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A Most Dangerous – and Revolutionary – Method: Sabina Spielrein, Carl Gustav Jung, Sigmund Freud, Otto Gross, and the Birth of Intersubjectivity

GOTTFRIED M. HEUER, The Association of Jungian Analysts, London, UK

ABSTRACT *As the first major commercial film to focus on Jung's role in the early history of (psycho-)analysis, David Cronenberg's (2011)* A Dangerous Method *constitutes a milestone in the portrayal of Jung – and his relationship with Freud – in the popular media. The film's subject is a pivotal point in the development of analytical theory and clinical practice, namely the discovery of countertransference, its uses and abuses – a discovery and method which, in turn, led to the birth of intersubjectivity. This article deals with the historical background to the events portrayed in the film, specifically with regard to boundary violations and sexual abuse in analysis, draws distinctions between love relationships and abusive relationships, and indicates the revolutionary aspect of the "dangerous method" of psychoanalysis – and, in doing so, reclaims the influence of Sabina Spielrein and Otto Gross in the history and development of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic method. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: Spielrein; Jung; Freud; Gross; Cronenberg; sexual abuse; countertransference; intersubjectivity

INTRODUCTION: "SCREAMS OVER LAKE ZÜRICH" (Kniebe, 2011)

> For memory, the first stop is not history but the cinema. (Willemsen, 2010, p. 334)

A dark carriage, drawn by two black horses, hurtles along a country lane, then comes to a stop in front of a dark building where it takes the efforts of several people to force a screaming and fiercely resisting woman through the imposing front door. This is the start of David Cronenberg's (2011) new film *A Dangerous Method*. Is this an abduction; a crime? One might well ask, judging from this director's oeuvre so far, that has predominantly been in the horror genre, and due to which he has been called "The Baron of Blood" (Huddleston, 2012). Indeed, this film's subject is crime, shock and horror: the crime of physical and sexual abuse in the family

Correspondence to: Gottfried M. Heuer, The Association of Jungian Analysts, 13 Mansell Rd., London W3 7QH, United Kingdom.
E-mail: gottfried.heuer@virgin.net

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and in psychoanalysis, and its traumatic effects. Cronenberg himself has spoken about this film in the following terms: "We're hitting the audience with no preparation, no discussion, no introduction to hysteria" (reported in James, 2012, p. 18), while also claiming that it is his intention to heal: "artists are like soul-doctors" (Cronenberg & Höbel, 2011, p. 136). The film deals with probably the most decisive turning-point in the history of psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice: truly, a revolution within the still comparatively young psychoanalytic revolution. The film shows that the healing method of the "talking cure", developed by Freud (1909/1957a, 1957b, p. 8) is a most dangerous one indeed, and that, metaphorically speaking, the scalpel of the soul doctor may well become a dangerous weapon when he betrays his art and commits "soul murder" – a term originally used by Daniel Paul Schreber in his *Memoirs of my Mental Illness* (Schreber, 1955), later used in 1903 by the American psychoanalyst Leonard Shengold to refer to child abuse and deprivation in general first in a 1979 paper and in a book of the same title (Shengold, 1979, 1989). Actually, it is not really the method that is dangerous, but rather the analyst who abuses it. In an interview, Cronenberg stated: "In my eyes, the discoveries of Freud and Jung are a world-shaking moment, a highlight in the history of humanity" (Cronenberg & Höbel, 2011, p. 136). As Diamond (2011) has put it: Cronenberg's film "tells a vitally important story, one that changed the world and how we see ourselves".

The film also shows that Freud and Jung were not alone when they made their pivotal discoveries. In the early summer of 1908 they were being decisively helped by two other pioneers of psychoanalysis who subsequently – thanks to the efforts of both Freud and Jung, in moves the like of which Erich Fromm (1989) not inappropriately referred to as "Stalinist" (p. 195) – vanished for many decades from the history of psychoanalysis, namely Sabina Spielrein (1885–1942) and Otto Gross (1877–1920). Spielrein is that young woman at the start of the film who, in 1904, is being delivered for treatment to the psychiatric clinic of the Burghölzli, near Zürich, where C. G. Jung is chief psychiatrist. She is the first patient he treats according to the Freudian method – my "test case", as he later called her (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 228) – about which at that time he has he only read. Four years later, Spielrein has healed sufficiently to be in the process of becoming a physician and psychoanalyst in her own right. It is at this time, in 1908, that, referred by Freud, Otto Gross enters the same clinic, himself a physician, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst – and anarchist. Gross was the first to have introduced psychoanalysis to the university when, as a university lecturer, he lectured on Freud in Graz, Austria, in 1902, at a time when, according to his own memoirs, Jung had not even properly read Freud's work to date.

The "rediscovery" of both Spielrein and Gross is due to the serendipitous discovery of documents in the 1960s and 1970s: in 1967 Emanuel Hurwitz, then chief psychiatrist at the Burghölzli, discovered Jung's case notes of his analysis of Gross in the clinic's archive and published his ground-breaking book 12 years later (1979). In 1977 the Italian analyst Aldo Carotenuto was given a cache of Spielrein's letters and diaries that were discovered in the Geneva Institute of Psychology; his book about Spielrein was published in 1984.

