Volume *20*, No. 4, 2022 ISSN: 1556-9195

Psychotherapy and Politics International

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PSYCHOTHERAPY AND POLITICS INTERNATIONAL

AIMS AND SCOPE

Psychotherapy and Politics International explores the psychological implications and consequences of the political, and the political implications of the psyche, both in theory and in practice. The premise of this journal is that psychotherapy is a social and political activity that asks us to examine the processes of self-deception that perpetuate individual unhappiness, as well as social structures that are inequitable and oppressive. Historically, political concepts and values, and their effects, have not been central to the therapeutic process, although that has changed. The journal welcomes articles from all modalities or schools of psychotherapy internationally and from across the political spectrum.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–4
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.02

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

EDITORIAL

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INTRODUCTION

After a busy year of transition for the journal—see our first editorial of the year published in June (Tudor et al., 2022)—we are delighted to have overseen the publication of a full volume of four issues. Earlier this year, as we were establishing ourselves as a group of editors, and given the invasion of Ukraine on 24th February, we decided that we wanted to propose a special issue of the journal on "War, Trauma, and Refugees". What you see in this issue is the result of that call for papers and, as ever, we are grateful to colleagues who have answered the call. The result is an issue which offers accounts of the impact of war, not only in Ukraine, but also that on women. The issue reflects all three topics of war, trauma, and refugees based on different experiences and viewpoints, and comprises six peer-reviewed articles, and two Notes From the Front Line, as well as some images.

THIS ISSUE

In the first article in this issue, Florentina Andreescu compares and contrasts the narratives about the war in Ukraine of those in Russia with those in Ukraine. The surreal representation of the Ukrainian war in Russian media is explored in light of conspiracy theories, and the manipulation of the nation via covering up the terror of human experience and focusing only on national victory. The line between reality and fantasy is also taken up with reference to Volodymyr Zelensky's previous career as an actor, and the particular irony that, having played out the current scenario in a television sitcom (situation comedy), now, as the elected president of Ukraine, he and his country are fighting Russia in reality. In considering how the

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surreal is privileged over reality, Andreescu also raises an interesting point about collective schizophrenia.

The reality of war can disappear not only behind the media spectacle like in Ukraine, but also behind the psychologisation of the traumatic experience of war, as Artemis Christinaki shows in an article written on the basis of her experience in a refugee camp in Greece. This experience allows Christinaki to become familiar with the way in which psychology both copes with the 'trauma' of war and assists in 'aid' programs for refugees from Syria and other regions in conflict. Using critical psychology and postcolonial theory, the author critically analyses the political background of aid and its effects on the formation of the subjectivity of the foreigner in the European fortress. Her article will surely be useful to better understand the politics of psychology in 'refugee crises' such as the one resulting from the war in Ukraine.

The third submission, a 'Note From the Front Line', also focuses on the war in Ukraine, this time from the point of view of an educator and a student on an online clinical psychology training course. Although based at the University of Warsaw in Poland, the online course comprises international students in rural, urban, and suburban areas across Colombia, Poland, Norway and unceded Sápmi lands, Turkey, and elsewhere. Informed by a Freirean approach to education, the course focuses on psychotherapy with marginalised populations. The article discusses how the course was transformed by the invasion of Ukraine, not least as the students based in Poland were called upon to host and/or provide support for forcibly displaced people from Ukraine. This is a powerful and challenging article which helps us think critically (not least about the term 'refugee') and discusses the implications for anti-oppressive work both in practice and in educational contexts.

In response to the protests in Iran over the death of a 22-year-old girl, Mahsa Amini, killed by the morality police for not wearing the 'proper hijab', Mehr Afarin Kohan offers a short article which describes the process leading to this powerful women-led movement in Iran. The importance of this resistance is positioned as a key moment in history: one that reflects the historical 'gender apartheid' of the region and the international political implications that it captures. The article discusses the politics of women's bodies and the process of reclaiming that in the context of a patriarchal dictatorship. This is followed by a short 'Note From the Front Line' by Fari Rasskeh, which is a personal powerful address sharing the impact of the uprising on herself as a woman and psychotherapist living in England.

