group thirty minutes early. My enactment might have been helpful in that it was a reminder that we had thirty minutes left and possibly prompted a member to talk about her experience of having been in the underground train carriage where the bomb exploded in St Petersburg on 3 April 2017, and the challenges of dealing with the aftermath. She felt that immediately afterwards there were many supportive activities and promises of help but it has now gone quiet and the victims now felt forgotten.

In group analytic groups we can share pleasure and pain and I find that being in a group of group analysts is both reassuring and facilitating of emotional growth.

St Petersburg is a beautiful city and I would recommend any who may attend next year's conference to plan in at least a week or more after the conference to explore the city, boat rides, visit the art galleries and palaces.

**Vivian de Villiers**

[viviandev@aol.com](mailto:viviandev@aol.com)

## **2017 Czech Spring Group Days, Prague, Czech Republic**

By Denisa Schücková

This spring the Group Section of the Czech Society for Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy (CSPAP) held its second three-day experiential group analytic seminar, “How to Experience and Survive a Group.” This year’s subtitle was, “What are Groups Silent about?” The event took place on April 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 in the premises of the Film Faculty of Charles University in downtown Prague. Prague’s new annual group analytic seminar is inspired by the rich and fertile experience that we gained from co-organising with Regine Scholz and David Glyn the GASI Summer School in 2015.

Last year we organised the first such seminar in Prague: “How to Experience and Survive a Group: Unconscious Dependencies in Human Groups,” and the report is available in Winter 2016 Contexts. The 2016 event was very modest as to the number of participants; this year the number of participants more than doubled.

During two years in the local Czech environment, the original GASI “Summer School” has evolved into the “Spring Group Days,” but the essential structure and purpose of the local “offspring” remains very similar to the “parent”. It is built primarily on experiencing the processes of small and large groups, learning from each other in supervision groups; and the program is also supplemented by theoretical blocks. It provides the local therapy community with a place for sharing ideas and exchanging experiences in the field of group therapy as well as a creative space for reflecting on larger societal themes.

Naturally, there are also some differences between the two events. Unlike the Summer School, which begins typically with a lecture, the Spring Group Days begin with the large group – thus throwing participants directly into the process. We held three LGs during the three days: in the first LG, associations arose of an “empty table”, people awaiting “meals” that we will have to “cook together” during the three days. I dare to say that, in the end, we all “ate” to our hearts’ content. Small experiential groups met three times for 90 minutes and offered private spaces to discuss more intimate issues and conference experience. Supervision groups met twice for 90 minutes and were widely appreciated - we have thus learned about a general thirst for more group supervision opportunities in the country.

Most importantly though, the Spring Group Days differ from the GASI Summer School due to the local character of the conference. While GASI Summer School offers learning and exchange among group analysts from different countries, the Spring Group Days facilitate exchange and discussion among different group therapeutic approaches in the Czech Republic.

This year, as part of the theoretical program, we invited professionals from Rogerian PCA, Gestalt psychotherapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Dynamic Psychotherapy who - along with a Group Analyst - discussed the theme of silence in groups from their perspectives, during a 90-minute discussion panel.

Experienced group analyst, Václav Buriánek, spoke about the meaning and forms of silence. He said the role of the therapist is to help the group understand the dynamics of silence: “What is happening that the group keeps silent?” He views silence as a natural part of communication, “without a pause, human speech would not be comprehensible...and silence is important for the genesis of answers.” Václav understands silence as an opportunity for the conductor’s introspection: “The conductor needs to understand the associations and projections present in the group or otherwise he/she would fall into countertransference and that may lead to his/her failure.” He shared his experience: “When the group is silent, my projections are like frothy steeds – I imagine silence as sound rattle. We all invest ourselves into silence...when we all work to the point of fatigue, then the pause is very rich in personal meaning.” Last, but not least, he mentioned that the group in silence expects the conductor to take the lead, “and through my response I offer the group the kind of language in which we will speak together - and the group offers its language back to me. It is a chance for mutuality...”

Věra Roubalová, a gestalt therapist, spoke about her experience with multicultural women’s groups and with descendants of holocaust victims’ groups. She said these groups are quiet about the painful emotions of degradation and shame; in her experience, it is also difficult for members of some cultures to speak about their family members in negative connotations.

CBT therapist, Katarina Adamcová, admitted honestly that CBT groups typically do not experience silence, and when they do “I think to myself that they need to be with their thoughts. But then I try to encourage them to speak out their thoughts.” She reminded us that CBT uses techniques, such as exposition. The therapist is likely to ask those who mostly speak “and who seem at the first sight not to suffer of anxiety” to try to be quiet, and those who mostly are quiet to try

speaking - and then reflect how they all felt in it. Katarina said that this is usually followed by attempts to connect the new reflections and experiences with inner cognitive schemes, “such as: when I speak everyone will see who I am or that I am vulnerable...the person who interrupts silence first may for example realize that he feels he must take responsibility for the group and then we talk about that”.

Gaba Langošová from Rogerian PCA spoke mainly about therapist training groups: “Often group can be silent about societal taboos such as cheating or moral issues but also about something that is present in the group – something that group members only speak about, behind the scenes.” She connected silence with deep empathy among group members but also with suppressed anger: “Sometimes I imagine there is a stone in the middle of the group through which conversation cannot float”. Gaba has also mentioned her experience with a psychotic group that would always speak but the words were meaningless: “Silence can raise anxiety and so these psychotic patients filled the space with words”. She warned against excessive conductor activity: “You probably know when someone brings up a difficult experience... and the group is silent, as they suppose that only the conductor knows the most precious intervention. But the group needs to learn that they can react competently themselves.” Groups can, according to Gaba, also be silent because they were traumatized “by someone’s painful story...but also by a directive or expert therapist...”

Jiří Jakubů, dynamic group therapist, appreciated the theme, “What are Groups Silent about?” as an important statement on the fact that a group is an entity and not a mere collection of individuals. Similarly to Václav, he stated that “when a group is silent it is always talking.” In support of Gaba’s words he added: “When you don’t know what to say, be silent...we have to restrain ourselves from talking in order to enable group members to be the promoters of the group.”

Last, but not least, an article by the late Marie Hošková, which distinguished between silence and stillness was mentioned in the discussion panel: “Silence is object related, but I can be still alone.”

This year’s lecture was presented by a well-known investigative journalist Marek Wollner, who spoke about his view of media and communication, and of the state of democracy in Czech society 3 decades after the fall of the totalitarian regime. His speech was followed by dynamic and passionate discussion. We had an immediate experience of one characteristic issue about which Czech groups are frequently silent. Although the lecture was seemingly

welcomed by everyone in the room, later on “behind the scenes”, some participants mentioned in private conversations that they felt Marek’s lecture as too political or “manipulative” and that they didn’t share what they felt as the “group normative view”. However, openly the group was unable to sustain disagreements on these political themes. Perhaps this silence was part of the apparently still persisting sad legacy of communism and its monopoly on the only “Truth”.

At the end of the second day we shared an informal dinner in a classical café in downtown Prague and enjoyed good food and a friendly unstructured atmosphere.

The conference provided rich experience and ignited an even stronger desire for the Czech group analytic team to carry the seminar on in future years. We have already started preparing 2018 Spring Group Days.

Thank you, Regine and David, for overcoming all the difficulties and obstacles in the preparation phase of the 2015 Prague GASI Summer School. The joint effort on both sides of the GASI/CSPAP international team seems to still bear fruit.