While Spielrein is the film's main protagonist, Gross is relegated to a role more designed for comic relief. According to the critics, he is the "debauched" (Anon, 2011), and "wild psychiatrist … the devil on Jung's back, pushing him towards following his instincts" (Calhoun, 2011) – in what may be regarded as a continuing expression of his having been "purged" from official history. In the film's coda even the year of his death is given incorrectly as "1919" (he died in 1920). It is, of course, foolish to expect historical accuracy from a Hollywood movie. It is a much graver error when the journal *New Associations*, published

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by no less than the British Psychoanalytic Council, publishes a review of Cronenberg's film (Diski, 2012), which repeatedly refers to Otto Rank instead of Otto Gross. What Rank and Gross have in common, apart from sharing the same first name, is that they were both cast out by the psychoanalytic establishment. It is almost as if, once "out there", who cares about any difference? In an added irony of history it is interesting to note that it was Otto Rank who was one of the first to delete Otto Gross from an official record: in Rank's report on the first International Psychoanalytic Congress in Salzburg 1908, he left out Gross's name from the list of those present (Rank, 1911). Apart from an autobiographical statement by Gross (1913a), we only have documented evidence of his presence at this congress from Ernest Jones (1974) and Wilhelm Stekel (1950), the latter yet another outcast. Worse, Jung later falsified another record by removing the credit he had originally given to Gross in his paper, "The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual" (Jung, 1909), in which he had initially noted that this was "based on an analysis carried out conjointly with Dr. *Otto Gross*" (ibid., para 695, 8n; original emphasis).

Several times during his life, Gross planned to publish a journal devoted to psychoanalysis and radical politics. One was to be called *Blätter gegen den Machtwillen* [*Journal against the Will to Power*]; another one he thought of editing together with Franz Kafka. In a 1912 letter to the Swiss revolutionary and physician Franz Brupbacher, he wrote about "the inestimable future of psychoanalysis as the very soul of tomorrow's revolutionary movement" (cited in Heuer, 2004, p. 160), and "of publishing a journal myself, something like *Organ für psychologische Probleme des Anarchismus* [*Journal for Psychological Problems of Anarchism*], as a kind of inner revolutionary preparation" (ibid., p. 159). In effect, Gross might be considered to be a founding father – or, by now, great grandfather – of *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, and yet, even in the pages of this journal, Freud's and Jung's "ban" continues to operate, for example, on Gross's significance and his name is omitted from Hargaden's (2012) review of Cronenberg's film. Already one year after Gross' death, the Austrian satirist Anton Kuh (1921) wrote about him as "a man known only to very few by name – apart from a handful of psychiatrists and secret policemen – and among those few, only to those who plucked his feathers to adorn their own posteriors" (pp. 16–17). Today, the latter part of this statement does not only apply to Gross but to Spielrein as well. We may understand Cronenberg's film as a contribution to correct this view, at least as far as Spielrein is concerned.

It is uncertain whether Spielrein and Gross ever met personally. In 1908 Spielrein is no longer an in-patient at the Burghölzli – that she was only between August 1904 and June 1905 — and in her relationship with Jung the analytic boundaries have shifted. The film shows her, correctly, not only as patient but also as Jung's assistant (with his word association experiments), as well as friend and lover. Certainly, there would have been times when both she and Gross were in the same building of the clinic, so an encounter is quite possible, but none has been recorded. What is documented, however, is that each mentions the other in their respective publications: Spielrein in 1912 (1994), and Gross two years later (1914). Both their papers have a common subject: destruction.

AMOUR FOU

> The past is fragile. Handle it as though it were a red-hot iron. (Goethe, cited in Melker, 2012, p. 83)

Amour fou is what we call a love relationship in which either partner directs such huge expectations and unquenchable desires onto the other that it can possibly only end in disappointment and

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disaster. Ostensibly, the film narrates how the therapeutic relationship between Jung and his patient Spielrein develops into just such an *amour fou*, a *folie à deux* – though, actually, as there are two further relationships of that kind, i.e. the one between Sigmund Freud and Jung, and that between Jung and Otto Gross, we may think about this as a *folie à quatre*. The film is about all these relationships.

Freud, Jung and Gross expect from each other a fulfilling and, moreover, a healing father–son relationship. Freud saw in Jung the heir to his throne, hoping that he would lead his science out of the "Jewish ghetto". The film refers to this in a rather subtle way: when Jung naively asks Freud what science has got to do with being Jewish or not, Freud replies that such a question is rather typical for a Protestant. That their relationship is much more than a professional one is shown in the way Freud looks at Jung as he awakens in his arms from a fainting fit – an incident (if not the look) described by Jung in his memoirs (1963, p. 180).

Freud wrote to Jung, "You are really the only one [of the psychoanalysts of the time] capable of making an original contribution; except perhaps for Otto Gross" (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 126). From a psychological perspective, Jung and Gross somehow have become brothers in arms when together they defend Freud's psychoanalysis at the International Psychiatric Congress 1907 in Amsterdam. Yet in the spring of the following year (1908), at the first International Psychoanalytic Congress in Salzburg, Freud rejects Gross because of the latter's revolutionary zeal: "We are doctors, and doctors we shall remain" (as Gross, 1913a, col. 507, reported it). Freud then referred Gross to Jung for analysis to heal his cocaine addiction. Cronenberg's film shows Gross's arrival at the Burghölzli. Subsequently, the very first documented mutual analysis takes place. Enthusiastically Jung writes to Freud:

> I have let everything drop and have spent all my available time, day and night, on Gross, pushing on with his analysis . . . Whenever I got stuck, he analysed me. In this way my own psychic health has benefited. (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 153)

Days later, Jung reported: "In Gross I discovered many aspects of my own nature, so that he often seemed like my twin brother." (ibid., p. 156) Subtly, the film refers to this mutual analysis, when Jung says, full of regret, "And your analysis was *nearly* complete!" Gross thanks him and replies, "The same can hardly be said about yours." Significantly, *after* Gross had broken off the analysis, Jung declared him "schizophrenic", a diagnosis that Wilhelm Stekel rejected when, five years later, he analysed Gross; and that Emanuel Hurwitz, who in the 1960s held Jung's post at the Burghölzli, and, drawing on the best possible knowledge of what, in the early 20th century, was generally referred to as schizophrenia, also refuted (Hurwitz, 2002). I have referred to Jung's "treatment" of Gross as an attempted psychological "fratricide" (Heuer, 2008a).

Spielrein and Jung fall in love with each other. As Jung still hesitates to live out his sexual desires, Gross, who believes that sexual transferences are best dissolved by having sex with the patient, encourages him. In her diary, Spielrein wrote: "Now [Jung] arrives, beaming with pleasure, and tells me with strong emotion about Gross, about the great insight he has just received [i.e. about polygamy], he no longer wants to suppress his feeling for me" (reported in Carotenuto, 1984a, p. 107). Jung confirmed Gross's influence on his abuse of his patient when he wrote to Freud, "During the whole business Gross's notions flitted about a bit too much in my head" (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 144). The German professor of psychoanalysis, Johannes Cremerius (1986), has commented that at that time Jung "is still completely the pupil of Otto Gross" (p. 20).

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Spielrein, though, wrote only of "tender poetry" that happened between her and Jung. Historians since have argued whether they actually had sexual intercourse or not, although from today's perspective that is rather irrelevant, as either way the known facts clearly amount to abuse; and, generally, differentiating between emotional and sexual abuse is no longer seen as relevant or appropriate. The film turns "tender poetry" into sado-masochistic spankings that are neither convincing nor documented anywhere, although the scene in which, on a walk together, Spielrein reacts strongly to Jung dusting, with his walking stick, her coat that has slipped to the ground, is mentioned in Jung's writings (1905/1953, para. 170). It may be worth noting that these sado-masochistic enactments were specifically created by Cronenberg. They are not in Hampton's original script (Hampton, 2002; also see Hampton & Samuels, 2012). While it is not particularly surprising that the press commentaries should focus on the scenes of actual physical sexual abuse (Hiscock, 2011; Muir, 2011; Venning, 2011), it is, by contrast, rather shocking that an analyst colleague, after seeing the film, voiced the opinion that Spielrein's ultimate recovery was due to the abusive acting out by her analyst Jung.

Such a statement, however, no more than echoes opinions already voiced by Carotenuto (1984b) when he defended Jung:

> In the situation in which Jung found himself, Sabina must have expressed a typical image of the anima, attracting and repelling, wondrous and diabolical, exciting and depressing. But Jung could not have known this. The only thing he could have been aware of was the "unstinting effort" he was offering this girl. (p. 161)

Jungian analyst Ilona Melker (2012) wrote that, at the screening of the film in New York, Cronenberg said that "it was clear from the way the film portrays Jung that he only obliged Spielrein's wish and was not a happy participant" (p. 84). Appropriately, Melker commented: "Such logic is often offered by those accused of sexual assault; it was "she who wanted it," "she asked for it." That Cronenberg should both perpetuate the rape myth and denigrate historical figures is unfortunate. It is, however, hard to understand why, a mere two pages later, Melker should have written: "During the romantic years Jung continues to play the caring father figure to Spielrein" (ibid., p. 86). Could she possibly be referring here to rape as a form of care? She quotes the psychoanalyst Zvi Lothane (1998), who rather euphemistically concluded that Jung and Spielrein shared "a loving relationship of mutual respect, friendship, and sympathy, a message from one soul mate to another, a manifestation of psychological and spiritual connectedness" (p. 201).

It is notable that Carotenuto as well as other commentators (e.g. Cremerius, 1986; Bair, 2004; Sherry, 2012) have usually referred to Spielrein by her first name only, whereas nobody ever seems to just speak of "Sigmund" or "Carl Gustav". Implicitly, this seems to be a continuation of the contempt with which Jung, in 1911, wrote to Freud, referring to Spielrein just as "*die Kleine*", the little one, who "was always very demanding with me" (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 470, translation modified). In a much more serious way, this continuing disrespect is apparent in the history of psychoanalysis – as well as reflected in Cronenberg's film – in the complete disregard for Spielrein's privacy: just as, on screen, we see Keira Knightley as Spielrein half-naked, whereas Viggo Mortensen (Freud) and Michael Fassbender (Jung) remain fully covered, confidentiality has been violated by the editors of the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* by publishing Jung's case notes about his treatment of Spielrein (Jung, 2001), revealing most intimate details. When asked, in an interview

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in 1959 about dreams Freud had told him, Jung replied, "Well, that is rather indiscreet to ask. You know I have – there is such a thing as a professional secret." When the interviewer responded with, "He's been dead these many years", Jung insisted, "Yes, but these regards last longer than life" (Jung, 1987, p. 387). Do we really need to know what excited Spielrein sexually, on which occasions and in which way and position she masturbated? These are intimate details we now know of her, and not of "Sigmund" or "Carl Gustav", because for Spielrein there is no Library of Congress, and no family to guard her privacy.