The symbolism of women's bodies as an entity to oppress, possess, claim, and traumatise is part of what Valerie Sinason discusses in her account from another front line, one of working with women who are the victims of rape during war. She offers a harrowing illustration that portrays the experience of terrible brutality as well as the first steps towards recovery. The case is drawn from a region in armed conflict and mirrors some of what has happened in Ukraine, where women have reported rape and the rape and sexual abuse of their children.

Two final articles in this issue take a more theoretical view of these subjects. The first is an excellent article—we (Karen and Keith) may say—by David on the subject of Freud's ideas about war. David firstly provides some historical context to the two papers Freud wrote on the subject of war, and then elaborates Freud's themes of disillusionment and suspicion, as well as his denunciation of the primitivism and hypocrisy of humanity, and his views on hope. In the second, drawing on Charles Darwin, Carl Gustav Jung, and other authors, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone reflects on the biological roots of power and its violent human manifestations in history and in the world today. The aggressive, competitive, oppressive, self-addictive, and deceptive tendencies of leaders such as Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, and Benjamin Netanyahu, are interpreted as expressions of alpha males and associated with the Jungian archetypal figure of Wotan.

These articles are followed by a poem and a photograph supplied by Gottfried Heuer, one of the members of the editorial board. As ever, we are grateful to Gottfried for supplying art, including photographs, and poetry to the journal and for curating this as a Section; and encourage readers of the journal to submit such items to this Section.

Finally, we end with some parting words from Keith, who has led *PPI* for 11 years, as editor from 2011 to 2021 and as co-editor from 2021 to 2022. Keith's words offer an overview of the last decade of the history of *PPI* and allow us to appreciate what two of us, David and Karen, consider Keith's impeccable, invaluable, and unsurpassable work. This work has resulted in important achievements such as the production of 11 volumes comprising 34 issues, including the co-edition of five special issues, and the inclusion of the journal in the prestigious Scopus database. Keith is a vital writer and activist and has established the journal as a truly international endeavour, building on the pioneering work of Nick Totton and Andrew Samuels before him. We are grateful for the platform this has given us as psychotherapists to have a political voice and to establish context, culture, and social and political influences firmly in the centre of the work that we do. You will be sorely missed, Keith, but the doors you have opened for many people like us matter a great deal and so you will not be forgotten.

LOOKING FORWARD

After working with Keith for the last year, we (Karen and David) are facing our first year as co-editors with some anxiety but comforted by the wonderful support of Angie Strachan as editorial assistant and the accompaniment of the editorial team, including Keith from next year as consulting editor. We have four issues planned for Volume *21* in 2023: one generic issue and three special issues (one a tribute to Keith's work, one on gender, and one on African psychology). Funding for the journal will continue to be generously secured by The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN).

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–22
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.03

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

War in a Society of Spectators: Ukraine 2022

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ABSTRACT

Russian society's perception of the invasion of Ukraine is strikingly incompatible with the actual events. This article reflects on the surreal representation of Ukrainian war in Russian media and its powerful grip on a large part of the nation. Socialised in a universe of propaganda and conspiracy theories, the Russian citizenry appears simultaneously cynical and gullible, and above all highly receptive to Kremlin's manipulations. Succumbing to this conspiratorial universe of meaning alters one's perception of the world. Thus, on the one hand, the feeling of reality is diminished, to the extent that the Ukrainian people's war suffering is rendered merely a performance by crisis actors, while the extensive destruction of Ukrainian cities is seen as staged film sets. On the other hand, the feeling of reality is heightened and charged with mysterious signification, generating a sense of a crystal-clear sight into the nature of politics and society. To understand the human experiential stance in this surreal world of virtual representation, the article engages with psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist's (2019, 2021) and clinical psychologist Louis Sass' (2017) exploration of schizophrenia in modern society.