**Denisa Schücková**

[denisa.schuckova@gmail.com](mailto:denisa.schuckova@gmail.com)

## **BOOK CORNER**

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### **BOOK REVIEW**

***On Group Analysis and Beyond. Group Analysis as Meta-Theory, Clinical Social Practice, and Art.* Anastassios Koukis. New International Library of Group Analysis. London: Karnac Books, 2016**

In 'On Group Analysis and Beyond,' Koukis introduces his new (meta) theory for Group Analysis. His thought provoking book is divided into 4 parts. After a reformulation and elaboration of theoretical models, parts 2 and 3 take us into the consulting room of the group analytic group and beyond. Case discussions and single case design studies are provided as evidence for the effectiveness of group analytic groups for the treatment of neurotic, psychotic, borderline/narcissistic personality and eating disorders, as well as depression in schizophrenia. Group Analysis' relationship with the social unconscious and music is explored in the final part of this unique book.

Influenced by orthodox Freudian, Kleinian, Bionian, and Lacanian psychoanalysis, as well as structuralism (Lévi-Strauss), Kantian philosophy, music and Foulkes, Koukis takes the reader on a 225-page long journey of original ideas and arguments. These are supplemented by numerous vignettes, case studies and analyses. Over the duration of his career, he has spotted the gaps in Group Analysis (GA) and has made it his mission to close these. Hence, he reformulates group analytic theory, which has been criticised for not being systematic enough. His modified model consists of an oedipal triangle, which includes the individual, father and psychoanalysis, and a circle of groupishness, which captures sociality and GA. Their interconnectedness and interdependence is explained as follows:

The triangle, consisting of father, mother and children is already a 'primitive circle' (group). Hence, this group (circle) occupies an essential place within the triangle. Whereas both are autonomous entities, they are produced through the "inherent unfolding" of the other. The primacy of libidinal bonds (psychoanalysis) is superseded by illusion of sociality (GA), which contains it. Love for society is interwoven with self-hatred and narcissistic drives. The archaic father/leader and his predominance over the mother/group is supported. As the oral-sadistic and paranoid-

schizoid phase prepare for the depressive position, pseudo sociality becomes real. Triangle and circle touch at the point of highest containment for both, i.e. when the depressive position is reached. This means that access to and resolution of the Oedipus Complex afford the transcendence of the maternal circle (or absorption of the triangle by the circle). It is proposed that the triangle (psychoanalysis, father) and circle (GA, mother) co-exist in “benign symbiosis”.

Koukis aims to introduce a new epistemological model of the symbolic roles of father and mother in the group. His ‘kaleidoscopic’ model depicts their paternal and maternal functions within GA. It gives primacy to horizontal, interpersonal and transpersonal relationships, instead of focusing on vertical transferences. These interesting conceptualisations are the product of numerous articles and presentations he delivered over the years, as well as his creative interweaving of orthodox psychoanalysis and GA. Whilst his theoretical models are based on similar ontological and epistemological principles, he avoids psychoanalytic primacy - at least that is his aim.

Throughout this “predetermined” book, Koukis discusses difficult and often neglected topics – money, envy, scapegoating, eating disorders, dreaming in psychosis, borderline presentations, depression in schizophrania. Numerous helpful vignettes make his conceptualisations accessible. Using money (its role in payment for treatment) as an example, he describes 3 developmental phases of patients’ journey in group analytic therapy: their fusion with and separation from the group, and their individuation. He shows that envy can manifest as mild, intermediate and extreme in the group. Koukis then guides the reader through envy and its vicissitudes. He shows that the group always remains an object of envy due to introjection of dead mothering objects. Tracing the origins of envy back to the ‘alteration of the ego’, which is linked to the incorporation of the mothering and group analytic group as ‘dead’ objects, he holds that for patients with ‘severe psychopathology’, dead objects can become even deader. Koukis demonstrates how envy can be transformed into jealousy in the group. In extreme cases of envy, group treatment might be counter-indicated, because it can either result in premature termination of treatment or a severe attack on the group. A ‘good enough’ farewell can help, he assures the reader. Since early termination or drop out is concerning, group therapists may find his scenarios and explanations of how to avoid these (or if unavoidable, how to best address them) helpful.

His chapter on scapegoating is equally informative.

Scapegoating occurs when societies', or groups' own unacceptable aspects are directed against others who are perceived as victims. Using the metaphor of the Spaltpilz (a fungus that infiltrates plants so deeply that it eats their innards), Koukis illustrates just how destructive scapegoating can be, both for the individual and societies. He links scapegoating back to identification with an archaic Superego and Id, which is then projected into others, who have a valency for these projections and identity with them. Koukis optimistically argues that improvement can occur and drop out avoided. However, this presupposes that the group has good enough mother-figure characteristics, as well as a conductor, who both demonstrates and overcomes the power of the archaic, invasive superego through "crescendo and decrescendo moves".

Koukis' explorations of early endings, their phenomenology and causes in patients with eating, borderline and narcissistic personality disorders are particularly interesting for clinicians. He describes their oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, as well as patients' inability to transform beta-into alpha-elements (due to severe disturbance in their primary mothering relationships). Stuck in the oral-sadistic/paranoid-schizoid position, oedipal resolution cannot be achieved. Deficiency in the patient's symbiotic relationship with the pre-oedipal mother is the reason for early termination. The same applies for psychotic states. Thus, it is the group's task to offer maximal maternal qualities to meet members' deficient, or absent, early symbiotic maternal needs. As in individual treatment, members must be weaned from the breast (mother, 'real object'). For good enough symbolic castration to be achieved, weaning from the breast (mother) as imaginary object must also occur, which is his, the father's (conductor's) task. Taken together, these two enable the symbolic death of patients' parents. In turn, members can begin the mourning process.

Symbolic castration acquires a centre stage for successful termination of therapy in Koukis' writing. Interestingly, if it does not happen, (neurotic) patients may not terminate therapy. Borderline patients, prone to leave early, must first be helped to accept frustration after having provided them with some gratification first, before symbolic castration can be reached (i.e. successful sublimation of same-sex elements). This can be a long process, which involves successfully going through the oral-sadistic, paranoid-schizoid and phallic phases. Sadly, not all members will develop higher self- and social consciousness, and lack of 'good enough' sublimation commonly results in early ending of therapy. What constitutes 'good

enough’ and when is it likely to be achieved? In Bionian terminology, when transformation of beta-into alpha-elements occurs. The former are thoughts without thinking, in search of a thinker. In the group, psychotic members can be helped to transform primal psychotic dependence on the mother (or group) into more creative and symbolic thinking. Some of Koukis’ patients spent 8-10 years in group therapy. If this feels long, lengthy treatment periods are not uncommon for chronic and severe conditions (schizophrenia; psychosis; personality disorders) within psychoanalysis and GA.

Koukis conceptualises schizophrenia in a traditional psychoanalytic way. He cites research studies throughout his book, asserting that depression in such patients can be treated “effectively” in an analytic group. Considering that ‘schizophrenia’ is a heterogenous condition, this claim is perhaps too ambitious. Whilst the presented case of Nikos certainly makes for an interesting read, the idea that patients with depressive symptoms cope in their transition from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position in an auto-destructive way and, therefore, may benefit from a group, is perhaps less convincing. There are many confounding factors (e.g. medication). And as much as I would like to believe in the supremacy of the group analytic method over cognitive behavioural therapy, I remain sceptical.