Carotenuto has empathized with the victim role of the perpetrator, a reversal of the actual facts that, sadly, is rather common in the context of abuse and the understanding or analysis of abuse. A year later, in 1909, Jung wrote to Freud: "I was the victim of the wiles of my patient", and, "Gross and Spielrein are bitter experiences. To none of my patients have I extended so much friendship and from none have I reaped so much sorrow" (Freud & Jung, 1974, pp. 228–229).

Bruno Bettelheim, himself the subject of accusations of patient abuse, in his commentary went a considerable step further when he stated with blunt cynicism (in what Jeffrey Masson, 1989, p. 219, calls "an outrageous passage"):

> In retrospect we ought to ask ourselves: what convincing evidence do we have that the same result would have been achieved if Jung had behaved toward her in the way we must expect a conscientious therapist to behave towards his patient? However questionable Jung's behaviour was from a moral point of view – however unorthodox, even disreputable, it may have been – somehow it met the prime obligation of the therapist toward his patient: to cure her. (Bettelheim, 1984, p. xxxviii)

Another, contemporary apologist for Jung's abuse is the Jungian historian of psychoanalysis Jay Sherry (2012), who echoes previous (mostly) male commentators by commiserating,

> Jung played with fire and got burned; he summed up what he had learned in his final words of the film: "Sometimes you have to do something unforgivable in order to go on living." This apocryphal credo captures his departure from conventional morality in his personal quest to go beyond good and evil . . . During this time Jung's libido was undergoing an intense period of activation due to his split with Freud and his emotional involvement with several women besides Sabina [sic!], namely Toni Wolf and Maria Moltzer, his research assistant. (p. 79)

That Spielrein may have achieved a certain degree of healing *in spite* of the re-abuse suffered, does not seem to enter the mind of the analysts mentioned. Historically correct, the film tells of "the complicity of men against the woman who has fallen for the seduction by one of them . . . The cynicism of this complicity is shattering in view of a patient who, severely disturbed, becomes their victim" (Cremerius, 1986, pp. 9–10).

In spite of his encouraging Jung's abuse of his patient, in his writings Otto Gross (1914) succinctly analysed the sado-masochistic acting out, (which the film shows as a lasting effect of early abuse), when he wrote of "the urge to rape and to be raped" (p. 529). In terms of what we know of Spielrein's pathology, it is quite possible that her sexuality was thus perverted into a sado-masochistic direction, but, obviously, that is no reason for her analyst to respond in the way Jung is shown to do in the film.

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There is, in this context, a further psychological aspect that is difficult to formulate because it might so easily be misunderstood. When, in my clinical work, a patient speaks so frequently about similar painful situations, which we may recognise almost as a kind of pattern in the sense of a repetition compulsion, it is important to try carefully to explore what the patient her/himself might contribute to create these painful situations. Certainly, in this, the aim is not to apportion blame – in fact, that needs to be avoided – but to recognize as best as possible self-responsibility as a necessary step towards healing. For example, if a patient who has been abused by her father as an adolescent flees home at a young age into a relationship in which she is, yet again, abused, it would be heartless to say that it was her own fault. For later healing and the achievement of agency, however, it may well be important to recognize in such a choice of partner the aspects of a repetition compulsion. For that reason we might easily imagine that Spielrein (un)consciously invited her analyst to abuse her. However, it is clear that Jung should have analysed such a desire rather than fulfil it in order to satisfy his own wishes. As far as Spielrein's healing/recovery was concerned, there was certainly a success in the sense that she was able to achieve an important career as a physician and analyst. At the same time, from a psychological perspective, we should be aware that her healing was limited in the sense that it did not enable her to break out of the vicious cycle of male violence that ultimately murdered her. We may ask therefore whether it is imaginable that Spielrein, without the additional abuse from her analyst, might have achieved a degree of healing that would have enabled her to overcome that vicious cycle of.

Relevant for us today is the question whether this behaviour of an analyst towards his patient was already as objectionable some 100 years ago as it is now. I believe that Jung's initial attempts to keep his affair with Spielrein from Freud, as well as the later efforts by both of them to prevent the scandal from becoming public, sufficiently answer this question. In addition, we have Jung's own words about "my Spielrein affair" (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 236). In June 1909 he wrote to Freud,

> I nevertheless deplore the sins I have committed … When the situation had become so tense that the continued perseveration of the relationship could be rounded out only by sexual acts, I defended myself in a manner that cannot be justified morally … my action was a piece of knavery. (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 236)

When one film critic wrote: "the storyline explores Jung's pioneering treatment of sexual dysfunction" (Brockes, 2012, p. 18), my concern is that this is what the public will take away: that in analysis sexual dysfunction as a consequence of early abuse is being treated with more abuse. Is it any wonder, then, that one response is: "Both Jung and Freud were lunatics – their methods were no more effective at helping ill individuals than expecting a fox guarding a henhouse to guarantee the well-being of the hens" (a reader's response, quoted in Venning, 2011).