KEYWORDS: Ukrainian war; Russian propaganda; conspiracy theories; schizophrenia; mediated reality; Vladimir Putin

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INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine shocked the global community with a sudden outpour of raw violence and destruction. Particularly unsettling is the fact that the deaths and suffering witnessed are not only unmotivated but are also inflicted on peaceful civilians. The defacement of everyday life is seen across Ukrainian towns and cities: lifeless bodies of civilians scattered on streets, children injured or killed by shelling, bombarded maternities and hospitals, mass graves, and numerous apartment buildings devastated. The torment of suffering, according to Emmanuel Levinas, is most unbearable when it is not given a meaning, when one realises that it is absolutely 'for nothing' (Levinas, 1988, pp. 157–158). Not only is this war absurd and the acute violence unexplained but, even more disturbing, it is unacknowledged, as it is mostly absent from Russians' awareness. What stands out about this war is the surreal way in which the invasion is represented in Russian media. Almost completely ignoring the enacted horrors, Russian media portrays the invading Russian army as welcomed by Ukrainians and praised for saving the country from the oppression of neo-Nazis and drug addicts. This portrayal contrasts sharply with the images and information available throughout the rest of the world. The contrast suggests an uncanny alternate reality. For instance, an internet search for the town of Bucha on Google returns images of destruction, death, and agony, while on Yandex (the search engine used by Russians) returns images of an unmarred happy town (Gaidau, 2022). In this context, the article meditates on the conditions of possibility for such a sharp disconnect to take place. It further engages with psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist's (2019, 2021) and clinical psychologist Louis Sass' (2017) exploration of schizophrenia in modern society, to reflect on the social consequences of this ontological disorientation taking place at such a large scale.

Historian Yuval Noah Harari highlights human language's unique ability to conceive and communicate information about things that simply do not exist. As far as we know, solely humans feel enticed to think and talk about an entire array of things which they have never actually encountered or experienced (Harari, 2014). Fiction, often disregarded in social sciences as trivial, rests at the core of society, enabling us to collectively imagine dimensions of the world that do not (yet) exist. For instance, we weave common myths about nations and states, and through them come together and cooperate as complex imagined communities (Harari, 2014). While fantasy can unleash creativity, it also holds a dark side. As discussed later in this article, it can lure subjects into accepting ideological oppression as a form of liberation and even as revolutionary behaviour.

Currently, humanity has reached a stage where a significant part of our social, economic, political, and cultural lives take place in virtual space, an ontological register where the information about concrete aspects of the world often blends with fantasy. Accessing both 'reality' and fantasy through screens and social media unavoidably weakens our ability to discern the separation between the two. For those of us not living in Ukraine, the war enters our awareness often through social media as an amalgam of facts, deep-fake, parody, and

conspiracies. In this evolving social context, humans' capability of joining together in collective dreams, could also become its Achilles' heel. That is the case, because not being able to distinguish between fantasy and reality or between truth and fiction, holds the potential to generate both disorientation and fragmentation of society. For example, these occurred when entire communities refused to accept that the COVID-19 pandemic was a real event; that Joe Biden won the US presidential election; and, most recently, that a devastating war in Ukraine is taking place. Old-fashioned propaganda mutates into insidious forms, especially in the hands of modern-day dictators like Vladimir Putin, who claims the absolute right in pronouncing, on behalf of the entire nation, fundamental ontological facts. For example, Putin deems artificial the state of Ukraine and Ukrainian identity while idolising the authenticity of the Russian state and identity. In addition, he referred to the war suffering of Ukrainian people in the town of Bucha as 'fake', dismissing their pain as staged and hence not worthy of care nor of compassion.

MYTHICAL LEADERS IN A MODERN WORLD

The difficulty distinguishing between what is real and fake is an element of uttermost importance in the Ukrainian war, requiring careful analysis. This situation is to a large extent associated with the unprecedented expansion of social media in our lives, infiltrating even the ethos and the purpose of the state (Lynch, 2017). It further impacts the public sphere, the nature of politics, as well as the relationship between citizens and the state, metamorphosing the role of citizen into that of spectator (Streeck, 2016). As the government and the democratic political system give way to the logic and values associated with the entertainment industry, active political engagement morphs into the passive stance of an observer, seeking within the political spectacle both amusement and existential validation. Politics, media, and entertainment are merging into a new powerful, mesmerising, and utterly confusing world.