In his chapters on dreaming in psychosis, Koukis rejects some neuropsychological theories of hearing voices. Instead, he favours Freud’s explanation (voices are defence mechanism; if derogatory, they emanate from a harsh superego). Patients with psychosis are thought to be unable to dream. However, they can rediscover the ability to produce ‘proper’ dreams as their therapy evolves in his heterogenous analytic group. Group analytic phenomena (mirroring, communication, sharing experiences in free-floating discussions in the group) foster the narration of dreams in the dreaming group matrix. This may lead to “decompensation of patients’ super-invested pre-conscious”. In turn, a reconstitution of their ability to dream occurs. This description is as heart-warming as it gets. Koukis shows that patients’ ability to dream is enhanced by the dream-like similarity between the act of hearing voices and the dream matrix of the group. His phenomenology and ontology of dreaming in psychosis is most certainly unique. The interweaving of neuropsychological studies and case presentations in his arguments makes for an excellent read. Unfortunately, their abrupt appearance may be disconcerting for those readers without prior knowledge of neuropsychology.

Psychosis is perceived as lack of dream-work alpha (ability to mentally digest primeval psychic material), because the primal scene is solely depicted as sensual and fragmentary experience on an ontological level. Dreaming can become healthy when dreams are produced as group dreams in the dream matrix. The dream matrix appeals, because it is based on communication, resonance, condenser phenomena, mirror reactions, and transpositions. It acts as container for projective identifications, which are expressed by recounting dreams. The group's task is to represent the fantasy of the primal scene (combined parents). This representation will help psychotic patients to acquire dream imagery instead of consisting of sensual fragments only. In this way, better negotiation of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive position can be achieved, and psychotic dreaming transformed into neurotic dreaming. Koukis describes this process beautifully.

In part 4, 'GA and its relationship with the social unconscious and art', we encounter GA at its best: excellent discussions of the matrix, the impact of the social unconscious and the group analytic conductor. Koukis' description of the conductor/leader is one of the clearest I have read in GA. He distinguishes between the leader, who is more directive and *of* the group, and the conductor, who is *in* the group. He compares the group analytic group to an orchestra and the role of the conductor to the 'dead' symbolic father. Archaic leadership is transformed into servant leadership, Koukis writes. The group analytic conductor is like a "maestro in reverse". Group dynamics are described in "crescendo" (intense, empowering) and "decrescendo" (diminishing). Successful therapy concludes with an internalisation of the mother figure (inner strength) and that of the conductor's strength as 'dead', symbolic father, whose power is diminishing (decrescendo). The musicality of the group analytic conductor vibrates through the text.

Koukis points out that absolute and servant leadership are continuously negotiated in the hope that the latter will prevail and achieve replacement of the 'live' father by the 'dead' father. This ideal is provided by western societies in the context of modern liberalism and democracy. Koukis is pessimistic about leaderless groups. Neither orchestras' nor groups' efforts to perform "leaderless" have ever worked, he writes, and goes on calling them "utopian". This leaves us with a rather bleak perspective on leaderless groups and societies. Elaborating on the leader's role in society when examining desire and despair in postmodern society, leadership is perceived as being structured by the symbolic order.

The symbolic features heavily in Koukis' writing, signifying that he is a Lacanian analyst at heart. Lacanians hold that analysts can only produce changes in the imaginary effects by working through the symbolic order. Mainly, because the imaginary is characterised by dual relations, images and appearances, which are merely effects of the symbolic. The imaginary, symbolic and real constitute the three orders of Lacan's tripartite scheme. We encounter theoretical and practical examples of how the symbolic is linked to communication, law and order, and ultimately, regulates desire in the Oedipus Complex, on numerous occasions.

'Desire in postmodern times has lost its symbolic form and is nothing but a disguised form of need and demand, which is no longer repressed.' What does Koukis mean? By linking desire to the decline of the paternal law, the ideal father, or in Lacanian terminology, the Name-of-the-Father, he suggests that some causes are to be found in society's paternal order, which is expressed through social institutions. To function creatively, desire must always be repressed. Since this is no longer the case, and he links desire to the Mother-as-thing (need and demand), false needs are created. He attributes this to consumerism, arguing that desire is the need to buy, to devour the commodity. Koukis' creative amalgamation of Lacanian and group analytic thinking is intriguing.

Several of his conceptualisations can be traced back to Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. The social world is structured by certain laws, which regulate kinship relations and the exchange of gifts (in form of communication). The circuit of exchange is fundamental to the symbolic and linked to law and structure. This symbolic, which is diametrically opposed to Freud's symbolism, is the realm of culture, linguistics, law and order. Characterised by triadic structures (death, absence, lack), the symbolic order is autonomous, determined by the subjectivity of the pleasure principle.

I can see why Koukis places so much emphasis on the symbolic, it has explanatory power. And so has his book. It reminds us that theory and practice are inseparable; that theory evolves out of practice, which is modified by further practice. This cycle finds its expression in the presented clinical and theoretical material. We witness how the group becomes a container for members' undigested psychic disturbances and projections. Being lured into the realm of the imaginary, real and symbolic, the dream matrix and music, we are invited to follow group members' journey from the oral-sadistic over the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. At their final destination, the resolution of the Oedipus Complex triumphs over

symptoms and disturbances, resonating from the primal scene. This achievement comes about through group analytic treatment, where symptoms can be effectively treated, or even cured. It is a fascinating journey for the reader – except that some readers may be left behind.

Koukis' conceptualisations and arguments require a good attention span and knowledge base, because definitions of complex concepts are either missing or given much later, and sentences tend to be rather long. This makes it, at times, difficult to follow his undoubtedly creative analyses surrounding group analytic phenomena. Hence, this book may have benefitted from further explanations, expansion of arguments, and glossary at the end. In its present form, many pertinent arguments/ideas may be too complicated (or even obscured) for those readers, who do not share Koukis' impressive, intellectual and clinical background (philosophy, Lacanian and other psychoanalysis, GA, psychology, pedagogy, psychodrama, music). For those who do, this book may prove to be a gemstone.

Koukis seems to favour resolution of the Oedipus Complex. In post-modern societies, we find many different family constellations (e.g. gay marriages, step/adopted adopted). Does neurosis or psychosis await them? This is not addressed. Hence, whilst Koukis aims to merge GA and psychoanalysis (and to demonstrate the effectiveness of group analytic groups), the reader might be forgiven for questioning that he achieves this. His conceptualisations seem to remain embedded in an archaic, psychoanalytic paradigm, which stress the primacy of the Law-of-the-Father, although the structure of his theoretical model is more akin to Levi-Strauss's system of relations, where a point is defined by its relationship to other points, and whose elements are defined in differential terms with other elements, and the relationship between elements consists of bundles of relations that produce oppositional and relative meaning ("mythemes"). So Koukis clearly attempts to move beyond psychoanalysis and tries a balancing act between the paternal/maternal in his conceptualisations. The mother's importance as pre-oedipal mother and her functioning as good group object is used to negate orthodox psychoanalytic primacy.

However, his ideas signify a strong allegiance to the paternalistic discourse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conductor is perceived as male (father). His authority is given primacy over that of the mother's (group) and children's (group members). Ultimately, mother and children have less power, because the oedipal trumps the pre-oedipal. Paternalism also finds its expression and echoes through medicalised language ('psychopathology', 'disorders', 'patients') and

reliance on DSM-IV - the psychiatric bible of ‘dis-ease’. Hence, despite drawing on musical and other metaphors, Koukis’ writing does not escape the *Zeitgeist* of paternalistic and psychiatric supremacy. His writing falls prey to existing ideologies and power relations, the very thing his book aims to leave behind.

Koukis’ attempt to make the unconscious conscious and reveal its latent structures through analyses of the social unconscious, is certainly valuable. But a Lacanian writer cannot exclude himself from the writing subject who undertakes the investigation and from the results of the analyses. Koukis does exactly this. Thus, his attempt to overcome the psychoanalytic (and by association medical/psychiatric) dominance in group analysis, may not be as fruitful as he wishes it to be.