I understand such righteous outrage as being linked to another reaction. In spite of Cronenberg's denial (Cronenberg & Smith, 2012), it is hard to believe that his intention was not to offend and to shock. Not without reason has he been called "the godfather of body horror" (Fletcher, Glasby, Graham, Leyland, & Russell, 2011, p. 112). Let us also remember in this context that "in our contemporary civilisation … millions of people love and pay money to watch humans kill and inflict pain on each other and call it "entertainment" (Tolle, 2005, pp. 152–153). Without much reflection, Cronenberg, almost in a kind of parallel process, is passing on to us the historical abuse between the protagonists of his film. Distancing himself from such justification and

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responses, Sherry (2012) has reported: "Several women I know described the film as soft-core pornography" (p. 79). When I hear a female colleague exclaim emphatically, "I just *love* this film!", I can only understand this as an indication of her being caught up in the same sado-masochistic complex as Jung, Spielrein, Freud and Gross. Does it not seem much more appropriate to react to the film the way my colleague Sally Mesner Lyons did:

> My response to the film was visceral. I'm not sure at what point this happened, but I had a shooting pain in my lower spine and sacrum and after that could not get comfortable in my seat for the rest of the movie. I came away in great discomfort, with terrible pain and stiffness in my neck and shoulders. (personal communication, 23 February, 2012)

A day later she added:

> I continue to be shocked by how messed up I feel by the film and although I think my pain surely expresses something of the abuse of Spielrein by Jung, I think I was also strongly affected by the feeling that both Jung and Spielrein had been abused by Cronenberg (personal communication, February 2012).

What the film does not show is that these emotional entanglements are also particularly passionate – as in "suffering" – because *all* the protagonists have been the victims of sexual abuse during their respective childhoods. The film only refers to this in Spielrein's case. But there is documentary evidence for that in the correspondence between Freud and Jung and in later psychiatric reports on Gross: Freud intimated that his father had sexually abused him (in a letter to Fließ, written 21 September 1897; Freud, 1986, p. 283); Jung spoke of a similar trauma suffered in adolescence from a male friend of the family (letter of 28 October 1907; Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 95); and Gross, as a child, was made to sleep in the parental bedroom, and witnessed for many years the sexual intercourse of his parents which he experienced as the "stabbing to death of chickens" (to Berze & Stelzer, 1999/2000, p. 24). The lifelong addictions of all three men – with Freud, first cocaine, then nicotine; with Jung, nicotine; and in Gross's case, cocaine and morphine – may well be linked to these unhealed traumas. More often than not addictions seem to originate in the desperate attempt to numb the unbearable pains of early traumas. Often, a further attempt to still those continuing pains is to pass the trauma on to others by inflicting similar trauma on them. We can see both of these in the story the film tells. What also belongs in this context is the fact that, throughout their lives, all three men were in double or multiple marriages, and there is an aspect to this which can be understood as an external expression of inner splittings. Cremerius (1986), for example, wrote about Jung's "addictive dependence on ever new love-affairs" (p. 14), and the same applied to Gross. Certainly, these considerations are not intended to excuse abusive behaviour, but they may add to our understanding of such patterns and thus contribute towards their healing.

I remember that, when, in the course of my analytic training, I gently dared to question Jung's marital arrangement; the response I received from the elder Jungian – who had just reminisced, "As trainees, we always knew when Jung was with Toni, because his car was parked in front of the house she lived in" – was, "You don't understand. *He* lived on a completely *different* level."

It may just be worth noting that none of these men had as long an analysis as Spielrein had.

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REVOLUTIONIZING PSYCHOANALYSIS

> The psychology of the unconscious is the philosophy of the revolution. (Gross, 1913a, col. 384)

How could the traumatic events that the film narrates constitute the possibly most pivotal turning point in the creation of psychoanalysis? Decisive changes in theory and clinical practice have their origins here – and they can clearly be traced to impulses that originated from Spielrein and Gross.

Of continuing relevance is the change from the traditional doctor–patient relationship, adopted from the medical model, including its corresponding authority-differential, the so-called "one person psychology" (Rickman, 1951), since initially the focus of the physician, as Freud continued to call the analyst, is one-sidedly on the patient, to a "two person psychology" in which the psyche of the analyst is also being taken into account. Until Jung's analysis of Spielrein, only "transference" had been considered, i.e. feelings transferred into the analysis from other relationships and situations, and even this term was still comparatively new. Freud has first used it in 1905, when he published a case history of the analysis of a female patient, Dora, that he had found taxing (Freud, 1955). It is only in the context of the dramatic events that the film portrays that the feelings of the analyst, too, are worked with and "countertransference" was discovered. The very first time Freud used this term was in his letter to Jung, dated 7 June 1909 (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 145). A year later, Freud (1957b) wrote:

> We have become aware of the "counter-transference" which arises in him [the analyst] as a result of the patient's influence on his unconscious feelings, and we are almost inclined to insist that he shall recognize this counter-transference in himself and overcome it … [W]e have noticed that no psycho-analyst goes further than his own complexes and internal resistances permit. (pp. 144–145)

Jung later formulated that: "For two personalities to meet is like mixing two different chemical substances: if there is any combination at all, both are transformed" (Jung, 1966, §163) Parallel to the development of the natural sciences during the previous century, here, too, there is no longer a place for an uninvolved, "objective" observer. That has reverberations into the present where clinicians speak of the "intersubjective turning point" (Altmeyer & Thomä, 2010). Spielrein's role in this development is a rather more passive one; it is only when Freud gathered from his correspondence with Jung how powerfully an analyst too can become emotionally involved in the course of the therapeutic relationship, or what strong feelings he brings into it right from the start, that for the first time he spoke of "countertransference" (Freud 1910/1957).