This merger stands out in the case of Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Zelensky who, prior to his presidency, had an ample career as a comedian and an actor. Remarkably, he played the role of a high school history teacher, in the popular TV sitcom *The Servant of the People*, whose impulsive rant about corruption went viral. Consequently, he ended up elected as Ukraine's president on the show. The blend between fantasy and reality is uncanny in this case, as Zelensky did run for presidency in real life and won the elections with an overwhelming majority. Ukrainians felt connected to the well-known comedian and to his campaign, that to a large extent was informed by his TV sitcom taking issue with the corrupt Ukrainian elites. As the newly elected president, Zelensky proceeded to form his cabinet by appointing for key government positions his fellow actors and comedians (Roman et al., 2021). Hence, one could argue, fantasy bleeds into and moulds reality. Reinforcing the ease with which our minds transition from cinema, as the register of fantasy, to reality and from

reality back to fantasy, is illustrated by the attitude of Zelensky's newly acquired North American fans. With the war still ravaging Ukraine, they are proposing that a new movie be made about the Russian invasion, in which the American actor Jeremy Renner would play the role of president Zelensky, spotlighting the physical resemblance of the two men (Court, 2022). What stands out about this proposal is the fact that the real Ukrainian war and the cinematic war are both understood as holding a special entertainment potential, inevitably raising serious ethical concerns.

In Russia, crafting Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's persona also involved heavily both media and fantasy. Since the time of his appointment as prime minister, Putin has used his experience as a KGB officer to cultivate the image of a shrewd macho spy. Following the war in Chechnya and a massive TV makeover, recasting him as a strong military leader, Putin managed to win the presidential election and establish his signature style of leadership. Integral to his leadership is a pervasive and carefully engineered media presence. In fact, one of his first actions after becoming president was to put Russian television under his direct control, arresting or forcing into exile the existing media moguls (Pomerantsev, 2015). Putin transformed television into one of his most lethal and effective tools of power (Ostrovsky, 2017), as Kremlin succeeded to run both television and politics akin to one vast scripted reality show (Pomerantsev 2015). In addition, taking advantage of technological innovations, it has used 'troll farms' and bots to weaponise the increasingly popular virtual space. Adrian Chen (2015) investigated for *The New York Times* the Internet Research Agency located in St. Petersburg, an agency that employed hundreds of Russians to post pro-Kremlin propaganda online under fake identities, to create the illusion of a massive army of supporters. Namely, Chen (2015) writes about the elaborate and entirely fictitious news about a powerful explosion, claimed by ISIS, at a chemical plant Columbian Chemicals in Centerville, Louisiana and an outbreak of Ebola in Atlanta. In this context, Konstantin Kaminskij notices that the Russian information warfare transitioned from the old-fashioned Soviet propaganda to a high-quality form of entertainment that successfully hails the imagination and desire of many Russians and holds together the virtual Russian world (Kaminskij, 2022).

A REPRESENTED WORLD

As the attention of our contemporary society is mainly directed towards representations, at the expense of the world itself, the representation becomes privileged as most valuable and most real (Levin, 1988). Namely, we are witnessing the development of a culture of the image, which, with its limited ontological dimensions, takes priority over the complexity and unpredictability of our lifeworld. The transfer of social, political, and personal dimensions of our lives onto the plane of social media, compels us to think of ourselves and our existence at the level of the imaginary ontological plane. It also gives the impression that our lives are infinitely more manageable. Seated in front of our computers, we acquire an exhilarating feel