In his epilogue, he highlights that GA has not developed a solid theoretical foundation. I am surprised that no reference to Weegmann (2014) “The World within the Group”, is made. Weegmann attempted to develop a theory for GA. Considering that both authors are musicians, psychologists, group analysts, psychodynamic therapists who draw on Lacan, social theory and philosophy, and aim to develop GA beyond the circle of therapy and offer unique insight into the group analytic world, this omission is puzzling. What does it signify? Be this as it may, ‘On Group Analysis and Beyond’ makes a valuable contribution to group analytic theory and practice. It contains many fascinating elements, but these need to be viewed through critical lenses. An unchanging (group analytic/psychoanalytic) society represents the decrescendo inability to listen, hear and understand its signifier as deciphering crescendo rhythm and presence that precedes the signification of both object and emotion. Hopefully, someone will listen and make it her task to move Group Analysis beyond the supremacy of psychoanalysis and the paternal.

**Reviewed by Susanne Vosmer**

## **Request for Foulkes Letters and Documents for Society Archives**

We are appealing for letters, notes, and correspondence from Foulkes that Society members may possess. This will add to our already valuable society archive that contains much interesting material, papers and minutes and that is a significant source of information on our history and development.

Please contact Julia in the GASI office if you would like to donate any original or copied documents:

Group\_Analytic Society  
1 Daleham Gardens  
London NW3 5BY  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6611  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7443 9576  
e-mail: [admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](mailto:admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)

## EVENTS

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### **GASi Quarterly Members Group (QMG)**

**All current members of the Society are eligible and invited to attend. Non-members are welcome to a first meeting.**

The dates for sessions in 2018:

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October

**Format:** there are three 90-minute sessions with a 90-minute break for lunch; the day runs from 9.30am - 4.30pm with the first group starting at 10.00.

**Conductor:** Ian Simpson.

**Venue:** Guild of Psychotherapists  
47 Nelson Square, London SE1

The venue is a three-minute walk from Southwark Underground Station. In addition to the large group room, we have the use of a kitchen. Morning refreshments are provided. For lunch, the Guild is in an area where there are many good, inexpensive places to eat.

The fee for the group is £30 per day or £120 for the year.

You can pay on the day by cash or cheque  
or in advance at the GASi office:

1 Daleham Gardens, London, NW3 5BY  
+44 20 7435 6611

**QMG Organisers: Joan Fogel, Derek Love, Jud Stone**

The Small Groups are conducted  
in a group analytic way.

The Large Group is conducted by  
an Israeli and a German Group Analyst.

Supported by



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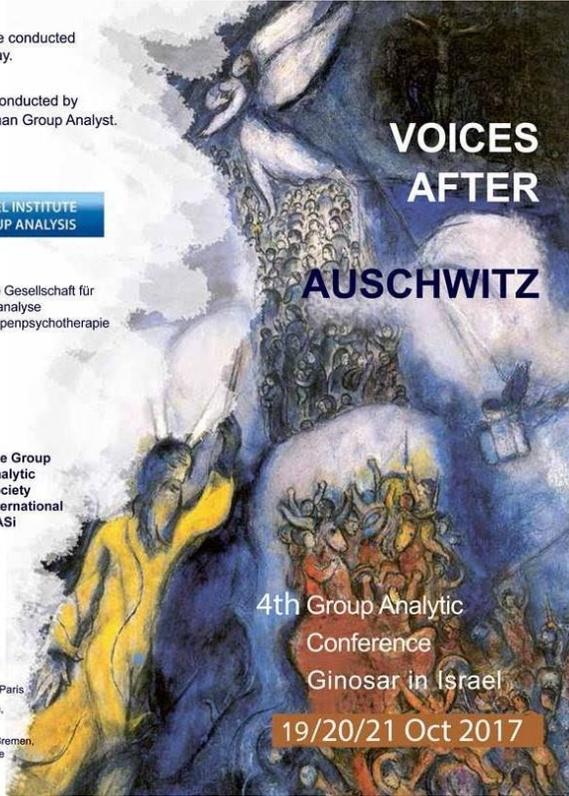
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# VOICES AFTER

# AUSCHWITZ

4th Group Analytic  
Conference  
Ginosar in Israel

19/20/21 Oct 2017





SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

## 43<sup>rd</sup> GASi Winter Workshop, Birmingham, UK

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2018

### *Northfield Revisited*



**Chairs:** Marina Mojović and Linde Wotton

**Lecturers:** Bob Hinshelwood, Diana Menzies,  
Dieter Nitzgen and Tom Harrison

**Large group conductors:**  
Sue Einhorn and Peter Zelaskowski

**Day 1: Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> 2pm - 6 pm**

**The Beeches Hotel**

**Day 2: Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> 9.30 am - 6pm**

**9.30 am - 1pm: The Hollymoor Centre, Former psychiatric  
hospital, Home of the “Northfield Experiments”**

**2.30pm - 6 pm: The Beeches Hotel**

#### **Full programme to follow**

Group Analytic Society  
1 Daleham Gardens  
London NW3 5BY

Phone: +44(0)20 7435 6611  
[www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](http://www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)  
E-mail: [office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](mailto:office@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)

Contact:  
Julia Porturas  
Administrator



# DISCOURSE

Conferences that explore the psychoanalytic and group analytic understanding of social violence



## On Terrorism

### January 26th and 27th, 2018

(Friday night 6pm to 9.30pm and Saturday 9am to 6pm)

**Venue:** Amnesty International, Shoreditch, London EC2A 3EA

**Venue**



Amnesty International,  
The Human Rights  
Action Centre  
17-25 New Inn Yard,  
London EC2A 3EA  
(off Shoreditch High Street)

**To register**

**Email:**  
discoursebooking@gmail.com  
with your name, email, phone  
number, place of work after  
you have transferred the fee  
to: Discourse,  
a/c sort code: 30-65-41  
a/c no 36737668  
Lloyds Bank.

Receipts will be issued  
following payment.

**Conference Fees:**  
including lunch:  
Early bird £120 until  
15th Oct 2017  
£150 from 16th Oct 2017

**Enquiries**  
Discourse777@gmail.com

**Website**  
www.discourse-conferences.co.uk  
Conference organised by  
Pam Kleinfelt

### Speakers

**The Devoted Actor in an Age of Rage and  
the Spiritual Dimension of Human Conflict**

Scott Atran

**Lessons from an ex-Al Qaeda Soldier**

Hanif Qadir

**Terror breeds Terrorists**

Dr Felicity de Zulueta

**The Roots of Terrorism**

Morris Nitsun

**Thought paralysis: Islam as the new black**

Farhad Dalal

**Women and Jihad**

Anna Motz

**ISIS: a story of a 'reversed family'**

Shulamit Geller and Eran Shadach

**Fundamentalism and male adolescence**

Elisabeth Rohr

**De-escalating cycles of violence**

Bobby Moore

### Chairs

**David Morgan**, psychoanalyst  
**Sue Einhorn**, group analyst  
**Peter Zelaskowski**, UKCP psychotherapist

### Large Group Convener

**Earl Hopper**, psychoanalyst,  
group analyst and organisational  
consultant

## **FOR YOUR DIARY**

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**Foulkes Lecture:**

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

**Foulkes Lecturer:**

**Robi Friedman**

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## **Free Associative Gifts**

Edited by Marcus Price

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### **Call for Poems**

I am honoured to have been invited to be poetry editor for Contexts. This has come about through the GASI forum discussions. Unsurprisingly a number of us have an interest in writing and sharing our poetry. I hope that you will feel able to send your poems so that I can choose a few for publication in future issues. In my experience, psychotherapists are commonly unreceptive to their patient's poems. These, I think, are sometimes the therapists who may not have had their own poetry properly heard.