Otto Gross, though, during his analysis with Jung boldly went a considerable step further in using the anarchist principle of mutuality in equality by changing roles with Jung, just as he had previously done this with friends and patients – a practice which marks the birth of intersubjectivity (Heuer, 2011). This, and the linking of psychoanalysis with revolutionary politics – "The psychology of the unconscious is the philosophy of the revolution", he later wrote (Gross, 1913a, col. 384) – may well be his most important contributions to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis.

Sabina Spielrein published more than 30 papers in German, Russian and French. "Some historians of Jung's development have seen her as the woman who revealed the function of the anima to him" (Appignanesi & Forrester, 1992, p. 205) Among her publications there

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is a longer text from 1912 that is seen as the basis of Freud's theory of the death instinct that he formulated eight years later: "Destruction as the cause of coming into being" (Spielrein, 1912/1994). We might well speculate about a link between Spielrein's sado-masochism on the one hand and her elevating destruction to a primary drive. Although this contribution of hers to the development of the death drive, never sufficiently acknowledged by Freud, is generally, if at all, seen as her most important one, it should be noted that this theory is losing more and more of its former importance. Already in 1932 Wilhelm Reich had "presented a clinical refutation of the death instinct theory by describing for the first time in great detail the dynamics and energetics of the masochistic character" (Boadella, 1973, p. 51). Reich defined masochism as a secondary drive, a response to a diversion of primary libido (Reich, 1932). Early last year the German psychoanalyst neurobiologist Joachim Bauer (2011) stated: "Current neurobiology cannot support the concept of a primarily bloodthirsty human, driven by an aggressive drive" (p. 27), a point with which the psychologist Steven Pinker (2011) agreed:

> Many people implicitly believe in the Hydraulic Theory of Violence: that humans harbour an inner drive toward aggression (a death instinct or thirst for blood), which builds up inside us and must periodically be discharged. Nothing could be further from a contemporary scientific understanding of the psychology of violence. (p. xxv)

If it were only Spielrein's contribution to the genesis of Freud's theory of the death drive, Jung's concept of the anima, as well as the fact that she was Piaget's training analyst – three facts that are most commonly mentioned in relation to her work – she would indeed deserve hardly more than a footnote in the history of psychoanalysis. There is much more. She was an important founder of the analysis of children; hardly anybody in her time, with the possible exception of Gross in certain of his writings, is as able as she to feel herself into the psyche of the child. There is also – and Cronenberg's film expresses this well – the exemplary power of her personality in her life and work that gives her an importance for both present and future.

What do I mean by this? Not a few of the psycho-historians who have engaged with Spielrein's life and work have succumbed to the temptation of seeing her one-sidedly as victim and martyr of individual and collective male violence. This is more than understandable, considering that her fate was so powerfully damaged and ultimately destroyed by it. I am thinking here first of the physical and sexual abuse by her father, then her analyst, her life in Stalinist Russia, and ultimately her murder – together with her two daughters – at the hands of German soldiers. In this context, to speak of Spielrein "dying an untimely death", as Hargaden (2012, p, 169) did in her review, is a rather chilling euphemism.

Cronenberg's film is about Spielrein's engaging with psychoanalysis:

> The Jung–Spielrein–Freud triangle seems to lend itself to that view of the early history of psychoanalysis – [and we have seen that this is not over yet!] – as a set of transactions between men, between leaders and followers, fathers and sons, members of the brother band or primal horde, in which women figure as units of exchange, goods for barter and sacrifice. (Appignanesi & Forrester, 1992, p. 204)

However, the film's theme is also – and I would say centrally – about Spielrein's power and strength – a strength that not only finds its expression in her successfully establishing a career in a profession that was so strongly male-dominated, but especially in her power to have sufficiently freed herself from her emotional and theoretical dependence on both Jung and

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Freud that she was able to mediate between the two at a time when they had long become irreconcilable enemies. Spielrein was also able to be true to her intention of lovingly separating from Jung:

> After 1910 she meets Jung again and is in correspondence with him until 1919; and she tries to reconcile the two men living in destructive enmity. Freud writes to Sabina [sic!] on 12 June, 1914, "*if you stay with us . . . then you will be able to recognise the enemy on the other side*." Sabina's response to Freud is, "*I love J. in spite all of his errors and I would like to guide him back to our side. Neither you, Herr Professor, nor he seem to know that the two of you belong together infinitely more closely than one might believe. But, certainly, this pious wish does not constitute a betrayal of our association!*" (Cremerius, 1986, p. 17)

Sadly, today, these sentences have lost nothing of their relevance. Still, some 100 years later, the enmity between Freud and Jung is being continued by generations of analysts, although, it seems, more from the Freudian than the Jungian side: while there are hardly any Jungians who, in their writings, do not quote Freud and Freudian authors, there continue to be hardly any Freudians who quote Jung or Jungians.

While Gross (1919) *wrote* that "the highest goal of any revolution is to replace the will to power by the will to relating", Spielrein seems to have been much more able to *live* this. Her way of linking psychoanalysis and revolutionary politics included returning to post-revolutionary Russia in order to work there on establishing psychoanalysis – as long as Stalin's politics would allow that, and until her brothers are murdered during his "purges".