of not only space and time transcendence but also of omniscience and omnipotence. The sense of control, that one has at one's fingertips in the virtual world, is simply not possible in the three-dimensional existence. For instance, we access news from all corners of the world, retrieve instantly information on any topic of interest, friend and unfriend people with the click of a button, shop a vast array of products, access entertainment, or search for romance. The gained sense of agency and immediacy lures us into exchanging the depth and complexity of the embodied human existence for the two-dimensional plane of the visual register. However, the sense of agency gained is to a large extent illusory. Often, we confuse the passive consumption of fabricated information and our utter compliance with conspiratorial noxious logic, not only with agency but also with revolutionary behaviour. In addition, weakening our immersion within a primordial embodied flow of life predisposes the human mind to an oscillation between an exhilarating sense of absolute agentic capacity to an intense form of nihilistic despair, when both the self and the world suddenly appear devitalised, artificial, and empty. This oscillation is specific to schizophrenia, a condition that Iain McGilchrist (2019, 2021) and Louis Sass (2017) see as both an important and a worrisome characteristic of modern society.

SCHIZOPHRENIA IN MODERN SOCIETY

With the increased transfer of existence onto the realm of representation, human experiential stance is significantly altered. To understand this alteration, I engage with the work of psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist's (2019, 2021) and clinical psychologist Louis Sass' (2017) discussion of schizophrenia as impacting not only singular individuals but also the societal level. McGilchrist distinguishes between the left and right hemispheres of our brains' mode of engaging with the world. He argues that for us human beings, there are two fundamentally opposed realities (modes of experience), and that each one of them is of ultimate importance in bringing about the human social reality. The differences between the two are rooted in our bihemispheric brain structure (McGilchrist, 2019). The right hemisphere perceives individual entities as belonging to a contextual whole from which they cannot be divided. Its broader field of attention is open and coupled with the ability of integration over time and space, making possible the recognition of broad and complex patterns. It also deals preferentially with subjective lived experiences. By contrast, the left-brain hemisphere deals preferentially with a conceptually represented version of our embodied experience, containing static, separable, but essentially fragmented entities. This kind of attention isolates, fixes, and makes things explicit. In doing so, it renders everything inert, mechanical, and lifeless (McGilchrist 2019). McGilchrist investigates the extent to which our contemporary society is increasingly colonised by the register of representation and hyper-rationalism, emerging into a world structured according to the logic of the left-brain hemisphere. Hence, transferring human existence to an online two-dimensional reality, comes with consequences for our understanding of the world as well as for our brains. Instead of seeing what is truly present

as primary, and the representation as a necessarily diminished derivative of it, we see reality as merely a special case of our representation. One in which something is added in to 'animate' it (McGilchrist, 2021, p. 7). This is a world in which abstractions (words and images) are dealt with as more real/consequential than whatever is they represent, and the living is turned into something inanimate (McGilchrist, 2021).

Both McGilchrist (2019, 2021) and Sass (2017) share the concern that an increased reliance on the left hemisphere leads also to an increase in the prevalence of schizophrenia and of schizophrenic-like dispositions. According to Iain McGilchrist (2019, 2021), schizophrenia is a condition that is associated with hyperactivity in the left-brain hemisphere and impairment of the right-brain hemisphere. He explains that schizophrenia is a relatively modern disease, existent only since the 18th century. McGilchrist (2019, 2021) and Sass (2017) are not arguing that humanity is dealing with a sudden epidemic of schizophrenia, but instead with an accentuated reliance on the world as delivered to us by the left hemisphere, meanwhile dismissing what it is that the right hemisphere knows and could help us understand (McGilchrist, 2021). In addition, Sass identifies an eerie likeness between schizophrenia and the existential predispositions within modernity. These include the following: defiance of authority and convention; nihilism and all-embracing irony; a tantalising, uncanny, but always frustrating sense of revelation; pervasive dehumanisation; and disappearance of external reality in favour of the omnipotent ego or, alternatively, dissolution of all sense of selfhood (Sass, 2017).