Every year of my secondary school we had a poetry competition, I always came first. So thankfully my confidence was bolstered early on. I guess some of those who were not the winners might just have been left alone with the vulnerable feelings. That's why I am sceptical about the value of poetry competitions and expert judges. A common mistake of artist's, who run projects for patient groups, is that they invariably find one person who gets elevated into the special one, into whom their own creativity gets projected. I hope you will feel brave enough to bring forward your ordinary poems and cast aside the endemic fear of judgement.

I feel that there is a pressing need for poetry in our world and that we as therapists and group analysts should try to set an example, perhaps, to let slip our sometimes jargonised defences into something more personal and meaningful. Thankfully we have found a space for poetry and song in some of the shadow workshops, spaces which have been enormously rewarding. It was psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden who likened poetry reading to corpse examination, unless that is, the poem is read aloud as a live event. Expect, therefore, in future Context issues, to examine only a few corpses, not corpuses. It might be at a future event that some of these will come alive.

Psychotherapy and poetry go hand in hand, so it's not surprising that there are some prolific poets amongst our members. We start with some powerful poems by Elizabeta Marcos, some sizzling and at times hysterically funny sonnets and limericks by Derek Love and we finish with contrasting group poems by Einar Gudmundsson and Marcus Price. I'm sure these free associative gifts will speak to you in different ways.

## Elizabetha Marcos

---

### For Malcolm Pines

Malcolm, I want you in Berlin,  
with all the innocents and their sin,  
in crazy laughter and cunning smile,  
in hunger of a crocodile.  
In its cry. In fake and lie.  
And Joan of Arc burning - true  
Malcolm, in Berlin I want - you.

If you don't come won't be the same,  
and I shall miss who to blame  
for silly circus of this world  
bows and arrows of absurd  
and all its turns and all its falls,  
if you don't come, I shall see Walls.

### Dawn

We walked at dawn to the East  
not hearing the least breath of wind  
shouting to death to be released  
from mines and pains and blackish Sun

We found gold  
but gold was none  
We met a God  
as partisan  
parting the bright fields of the world  
he told us - trust only the absurd  
And the absurd only kept us alive

Now we're sacred  
now we dive where none have swum  
Look at me, mum! Mum, look at me! Mum

### **The Gaze**

We. The 'culture' and 'race'.  
Sit-standing in front of the mirror. estranged.  
Were gazing amazed,  
caught by the darkness of our own face.

### **Symposium aftermath**

Now I can see the Moon in the sky,  
The last one I saw, I hallucinated.  
Why?

### **For Derek**

We went to the west  
To get some rest  
But there they put us to the test  
If we are black if we are white  
If we are flying elephant

## Derek Love

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### SONNETS

#### On desire being in doubt

Thou sayest that I do not love enough  
“Prove to me that thy passion doth not slake”  
But let me in thy chamber, thee to stuff  
Then proof shall be thy “cease now, I do ache”.  
If all the lovers of mythic renown  
Were called to serve thee well and then be caught,  
Then even if they were all melted down  
Beside my lust for thee ‘twould seem but naught.  
The noble phoenix is all burned and spent,  
Yet rises in the morn to fly anew,  
So does desire for you, so truly meant,  
These feelings in my loins each day renew.  
And lest thee think your body’s all I want,  
I’d like to say it isn’t, but I can’t.

#### For Ms D F

With your long blonde hair and your eyes of blue,  
A blue of sun through stained glass window sky,  
The many things I always get from you  
Are sorrows antonymous cause to sigh.  
In your tower you lie and dream of love,  
How love may move the ground you stand upon,  
To wish and not to wish for what comes of,  
So long you’ve thought, ‘tis ‘nough to make you yawn.  
But let your golden braid down to the earth,  
From earth I’ll climb no matter what the height,  
Outhanging then will surely give us mirth,  
Oh, love, just let your eyes pour forth their light.  
I lean on trees to still my beating heart,  
Are hopes fulfilled or do they fall apart?

### **On our first meeting**

To the furthest reach of the furthest reach  
Else seen within the span of thumb to finger  
What scale of measure that would honour each  
Can compass heart's connection, bypass thinker?  
But let's not to the supernatural go,  
We live here on the earth and that's our home,  
Let's specify, let's say we see what's so,  
Then we can take the time to build our Rome.  
Your hair so wild it might be called untamed  
Your eyes defy my skill to put in words  
Yet still they spoke a language all their ain  
And mine replied in kind, I hope you heard.  
We live, we laugh, we seek out our distraction  
Though there may be no cure for the attraction.

### **THE AMBIVALENCE LIMERICKS SET**

She doesn't think much of obsession  
"It makes me feel like a possession"  
So I just let her be  
And she chose to go free  
'Cos she was the silk to my hessian

Your shoulders are two dappled beasts  
I look and think, "yum, what a feast"  
I gave one a kiss  
And went straight into bliss  
What a shame you don't like me in the least

Your feet, on the other hand  
Are your body's imperfect contraband  
You could have them sawn off  
Though that would be quite rough  
And you wouldn't be able to stand  
The index toe is very long  
Almost freakishly, does it belong  
To someone else really?

Or is that being silly  
Were you born with them terribly wrong?  
But loving you, such as I do  
There's no point getting into a stew  
Over what doesn't work  
So with all of your quirks  
I take quite a liberal view

This includes not being quite sure of me  
You wonder if I'm your cup of tea  
But give up your doubt  
I'm not such a lout  
Then happy both of us could be

She said to her prospective lover  
"I'm telling you, please do not bother,  
I don't like to be mean  
But you're just not my scene,  
You remind me too much of my brother"

But when he had gone and was taken  
She had second thoughts and was wakened  
To their flow and his spark  
And then wanted to lark  
So when he would not, she was shaken

Is there cure for this complex conundrum  
Which could save both of them from bummerdom?  
If she'd take him to bed  
They'd not know who was led  
And the leader without referendum

The trees that surround me are few  
Though each one reminds me of you  
When I lean on a trunk  
I feel like a monk  
That should please you, though it makes me blue

Your feet are so lovely and slight  
Just ready for you to take flight  
I'll give a head start  
Then my blanche will be carte

But the Love machine's comin' to get ya, baby,  
regardless of rhyme,  
reason, the season, any more I can squeeze in, no need for the  
obscene, or even for pleasin', 'cos you know it's right.  
Won't you please surrender to me  
Your lips, your arms, your heart, dear?

## **Einar Gudmundsson**

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A Poem presented at the 8th European Symposium in Group Analysis  
in Oxford 1990:

### **The Large Group Experience**

In the Large Group I didn't know how to behave  
When silent, I was swept by an emotional wave  
Frightened, torn between love and hate  
I gradually gained hope in the Human fate

## Marcus Price

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Recited at The Shadow Workshop Dublin 2016

### Off the Trolley

The man behind me must have been born here,  
He watches for the ritual of the nurses whom he guards.  
Like the overseer of an execution,  
His tracing eyes expect precision,  
This authority he has come to bare  
The daily drawing of a perfect square.  
Like a mad mechanic in the bonnet of a car  
I doze and grip and stare  
What's the other name for that?  
Obedient eunuch, spastic muscle, plastic soldier on a rubbish dump,  
A head full of pills  
On a trolley full of dust  
Dying to be safe, without trace  
Where's the B N F Amulsoptultriptoepineverin?  
I'm going now  
Help yourselves.

