

## BOOK REVIEWS

### BRAND NEW RETRO

*The Future of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*. Edited by Lucy King and Rosemary Randall. London: Whurr, 2002. 209pp, £25 pb.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No-one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment. (Charles Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading')

A book review, perhaps like an analysis, assumes three things. A book, a reviewer, and someone to read something. (Or: an Unconscious, a client and an analyst.) (Or further still: mother, father, me.) The book tells me something I want to tell you, that I want – in brief – to report on. We read words that we gain a rapport with – a book review is premised on a rapport of a kind – yet we only gain word rapport once we have read the words – which is to say, we are always asked to make a leap of faith about meaning. Sitting down to a book is a paradoxical marriage of retrieval and publication: language is brought home (*rappor-ter*) and published (by the *rappor-ter*) at one and the same time. Every sentence verges on the cusp of nonsense (non-sentence), trading off on an *a priori* neurosis

that the sentence might not make sense in the end (or at the end), that the sentence will escape us, defeat us. English speakers are sometimes shocked by the position of German verbs. A sentence takes up time and space: there is nothing so daring as literacy. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003, 240, tell us 'capitalism is profoundly illiterate'.) Rapport, *rappor-ter*, the *rappor-ter*: reading, like reviewing, like analysing (I would imagine) has something to do with liking and reporting what we like (and don't like). Psychoanalysis, in short, is a form of journalism.

*The Future of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* is a broad text with chapters surveying such diverse topics as regulation, accountability, training, legitimacy, neuroscience, ethics, migration, feminism, sexuality, children, brief therapy, music therapy and literature. The sense is of a future overhanging, in climates of capitalism and market forces, where risk-averse cultures and cautionary bureaucratic modes of accountability prevail, which potentially undermine the art, and pleasure, of listening to someone. Peter Lomas's 'Telling It Like It Is' – the concluding chapter – is tellingly unbureaucratic, undogmatic, anti-technique, preferring not method but

‘spontaneity, intuition and style’ (p. 186). Lomas is intrigued by how therapists write as if it were the case that they never divert away from the technique they were trained in. ‘What is omitted is the intonation of the words,’ he writes, then asks of the facial expression, ‘what *kind* of smile is it?’ Lomas wants more than facts, he wants expression. He wants more words. Throughout ‘Telling It Like It Is’ – which sounds like a slogan for a pop phenomenology – Lomas is keen to instil in us the idea that the practice of psychotherapy is indistinguishable from how it is reported. There is an ethics of writing here, of the kind of duties words place on us, and us on them. Writing disseminates the idiom of the analytic session. The material the analyst reproduces is ‘confidential, often embarrassing to reveal’ (p. 189) – it could be a betrayal to reveal. Once a report has been written, something belongs somewhere, and the belonging – like a possession, or pre-occupation – fills a gap, replaces a lack (or re-describes it). The analyst contributes a verse to the powerful play. Text replaces sound. ‘There is a lot to be said for an account, however flawed, of an actual event; it is often an oasis in a desert of intellectualisation’ (p. 189). (The flaw seems to be the point.) For Lomas, then, the psychotherapist is a newspaper reporter – and he makes the analogy directly – contributing to the daily collective output of words, who should respond, ‘in the room, with language – or gesture – which matches the patient’s experience’ (p. 189).

How useful is it to conclude this book with a metaphor? (Lomas is metaphor-happy, also calling the analyst names like ‘politician’, ‘poet’ and ‘midwife’. Like the reporter metaphor, they need unfolding.) ‘The psychoanalyst is a reporter’ assumes

of us that we know something of both – of analysis and reportage – to be able to nod our heads in knowing agreement. Perhaps we might helpfully ask ourselves why we buy a newspaper. The answer seems to be connected with a will to know about the events, people and places that surround us on local, national and international levels, to contextualize the here-and-now, to assuage the guilt of onanism, to dare to read and think, to find out what’s going on. If we ask of our reporters some or all of these things, then we might be asking something similar of our therapists. Because at one time we asked them of our parents, or the groups we grew up in. However, the opposite might be just as true – when *don’t* we buy a newspaper? When we are in therapy. When is a newspaper not enough? Newspapers will tell you everything you want to know about, except yourself. They declare an ethics of internationalism, description and participation that is premised on your locality, passivity and vulnerability. On erasing yourself, in short. We never read newspapers to find out what will happen, particularly not to us; they are always retrospective – much like an analysis. And although they are loyal to a past we are indebted to, it is not our own past. We attend the conversations that we cannot conceive of ourselves not attending. Sometimes we simply ask of another human to listen to what we have to say and report it back to us. Sometimes we don’t know what we are bargaining for when we pay for an analysis, or a newspaper.

One key hazard for reporting, for reporting as a metaphor for psychoanalysis, is that as soon as we register the reportability of an event or moment, the essential specialness of that event or moment vanishes. ‘We lose the essential experience’, writes

Lomas. (p. 190) Thinking about reporting precludes the possibility of accurate reporting. If reporting is about bringing something back again, then the loss of experience's essence might hint there was no original to bring back (which is not to undermine the reality of lived experience, but to defend language). Why do we report events? Is it because we are really interested in the events for their own sake, or is it because we never cease to be shocked that events actually take place? Are we always surprised that we are alive? 'What is thinking for?' asks Auden, if not to generate action. What are actions for, we add, unless to describe them? Newspapers, like analysis, are premised on language and desire.

The happy contradiction of Lomas's concluding essay is that he both claims psychoanalysis is not 'best thought of as literature' (p. 186) and that the analyst is a story-telling reporter. Are writers false selves, reporters true selves? The opposite seems to be equally plausible, if not more so. The saying goes that we must not believe what the papers say – is the same true of our therapists? Arnold Bennett wrote that 'journalists say a thing that they know isn't true, in the hope that if they keep on saying it long enough, it *will* be true' (Bennett 1918). Is the history of psychoanalysis a study of the hope that truth becomes of repetition? Psychoanalysis seems to be as much about its own repetitions as its clients'. Was Freud a journalist? If newspapers are about selling lies (and telling them), are they Schuyler-style lies: 'I have told it [the secret] to my shrink . . . Are secrets a way of telling lies?' (Schuyler, 1993, 362). Mike Leigh's film, *Secrets and Lies*, suggests something similar. When we share a secret with someone we are suppos-

edly at our most intimate with them. Are we lying to the people we have sex with?

Peter Lomas's metaphor is an astute, pithy, contradictory summary of a connection that has not been written about enough. This has been more of a metaphor review than a book review, although what do we remember when we remember a book, if not the secrets and lies they tell us (the sex scenes)? And the metaphor, in a way, sums up the book's whole message, and that message is well versed by the anti-theory expressionist himself: 'the future of psychoanalytic psychotherapy is in the hands of those who report it'.

Bennett A. *The Title*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1918.

Deleuze G, Guattari F. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, 2003.

Schuyler J. *Collected Poems* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1993.

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## WHOSE HAND IS THE WHIP HAND?

*The Sadomasochistic Perversion: The Entity and the Theories*. By Franco de Masi. London: Karnac, 2003. 162pp. £16.99 pb.

Franco de Masi, Training Analyst of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, has written a study of what he calls 'the' sadomasochistic perversion, in which he reviews at some length three paradigm theories of sadomasochism in the mainstream psychoanalytic tradition and undertakes to offer us his own understanding instead.

His first paradigm derives from Freud's drive theories of infantile sexuality, as