When Gross (1913b) stated that "The coming revolution is a revolution for matriarchy" (col. 387), we may understand this today as a call for what, traditionally, has been linked with a "feminine principle": the capacity to relate and love, empathy, forgiveness, etc. Without being able to live much of that, Gross was able to formulate this – and that continues to make him relevant for us today. I see Spielrein's continuing importance in the way she seems to have been able to have *lived* this in an exemplary way.

Having spoken, above, of the demise of the "objective observer", I have a very subjective phantasy: if I was in a position to choose between Freud, Jung, Gross and Spielrein, to whom to open my heart and soul in an analysis, I would, without hesitation, choose Spielrein, since we heal by what we are, not by what we say.

THE FILM: AUTHENTICITY, LOCATION AND LANGUAGE

> The logic of the cinema is the logic of the dream. (Cronenberg in Cronenberg & Höbel, 2011, p. 136)

To a critic, surprised about Cronenberg's choice of subject, the director answered: "I started out as a director some 40 years ago with the film *Transfer*, which tells the story of an analyst and his patient. All my life I have been interested in psychology and psychoanalysis" (quoted in Cronenberg & Suchsland, 2011). In spite of a number of gratuitous voyeuristic aspects in her presentation, due to her presence as an actor, Keira Knightley as Sabina Spielrein dominates the film. Vincent Cassel, too, is convincing in his supporting role as Otto Gross. Yet in spite of considerable praise from the critics, and even a 2012 Golden Globe nomination for Viggo Mortensen as Freud, both he as well as Michael Fassbender as Jung pale by comparison and remain lifeless: they never seem to truly inhabit their roles to the extent the other two do.

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The writer Will Self commented on Fassbender's "Jung": "So he's playing the founding father of psychoanalysis and he clearly doesn't know anything about it . . . just 'mumble mumble'" (quoted in Armstrong, 2012, p. 15). Jung's wife Emma, too, played by Sarah Gadon, is two-dimensional and stereotypic. Contrary to the complaint by a Zürich critic, Simone Meier (2011) that the film's settings are not the actual, original ones near Lake Zürich – "The Burghölzli is on Lake Constance", Meier criticised – the exterior as well as interior settings, the clinic, Freud's consulting room, etc., all convey authenticity. However, the locations mentioned are not the only ones: in its final part the film shows Freud's, Jung's and Ferenczi's journey to America in 1909. Aboard ship Jung tells Freud a dream of his. When he subsequently asks Freud, in turn, to tell him what he has dreamt, Freud replies by saying that he could not possibly do that – as he would lose his authority. For Jung, as he wrote in his memoirs (1963), this is the beginning of the end of his friendship with Freud – and it makes sense to me to assume that, in this, Jung's then recent experience of the mutual openness between him and Gross played a significant role.

A rather important aspect of the film, noticeable because of its inconsistency, puzzles me, and that is the language, or, rather, its pronunciation. One component of Knightley's most convincing portrayal of Spielrein is the Russian accent with which she speaks, while part of Mortenson's and Fassbender's paling by comparison is their accent-free speech. Recordings of both Freud and Jung speaking English with their respective accents do exist. If – almost at random – I think of Edward Zwick's 2008 film *Defiance*, about armed Jewish resistance in Russia against the invading Nazi army during WWII, in which part of the effect of an immediate "authenticity" the film conveys comes from the fact that everybody in the film speaks with a supposedly Russian accent. I remember the dramatization of the Jung–White Letters at the International Association for Analytical Psychology Congress in Montreal 2010, at which in an almost uncanny way Jung "was present" because the analyst who played his role, Paul Brutsche, irrespective of not looking particularly like Jung, spoke with a Swiss accent, in particular with a Basle accent, just as Jung had. I am surprised that Cronenberg only used this dramatic tool for Spielrein's and not for any of the male protagonists' roles; it does seem to make Spielrein even more of an outsider.

LITERATURE: "A MOST DANGEROUS METHOD" (Kerr, 1993)

The film's title is taken from the book by the American psycho-historian John Kerr, the attribute "most" having got lost in transition. In 1993, Kerr wrote the authoritative account of the events told by the film. In writing the screenplay for the film, Christopher Hampton considerably changed – and bettered – his play *The Talking Cure* (Hampton, 2002). When this premiered in London in 2002, I saw it more as a superficial collage of sensationalist bits and pieces, mostly taken from the Freud/Jung correspondence, and presented, albeit with powerful performances by Jodhi May as Spielrein and Ralph Fiennes as Jung, with some rather primitive stage tricks. In Cronenberg's film these mistakes are mostly corrected.