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Please send poems to Marcus at [mjpthery@gmail.com](mailto:mjpthery@gmail.com) (we cannot guarantee that all works sent will be published)

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## **The Visitors**

A Psy-Fi Tale

By Mike Tait

### **Part V**

**conspiracies against the laity; and I do not suggest that the medical conspiracy is either better or worse than the military conspiracy, the legal conspiracy, the sacerdotal conspiracy, the pedagogic conspiracy, the royal and aristocratic conspiracy, the literary and artistic conspiracy, and the innumerable industrial, commercial, and financial conspiracies, from the trade unions to the great exchanges, which make up the huge conflict which we call society.**

#### **Dilemma**

Anxieties fluctuated concerning the Visitors' identity. Were they true liberals? Were they validating psycho-analytic concepts? Did they have a concept of individual freedom? Were they a communistic or even symbiotic life form? Did they have separate minds - or draw some distinctions between themselves? Had they had so many conversations over the eons that, like an old married couple, they understood what each other were thinking? How did they resolve conflict? Did they need to? Did they have impulses - and therefore know about frustration? Did they communicate with each other when human beings weren't present? The difficulty was that their replies to enquiries were hard to remember. Most of those present felt that somehow they had been left with a new set of questions. *'How symbiotic or independent was any human being? What was a mind? What kind of separation was ever possible? Was conflict ever resolved or did the foci of tension continually shift – if one remained open to evolving dynamics rather than retreating into the illusion of arrival?'*

There was usually some sense of relief when the Visitors appeared to appreciate areas of human thought – although they were rarely ideas that were considered mainstream. They seemed to understand the ancient Athenian idea that retribution and punishment harmed the soul of the litigator. When they heard that early psychoanalysis had focused on developing the capacity to reflect - at the expense not just of impulsivity but also of harshly judgemental aspects of self – the visitors seemed curious as to the difficulties in creating social structures that encapsulated such ideas. They gave

attention to spiritual and therapeutic journeys that emphasized self-reflection and advocated responding to the actions of others thoughtfully. They inquired into the psychological development of forgiveness and the capacity for concern and the organizational implications if this informed policy. They asked why so much of this thinking was not familiar to social discourse.

There were psychotherapeutic professional bodies who, despite finding the visitors refusal to categorize or condemn anyone difficult to stomach, considered that aspects of their guiding theories were more in accord with the points that the visitors were making. Representatives of these bodies invited the visitors to consult with them separately. The Visitors declined - but encouraged those individuals to make themselves heard in the large group settings. Representatives of training and practice committees explained at length why this would be impossible. The Visitors' replies left large groups of grumbling professionals feeling as if they had been somehow treated as resistant patients.

The Visitors created space within the hubbub to hear about the beliefs, learning styles and organizational structures of these apparently benevolently motivated organisations. They listened to therapists explaining their practice. They were curious with regards to the extent to which the practice of any group corresponded with the description of their beliefs. They noticed the variations of practice that occurred within most organizations and enquired whether adaptations were in response to a relationship which was as relevant as the method. The woman who had given up shrugging listened closely.

*'What was the balance between thinking and feeling? What was the value accorded interactions with an individual, a group or a culture as vehicles for development? Could thoughtful interactions be standardized? What was a 'therapeutic relationship' when the variety of potentially helpful ways of being with another seemed infinite?'*

Practitioners who tried to explain 'scientific method' and boundaries found themselves confounded by the lack of both in their current settings. The Visitors seemed bemused by the notion of assessment as measured in a moment in time or in a defined piece of work. They'd observed that parents were unlikely to measure their children in this way and inquired as to whether such practices were reserved for strangers. *'What was difficult about continual conversations and evolving knowledge in the context of developing relationships? Did assessment, diagnostics, objectification, accreditation and certification institutionalize a faith rather promote understanding?'*

The Visitors showed an interest in the selection procedures of clients by professionals. They seemed to regard as a helpful form of reality testing the discomfort of psychotherapists trying to explain their thinking to individuals that they would be likely to exclude from their practice. Conversations ebbed and flowed – and over-flowed – but almost invariably in the direction of inclusion. *‘Were individual exclusions an exclusion of the thoughts located within those individuals? Might re-thinking the excluding method or ideology be a logical next step? Did boundaries exclude as much as they protected? How often did protecting slip into protection from thinking difficult thoughts? How well did the ‘realistic limitations’ of a way of working hold the disowned parts of a community in mind?’*

The man who had killed stared at the therapist as she tried to speak about boundaries. She lost her train of thought. This was intimidation. Why were the Visitors allowing this? She would have been able to give a much more reasoned account of her practice if the Visitors had agreed to meet separately with professionals. The warder sat beside the staring man with a hand on his shoulder. All the man heard was a woman making excuses for rejecting him. The warder quietly enjoyed the discomfort of the psychotherapist. He liked the way that the most impossible people had been placed in the centre of these discussions. The Visitors seemed to focus inexorably on the interconnectedness of things so that people became responsible not just for what they did but also for what they shut out. Everyone was becoming responsible for the difficulties he faced every day.

The Visitors inquired as to whether professional committees, implemented to safeguard standards, were genuine attempts to understand matters in a multi-dimensional way without recourse to reductionist thinking. When organizations that had previously attracted the Visitors attention by focusing on the social nature of symptoms acted on the basis of individual responsibility, the visitors became confused. *‘Was social responsibility inconceivable?’* When members of organizations felt let down by their own colleagues, were they *‘able to reflect on the nature of their own idealization, disillusionment and impulse toward litigation?’* When the Visitors inquired as to whether the focus of the litigation might change, *would ‘self-litigation’ rather than ‘other-litigation’ be more likely to deepen thinking?’* some of those on ethics committees found themselves withdrawing their support. Was the Visitors’ apparent failure to allow for an external location for guilt and responsibility a form of psychopathology? [Some of those who tried ‘self-litigating’ on these thoughts found themselves recalling other occasions on which they

had used similar language to dismiss criticism].

It was as if the Visitors heard these internal dialogues. Their inquiries elicited examples of drop outs from treatment methods in which mental health professionals disparagingly diagnosed patients - rather than themselves or their own methods. The Visitors seemed confused by the reluctance of practitioners, particularly those who prided themselves on years of self- examination, to think more empathically about the relationships they had been – and continued to be - unable to sustain. They highlighted occasions when loyalty to a method or body of theory replaced creativity and dynamic thinking. They elicited examples of human organizations remaining in comfort zones even when thinking withered or rigidified and involved a shrinking band of disciples. Sometimes, when professionals attempted to assert any pre-condition for their method to operate effectively, the Visitors would make inquiries until it became apparent that the pioneers of these methods had evolved their method during their lives and felt freer to adapt them to a perceived need than had many of their successors. Inflexible methods, the limited capacity of therapists or nations to tolerate feelings or behaviours, cursory interventions, unaffordable fees, waiting lists, cultural insensitivity, exclusive suburbs, the fear of immigrants; expulsions from schools, workplaces and countries; the loss of benefits, hatred of others, the nature of cruelty - emerged unpredictably in sometimes hostile conversations and re-enforced the longing of several practitioners to return to the calm of their consulting rooms. It became increasingly clear that the Visitors regarded most attempts to define method as restricting thinking and were much more interested in developing states of mind that responded to subjective experience of current need.

