

EDITORIAL

Petruska Clarkson died in Amsterdam on May 21, 2006. Petruska was an Associate Editor of *Psychotherapy and Politics International*; the Editorial Board met a couple of times in the library of her labyrinthine Harley Street consulting rooms, sitting on oriental cushions, under a huge fish tank which loomed precariously among the bookshelves near the ceiling. She contributed much support to the journal, and also two powerful and passionate papers, ‘War, bystanding and hate: Why category errors are dangerous’ (Clarkson, 2003) and ‘Racism in psychotherapy: Institutional and/or individual?’ (Clarkson, 2004).

Her work with PPI was, of course, a very small part of her contribution – to the field of psychotherapy in general, and to psychotherapy and politics in particular. ‘Powerful and passionate’ is actually not a bad summary of her work, and indeed (from my limited vantage point) of her nature. From her prodigious output – encompassing among other areas epistemology, ethics, sexology, psychology, research methodology, and therapeutic technique – perhaps her major political contribution was her application of the concept of *bystanding* to the context of therapy and counselling (Clarkson, 1996, 2000, 2003).

By ‘bystanding’, Clarkson referred to the attitude that sees wrong being done and does not intervene.

In everyone’s life there are experiences of not helping or not being helped. Every day we hear the devastating effects of bystanding described in the consulting room. The act of turning away

from someone who needs help can be called ‘bystanding’. (Clarkson, 2000, 62)

Clarkson believed that attitudes of bystanding are prevalent in the therapy world, supported by what she called ‘the myth of neutrality as a value’ (Clarkson, 2000, 63) and a ‘preoccupation with competency’ (Clarkson, 2000, 64). She placed a very high value, therefore, on whistleblowing; and in practising what she preached, accurately or otherwise (it is very hard indeed for an outsider to tell), she alienated a high proportion of her peers and colleagues, and ended up deeply disillusioned about the institutions of psychotherapy (which, in Britain, she had helped to construct and develop). This is always a lonely and unpopular road to take, and one which, if it does not begin in paranoia, generally ends there, since the pressure one experiences in the rule-breaker’s role is hard to endure.

Whether or not her campaigns against professional abuse were well-founded in specific terms, they certainly rested on a crucial theoretical position: the responsibility of therapists towards the vulnerable people who look to therapy for support and help. Petruska Clarkson’s life work was to support the disadvantaged, in whatever area that disadvantage lay. The profession needs more like her; sadly, we can anticipate the opposite. She will be missed; and this issue of PPI is dedicated to her memory.

It is an issue packed with riches – so much so, in fact, that this editorial needs to be kept short! Hilde Rapp contributes the next instalment of her massive theoretical synthe-

sis around peacebuilding, focusing on what she identifies as 'four key tasks' of conflict work. The structure of ideas and practice that she is quietly and steadily putting together may well turn out to be a crucially important underpinning for interventions from a therapy standpoint. Hilde has considerable involvement with the Middle East, and the three following papers all have some bearing on this currently very 'hot' area (at the time of writing, Israel is preparing for a land invasion of southern Lebanon). Irris Singer discusses the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the standpoint of attachment theory, arguing that the Israeli position derives from 'centuries old experience of persecution, homelessness, statelessness and displacement. In other words: a history of direct or indirect trauma, of gross vulnerability and insecurity, as in Bowlby's disorganised or chaotic attachment'.

We are excited to publish Jonathan Chadwick's paper, 'Talking about theatre and therapy', since it takes PPI into a new area. Chadwick is a professional director who has been deeply influenced by therapy and therapists, and who is trying to find ways to use theatre to 'treat' war trauma. In his papers he describes plans to take a production of Euripides' *Alceste* – one of the oldest theatrical texts in existence – to several war-damaged areas of the world, as a way to 'collect contemporary stories of how people have survived, resisted, recovered and repaired their lives in situations of violent conflict'. We hope in due course to publish an account of how the project turned out.

Thomas Singer is a distinguished American Jungian analyst. His paper in this issue

outlines his theory of the 'cultural complex', a development of Jung's original theory of complexes, and Joseph Henderson's later theory of the cultural unconscious. He describes the cultural complex as a powerful, stubborn set of collective feelings and reactions which 'resist our most heroic efforts at consciousness'. In the second half of the paper, he seeks to show how the theory can be a valuable tool for understanding important sociocultural phenomena – in this case, 'the ancient, archetypal riverbed of rivalrous conflicts between Christians, Jews, and Muslims'.

Finally, Peter Chatalos contributes the latest in a series of important papers on eco-psychology to appear in PPI. In it he experiments with using metaphors drawn from the immune system as a way of reconnecting human beings with what is happening to the natural world, in the face of what he describes as widespread 'ecological autism'. Together with three excellent and varied reviews, this completes what is arguably one of PPI's best issues so far.

References

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- Clarkson P. War, bystanding and hate: Why category errors are dangerous. *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 2003; 1(2): 117–32.
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