The film *A Dangerous Method* is but the latest in a long series of literary and dramatic engagements, both on stage and screen, with that key situation of 1908 in the early history of psychoanalysis. This series seems to have started before Spielrein and Gross were rediscovered and have become known to a wider public with D. M. Thomas's, 1981 novel

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The White Hotel, the story of an early psychoanalytic patient who later gets murdered by German soldiers during the Shoah in Russia. Thomas claimed not to have been aware of Spielrein's story and wrote in a review of the English language edition of Carotenuto's (1984a) book:

> Jung might also have been intrigued, as I was, by the many coincidences which link Sabina Spielrein's life with that of the fictional patient Lisa Erdman in my novel *The White Hotel*, though the details of her life were unknown to me when I wrote the novel. (Thomas, 1982, p. 3)

In chronological order further literay and dramtic engagements are:

- In 1989 – a play by the Swiss writer Linnard Bardill about Gross's and Jung's relationship.
- In 1996 – Willy Holtzman's play *Sabina* was premiered in New York.
- In 1998 – a play with the same title by Snoo Wilson was premiered in London. (Hampton, too, has reported that he also wrote a play with, yet again, the same title, although this was never staged; Grady, 2011).
- In 2002 – the year Hampton's play, *The Talking Cure* was premiered, the story of Jung and Spielrein was also the subject of two films, first in Italy, *Prendimi l'anima* [*The Soul Keeper*], directed by Roberto Faenza, then in Denmark, *Ich hiess Sabina Spielrein* [My name was Sabina Spielrein] (directed by Elizabeth Martón).
- In 2005 – John Carter's play, *Where Three Roads Meet*, which, in my eyes, is by far the best dramatization (see Heuer, 2008b), was premiered in New York.
- In 2006 – German writer Bärbel Reetz published her novel *Die Russische Patientin* [The Russian Patient], which is a subtle mixing of an autobiographical account and historical research.
- In 2010 – Canadian writer Elizabeth Clark-Stern's play *Out of the Shadows: A Story of Toni Wolff and Emma Jung* was premiered, a play which portrays with great empathy the suffering caused by Jung to the women he later involved in his *marriage à trois*. (Wolff is briefly mentioned at the very end of Cronenberg's film. Also an erstwhile patient, she is to take Spielrein's place as Jung's second wife for many decades to come.)

CONCLUSION: HEALING?

"Jung's abuse", supported by Freud and Gross, "stands as a wound to us all" (Rutter, 1989, p. 45) – so wrote American analyst Peter Rutter, then chair of the Ethics Committee of the San Francisco Jung Institute. Now with his film has David Cronenberg succeeded as a "soul doctor" in contributing to healing the wounds of our past, as, according to his statement quoted earlier, he set out to do? Insofar as he highlights a Shadow aspect of our collective past, I believe so. Yet, for the film to have a healing function, Cronenberg lacks the necessary analytic distance from his subject – abuse. Certainly, as in every analysis, we need to be careful, as it is indeed a (most) dangerous method. Just like the unconscious, the past is "another country", forever unknowable and ultimately closed. Especially with the advantages of those born later, the past can all too easily become a (movie) screen onto which we can project without limitations. But only in fairytales – and

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Hollywood movies – good and bad are differentiated in a clear-cut way: only whosoever among us is without guilt may cast the first stone.

In 1908, Freud, Jung, Gross and Spielrein were just about in the process of learning much of what today we know. Thus we should not forget that Freud is the first to have the idea, among so many others, that there might be a deeper meaning in the rantings of "hysterical women"; that it is Jung who discovers, again, among many other things, that the unconscious might not just be a midden of personal and collective history, but a source of our creativity and *joie de vivre*; that Gross, yet again among many other things, is the first to speak of the personal being the political, and who in both areas calls for an approach which will be later formulated as "Make Love, Not War!"; and that Spielrein, who was infinitely more than just "muse" to these great men, contributes to the initiation of child analysis and has probably a greater strength to transform the men's and her own revolutionary ideas from theory into life actually lived than all three of them. In terms of the above-mentioned "feminine principle", might she just also have been a bit gentler with herself?

At the end of his foreword to Carotenuto's book, the late German professor of psychoanalysis Johannes Cremerius (1986) asked rhetorically, "Does our gain justify the sacrifices?" – to which he immediately replied (quoting C. von Weizsäcker): "No! 'If realisations stop our love, we have to give up the realisation'" (p. 28). In the final analysis it is this dilemma that Cronenberg confronts us with; the events portrayed in his film have changed our world indeed by changing the way we see and understand ourselves and each other. Recently, the writer A. S. Byatt (2009) wrote of the encounter between Jung and Gross: "They were angels wrestling, you must understand" (p. 505). Might it possibly be the most healing for everybody involved in this drama, and not just Freud, Jung, Gross and Spielrein, but we, too, to ultimately consider a similar perspective?

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Dr Gottfried M. Heuer is a Jungian Training psychoanalyst and supervisor with the Association of Jungian Analysts, London, and a neo-Reichian body psychotherapist, in clinical practice for 40 years in West London; an independent scholar with over 65 published papers on the links between analysis, radical politics, body psychotherapy and spirituality, as well as on the history of analytic ideas published in the *Journal of Biodynamic Psychology*, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, the *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, the *International Journal of Jungian Studies*, *Harvest*, *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, *Theory, Culture and Society*, *Spring*, et al. Some of his work has also been published in German, French, Finnish, Portuguese, and Serbo-Croat; and he has translated books by Murray Bookchin, Jack London, and Andrew Samuels. His own books include *A Translucent Turtle Ascends to the Star: Hypnosis and Bodypsychotherapy* (Paradise Now!, 1984); nine congress and symposia proceedings for the *International Otto Gross Society* (http://www.ottogross.org/) which he co-founded; *Sacral Revolutions: Reflecting on the Work of Andrew Samuels. Cutting Edges in Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis* (Routledge, 2010); and *Sexual Revolutions: Psychoanalysis, History and the Father* (Routledge, 2011). He is also a graphic artist, sculptor (with one-man and group shows in England and abroad), and a published photographer and poet.

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