Frequently, it appeared as if both knowledge and language was breaking down with professionals increasingly reluctant to use diagnostic terms lest they be encouraged to explore their relevance to their own functioning – as well as in relation to social norms. Categories of all kinds - whether they related to attachment, trauma, defences, impulses, motivations, thoughts or relationships - were subject to the same scrutiny as to whether they made conversation and free-ranging thinking more possible or shut down thinking by offering the illusion of arrival. *‘Which theories emerged out of a wish to inhabit safer or more respectable academic and moral territory? Why had theories of early sexual development been central to psychological exploration a century previously but largely disappeared from social discourse? Had other theories become more fashionable or safer to explore – given that this was an area that continued to elicit such*

*strong feelings particularly in relation to 'protection' and 'normality'?*

The Visitors observed that belief systems were often developed in reaction to the perceived limitations of their forebears – only to become mutually reinforcing with adherents quoting each other in their writings - and wondered whether practitioners became less able to adapt to the nuances of their clients in their eagerness to practice their faith. *'Were words sounds which gathered meaning in relation to a listener? When conversations were unable to be sustained, did meaning lapse?'* It was always going to be difficult to explain concepts developed clinically to strangers, but these strangers were unnervingly proactive students. Trying to provide coherent replies was made more difficult by the frequent interruptions in the unfamiliar and often turbulent settings.

The Visitors puzzled over terminology used by apparently self-reflective psychotherapists that appeared designed to protect them from anxieties provoked by interactions. They noticed when assertions were made with the same bodily inflections as 'sin' and 'faith' by those with a different set of beliefs. *'Did psychotherapy encourage conformity? Was uncertainty intolerable? Was an 'interpretation' ever correct? How often did 'difficulties with authority' become a phrase which disguised an organization's difficulty with creativity and change? Was the external location of knowledge a way of not giving credence to a variety of internal conversations in perpetual interaction with current experience? Could polarities be allowed to exist simultaneously? Did the complexity of the struggle to understand the boundaries of bodies, feelings, thoughts and impulses lead to the somewhat artificial creation of fixed points – as if by defining reality in relation to these boundaries, truth might become apparent? Might 'being alongside' require tolerating the absence of fixed points and therein the difficulties involved in articulating fluidity? Were reflective conversations maintained with divergent ways of thinking'* Sometimes, in the chaotic interactions within the large group, it seemed as though allegiance to current authority became linked to the destruction of the planet – as well as an ever-extending list of social ills – and it became an impossible battle to explain benevolent motivation or practice whilst retaining loyalty to a national or professional identity.

The therapist, who had tried to explain boundaries to the Visitors whilst being stared at, wondered about the chaotic range of feelings that she had experienced since she'd first met the Visitors in the psychiatric hospital. She noticed that initially the Visitors listened

with apparent respect to most explanations before they asked questions which riled the speaker. Initially she had felt supported by the way they questioned the certainties of politicians, managers, psychiatrists and psychologists in the hospital - until they reframed her own explanations as a series of questions. She had been surprised by the prison warder who had volunteered to accompany criminals to the hospital and terrorist camp and had seemed as if he was enjoying the questions. He'd seemed less interested in defending the prisons than had the politician. Was she less open than the warder? Was she looking for the Visitors' approval? She remembered the disappointment that she experienced when her father took her mother's side. Where had that thought come from? It wasn't that the Visitors took anyone's side – although their questions did seem to redistribute power. Perhaps they were on the side of the powerless – but not, strangely, on the side of victims – unless everyone was a victim.

She noticed how many of the Visitors enquiries focused on the interactions between people. But were interactions sufficiently stable to sustain organizational and professional structures? In the terrorist camp, this focus shifted to the interactions between beliefs, behaviours, cultures and countries with scant consideration of national boundaries. Was it just that the Visitors couldn't tolerate certainties? Surely knowledge was built up on things that were understood. Was it possible to theorize – or think – if you didn't 'know' anything?

Was it possible to think about everything? The Visitors seemed doubtful as to whether any amount of training freed anyone from a defensive propensity to locate difficulties in others. Organizations that emphasized empathic relationships found themselves self-reflecting in relation to the cruelty that had been located in these meetings with terrorists and criminals. Reassuring and kindly practitioners found themselves considering whether they could work in more forensic settings – even when they doubted their resilience for this kind of work. *'Are cruelty and resilience personal or social constructions? How is cruelty modified when a strand of hope, however fragile, is responded to? Is personal resilience experienced differently when social structures are thoughtfully supportive rather than restrictively litigious?'*

Some practitioners who had attempted to explain analytic reserve to the Visitors, wondered whether the visitors were serious when they were invited to explore their methods in the current setting. Some found it difficult to explain how this reserve was linked to a responsive parental figure. Practitioners, who were interested in

working with thoughtful patients most likely to benefit from their expertise found themselves reflecting on the anxieties underpinning this preference and being asked to consider the implications of working in more turbulent and chaotic environments – adapting their methods accordingly.

The curiosity of the Visitors was unrelenting. They seemed driven to ask disturbing questions which led towards extreme conclusions. It was as if they thought that theoretical dogma unadapted in the face of difficult interactions was little more than cruelty. Some therapists suspected that they viewed the absence of curiosity as not dissimilar to genocide. It was pointed out that professional organizations had to live within contemporary social parameters. The Visitors questioned adaptations made in accord with social norms rather than thoughtful explorations - as well as the cost to thinking involved in successfully marketing such adaptations.

Their refusal to live in the real world reactivated the attention of delegates who were hoping for some sort of spiritual revelations from the Visitors. Hope re-emerged that the Visitors had some greater purpose and perspective which might be considered to have a spiritual dimension. Some representatives of humanity, who had been brought up in fundamentalist religious traditions, thought that they might be angels, devils, divine messengers or a sign of ‘the last days’. Others wondered whether they were speaking about spiritual beliefs that had been overlooked in a materialist society. It was true that the Visitors showed an interest in the eternal in as much as they seemed to have no notion of fixed points in time during which things could be evaluated. Everything was fluid, historical, intergenerational – with the current and personal never more than a flickering reflection of an interactional infinity. Working compromises emerged out of explorations in which considerations of merit seemed irrelevant. To some, the focus on reflection and introspection was not dissimilar to meditation or prayer.

The difficulty was that because the visitors were so focused on what they saw as integrating the whole picture, they progressively alienated all the segments of it by frustrating individual alliances. They spoke about developing connections but continually interrupted them by their indiscriminate compassion and relentless curiosity.

**Part VI will be in the December issue**

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## Quantitative Unease

By Susanne Vosmer

**A column dedicated to demystifying psychotherapy research**

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Foulkes (1973) recognised the enormous complexities of processes, actions and interactions that occur when people come together in a group. It's quite impossible, he thought, that we can perceive and disentangle what's happening at the same time. You might have the same feeling when you engage in research activities, looking at the plethora of data.

How come that people nevertheless understand each other when coming together so that a shared understanding of what is going on can emerge? And how come that we can make sense of data? Foulkes' answer to this conundrum was a 'suprapersonal matrix' (psychic system) and he thought that we share a fundamental mental matrix (foundation matrix). When we interact, pattern-forming, coherent properties can emerge.

Foulkes' matrix has much in common with scientific research where we find the same complexity of processes, actions and interactions when we gather, analyse and interpret data. The research matrix, a grid-like arrangement of data in form of a spreadsheet is a mould, in which a record is shaped. It's comparable to a group, where individuals are shaped through group processes. And just as people share fundamental biological and cultural characteristics, so do raw data (e.g. demographic information, sex, gender). In both foundation matrices, we find similar changes through biological and cultural evolution (e.g. transgender as a new category in the research matrix). Through analysis of interaction data, coherent data sets emerge. At least that is what researchers are hoping for. And we are looking to achieve coherence in groups as well through interactions. In 'scientific' research, researchers systematically attempt to avoid error and aim for reproducibility of statistical analysis and results. In Group Analysis, we also like to avoid error (e.g. history taking).

