

Editorial

It's not hard to feel that world events are approaching some sort of culmination. Barack Obama's inauguration; the Gaza incursion, which by the way included the destruction of the headquarters of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (<http://www.gcmhp.net/>) and the suspension of its activities; and our developing understanding that we have little or no time remaining to prevent catastrophic global warming – all of these push us towards a sense of climax, of a sharpening choice between global disaster and global transformation.

Of course we need to be immensely careful of such notions, in part simply because they are so attractive on so many levels. The *Lord of the Rings*, paranoid-schizoid meme of a final choice between light and darkness, good and evil sometimes seems hardwired into us at a depth we cannot reach. Perhaps what is ultimately attractive about this is the idea that we might then be able to *rest* from the intolerable labour of constant decision and discrimination. Jung observed in the 1930s that many people were dreaming of empty, abandoned buildings and cities; he warned that this might represent a deep unconscious wish for surcease that would find some way to instantiate itself, as it perhaps soon tried to do in World War II. More than one recent book (for example Weisman, 2007) has lovingly described a world without human beings. Unfortunately the more likely result of climate change seems to be a world with no one *except* some human beings and lots of cockroaches. The important question now is: 'What is it that we really want?'

It has in any case become blindingly apparent in the last few decades that we live in one world, and that all our problems are in crucial ways global problems. (Although Schumacher's slogan 'Think globally, act locally' still retains its full power.) As its name implies, *Psychotherapy and Politics International* has, since its inception, aspired to being a global journal; but really achieving this has perhaps been harder than we expected. Our editorial board has always been genuinely international, with distinguished representatives from a total of seven countries on five continents; but even there the large majority are from the UK and the USA, and this has been even more true of our contributors, despite some excellent exceptions. Getting beyond the privileged Anglophone circle has been an ongoing struggle – to some extent inevitably, given that PPI is published in English; but practical constraints have an interesting tendency, on further inspection, to reveal political aspects – privilege of language, of access to literature and to information, all reflect the uneven global distribution of influence and power.

This new issue of PPI feels genuinely and successfully global in the span of its contributions, including papers from Africa, Latin America, Switzerland, Greece, the USA and the UK. We very much hope, and will continue to make every effort to ensure, that this continues into the future. This issue also spans a very wide range of themes and issues, from narcissism to asylum seekers and from complexes to political struggle. It opens with the second half of Sue Cowan-Jensen and Lucy Goodison's monumental paper on narcissism

and consumer culture, exploring the contemporary Western culture of ‘unrelatedness and disembodiment’ and asking ‘who benefits’ from it. This rich and dense paper successfully brings together analytic theory, political analysis and concrete clinical and non-clinical material.

Augustine Nwoye’s paper is our first contribution from Africa. Professor Nwoye explores the question of (legal) African immigration to the West from the other end, so to speak, asking what dreams and visions impel their journeys, and how they are affected by the disappointments of reality. In contrast to this very practical paper, Lawrence Alschuler makes a contribution to the theory of psychotherapy and politics, suggesting that Jung’s concept of the complex is applicable to understanding and working with political issues of oppression; he introduces the radical concept of ‘psychopolitical healing’, and defines it as ‘the integration of split-off complexes in the oppressed’. It is worth noting that Professor Alschuler is not a clinician exploring the political, but a political scientist who has found therapeutic concepts valuable to his own specialism.

Manuel Llorens is a practitioner and researcher in Venezuela, currently one of the focal points of global political struggle. In the first half of his paper *Psychotherapy, Political Resistance and Intimacy*, Llorens situates the difficulties faced by practitioners in Venezuela within the context of therapeutic debates over the last century about the relationship between politics and psychotherapy, and begins to apply these ideas concretely to working in Venezuela. A contrasting and deeply moving paper from Edward Emery explores in detail the workings of religious fundamentalist patterns of thought and feeling in an analysis.

The issue is completed by a review article in which Sean Homer discusses a Lacanian account of the Northern Irish conflict; and by the very welcome return of PPI’s occasional feature, ‘Documents from the Front Line’, which gives space to topical and ephemeral material relevant to the journal’s concerns. The first piece is Professor Joel Kovel’s account of his dismissal from Bard College, apparently because of his critical attitude to Israel’s treatment of Palestinians (Professor Kovel is a new and very welcome addition to PPI’s Editorial Board); while the second piece is a Statement of Intent from a new organization, the Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy, which has been set up to oppose plans for state regulation of psychopractice in the UK.

All in all, a rich, varied and challenging issue, which we hope you will enjoy.

REFERENCE

Weisman A. *The World Without Us*. London: Virgin Books, 2007.