However, it's astonishing how easily mistakes can be made through typing errors in this process. You'd be surprised how many research papers won't be wrong due to scientific flaws (poor research design, inappropriate statistics) but because of typing mistakes. These, and other errors can be easily avoided or rectified.

Here's a 10-item list how to avoid 'the avoidable' during data collection, entry, analysis, and errors made during manuscript preparation:

1. Setting up procedures for checking data whilst you collect them (e.g. checking that all questions in questionnaires are answered).
2. Dating and signing questionnaires before filing them.
3. Transferring data directly by scanning or directly downloading them into a statistical package/spreadsheet.
4. Entering data twice (double data entry): after data has been typed into the database, a blank copy of the database is then made; the data re-entered and the 2 databases are merged to detect inconsistencies.
5. Writing a data entry protocol (specifying rules for illegible/ambiguous data).
6. Creating log files (rationale and record with dates of all analyses, names of files, folders and updating these).
7. Checking the final data set for missing data, inconsistency (are values of variables likely?) and range (are values of any variable unlikely?).
8. Programming analysis: Writing a programming code, or getting a kind statistician over a cuppa to help you, to include automatic output that's suitable to be imported into a word processor, because cutting and pasting individual numbers from software output is a source of error.
9. Checking every number on your report against the printout of statistical software when preparing your manuscript.
10. Double-checking your final copy to avoid errors at the re-formatting stage.

And finally, taking a deep breath when it's done. If you get your matrices right, coherence emerges during the process of your research. When it all comes together, the data creates a new phenomenon, a 'suprapersonal research matrix'. It's just like in the group, when

people come together and create a suprapersonal psychic system. Try it and let us know how you are getting on with the ‘suprapersonal research matrix’.

Cheerio for now

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**Susanne Vosmer**

[s.vosmer@gmail.com](mailto:s.vosmer@gmail.com)

## **MY WORLD**

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*It should've been you*

### **I Go AWOL, Doc**

*Davinia Palace's session with Doc*

DP: Who's in charge here? Don't answer that – I am. So I'm thinking about the IGA and I'm going to talk about it despite you disapproving when I do and insisting I should talk about my damn self all the bleedin' time. I mean, you're supposed to be a *therapist*, where do you get off telling me what I should and shouldn't talk about, I'm the one whose paying for your service.

Doc: And, indeed, I'm at yours.

DP: OK, good. Well, Lavinia's applying to be a training group analyst with the IGA and I've been thinking, why?

Doc: Why.....?

DP: Why special training group analysts.

Doc: Err.....because trainees need to be in a group?

DP: Duh! I'm not an idiot (ok, I am an idiot, but not in the way you seem to be implying), my point is, why can't they go into any group that's running twice a week if that's what the training requires, why a special category of GA?

Doc: They, IGA, needs to be assured that the GA is up to the job, perhaps?

DP: They've been training the poor buggers for at least four years, if you don't think you've produced or approved someone who's good enough by then, what the hell do you think you are doing taking money from them, what's happened to your standards?

Doc: Surely before taking on someone in training a GA would need



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It's somehow got about that Freud once said, "Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanity", except that he never did! It's nowhere to be found in the complete works, his letters or any public record. The nearest one can get is in *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, where Erik Erikson recounts a story about Freud being once asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well. Instead of something "profound" Freud simply said, "Lieben und arbeiten" (to love and to work).

Subsequent therapists have written eulogies round this fictional "quote" and it is easy to understand its attractive concision and scope, it seems to have the natural Freudian portentous ring to it. For instance Erikson himself said about the version in his story, "It pays to ponder on this simple formula; it grows deeper as you think about it." Well, MWYWTI hates to disagree with the great man (both of them) but surely Freud, and implicitly Erikson, are missing at least two other "cornerstones", aspects of life that are essential to our humanness.

In fact, MWYWTI would like to reconfigure the whole thing and, in the spirit of the dynamic therapies, call them the activities that make us human, which give meaning to our lives. So. these are: Productive activities, erotic activities, pointless activities and spiritual activities. Let's consider them one by one:

**Productive Activities:** It can be assumed that within this category Freud was considering as work anything that earned money - manual, intellectual, psychic - or contributed to society in other ways through voluntary labour. We certainly want to include in the latter, not just volunteering in various capacities but work on committees, organising forums, symposiums, workshops etc. etc. – activities that lead to some outcome.

**Erotic Activities:** MWYWTI is using this in Guggenbül-Craig's\* sense of all relationships of affection and love including friends, colleagues, lovers, partners, husbands, wives, children, relatives – basically all our relationships. And all the things that go on in those relationships – play, talk, co-presence, sex, sharing etc. etc.

**Pointless Activities:** The main categories, here are obviously sport and art but considered in the widest sense and both participating in and the enjoying of as spectator, listener, viewer. (We're not including tasting smelling, touching here as food – producing, eating – comes under productive activities and we agree with Aristotle that cooking cannot be considered an art as it is a form of pandering, though these other senses may be involved in forms of art). However, we are broadminded about sport so amateur as well as professional, viewed live or on TV, snooker, cards, any leisure wasting activity that isn't art (walking? Ok, walking, running, strolling, sitting down doing zilch, if you want, sort of very slow sport). Art includes stuff on TV, box sets, video games, graffiti, certainly not just "high" art or even particularly skilled art but also including high art. Things that are done for themselves and not with an end in view, with the aim of getting somewhere, the "thing" is the thing in itself not necessary for its utility. We don't care if things cross boundaries and are accidentally useful e.g. pottery. They may not always be aesthetic e.g. whittling – activities that are aimless (but not meaningless, on the contrary we sometimes lean on them to give our lives meaning [especially if other activities are disturbed, through bereavement, for example] and have you ever heard football fanatics?). Some of these come close to, and may also be, the spiritual activities outlined below. MWYWTI has its prejudices, believe it or not, and one of them is that art is one of the higher order activities which are essential and transformative to life, so absolutely necessary that they arise at all levels of civilisation - flutes discovered at Divje Babe in Slovenia dated about 43,000 years ago; cave paintings at El Castillo in northern Spain, dated about 40,800 years ago.

**Spiritual Activities:** These include meditation, thinking not aimed at producing anything in writing, mindful activities of all kinds, different states of, levels of, consciousness - reluctant to define, but of this world and not of this world. The sorts of thoughts, insights, revelations, visions that arise are often institutionalised as the children of philosophy in religion and politics. We are calling them spiritual because they are so fundamental to human beings to the point where people will die, or kill others, for their beliefs in both areas, the sacrificial and murderous being flip sides of the institutionalisation of the spiritual impulse. The non-institutionalised activities are the most important, of course.

MWYWTI had just baked (whaddya mean, half-baked?) this

confection for the first time and served it to some others only for Kate Trench to ask, “What about nature”? For a moment, the soufflé wobbled precariously and looked as if it might crack and collapse with the cold air of a critique upon it but, thankfully, it survived. So, Kate, I guess the answer is, first, that MWYWTI agrees with Jackson Pollock\*\* - we are nature; second that all these activities are taking place *within* nature – the Universe, which is the foundation of the foundations, so to speak.

\* Adolf Guggenbül-Craig: *Power in the Helping Professions*

\*\* See MWYWTI in *Contexts*, June 2017

*Who wants moonlight that's been trampled on?*

*Sue Burd on the 1969 moon landing*

*No one ever died saying “You know, I think I may have had too much sex!”\*\*\**

\*\*\* Sex workers excluded as commerce, so coming under productive rather than erotic

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