According to both Sass and McGilchrist, schizophrenia's principal psychopathological features are not regression towards irrationality, lack of self-awareness, and a retreat into the infantile realm of emotion and the body but entail the exact opposite. That is, a sort of misplaced hyper-rationalism and a disengagement from emotion and embodied existence (McGilchrist, 2019). What emerges is a sense of radical alienness and a separation from the socially shared world, which is stripped of its usual meaning and sense of coherence (Sass 2017). Reality appears peculiar and eerie (Sass, 2017), attracting the gaze and enabling a feeling of profound penetration into the essence of things. This experience, involving a contradictory sense of meaningfulness and meaningless, of significance and insignificance, is referred to as the 'truth-taking-stare' (Sass, 2017, p. 26). Subjects in this state say that they find themselves, akin to scientists, 'not involved in the world, merely observing it from outside to understand its secret workings' (McGilchrist, 2021, p. 348).

OMNIPOTENCE THOUGH THE OTHER

In schizophrenia one might feel that there is no access to an outside of the realm of the Other and its overarching power of thought and representation, as the world comes to lack the ultimate unknowability that exceed our grasp. Jacques Lacan conceptualises the ultimate paternal authority as the Other of the symbolic order and as the Other of the unconscious,

further equating it with the authority of the language, the social law, as well as with the locus of truth and meaning. While this type of authority is constructed in the name of a symbolic locus, it nevertheless can find expression in an actual person who embodies it (Borneman, 2004). In a world structured by schizophrenic-like dispositions, one oscillates between two apparently opposite positions: impotence and omnipotence. Namely, either there is no self as all there is appears structured by the deadening law of the Other; or all that the one sees appears to be in fact part of the self, as in this case the schizophrenic identifies with the pervasive gaze of the Other (McGilchrist, 2019). The stance of omnipotence is accompanied by euphoric exaltation, while that of impotence is accompanied by dysphoria and profound ontological insecurity (Sass, 2017). To escape the later dreadful feeling, the schizophrenic subject gains existential reassurance when fully identifying with the gaze and stance of the Other. Accepting the Other's world view and desire as one's own allows respite in an unsettling schizophrenic world.

Returning to the case analysed in this article, the disconcerting oscillation between euphoria and dysphoria, brings insights into Russian society's puzzling attachment to the world designed around and to a large extent by Vladimir Putin. Putin occupies the position of the social authority figure, the pivotal figure in generating meaning and sustaining the social order. Bare-chested Putin, with his predilection for horseback riding, hunting, stroking tigers, ice swimming, and judo fighting, is a perfect embodiment of the traditional paternal authority (Pomerantsev, 2015). In addition, as the commander of the largest nuclear weapon arsenal on this planet, Putin envisions himself as holding in his hands the future of entire humanity, and repeatedly reminds the world about his apocalyptic destructive potential. The emphasis placed on the figure of the father (particularly in Lacanian psychoanalysis) stems from his ability to introduce and sustain a social order that is structurally different from the natural one. This further institutes the structure of society and a certain community of meaning (Stavrakakis, 1999). Putin, as the symbolic authority, above all, asserts both his supreme right and desire to shape the discourse through which his supporters understand the past, present, and future; the distinction between true and false; as well as the distinction between real and artificial. Indeed, he sees himself as a mythical hero and a historian destined to rewrite and restore the national history in his own image (Andelman, 2022). To that end, he wrote a lengthy essay, entitled 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians', published on the Kremlin's webpage in Russian, Ukrainian, and English. The essay informed Putin's utterly chilling hour-long televised speech announcing the invasion of Ukraine. With this occasion, he proclaimed Ukraine an artificial state and Ukrainian identity as a distortion of the genuine Russian identity. He also decried that 'Russia was robbed' when Ukraine gained independence in 1991. One could interpret Putin's discourse as the articulation of the Other's Law, as he voices his desire for things to be a certain way and not another (Fink, 2000). It is important to specify that the moral Law, or the voice of conscience, which typically originates in the voice of the father, is experienced as an expression of the Other's desire (Fink, 2000). In Russia, Putin's public persona is rendered stern and closely associated with morality. His supporters

see him as a strong promoter of Christian Orthodox values and a relentless defender of motherland Russia, who is driven by deep paternal love. Thus, Putin legitimises his rule through his personality cult, using heroic and paternal images that portray him as the ultimate source of Russian vigour and prosperity.

RUSSIAN CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Vladimir Putin sustains a universe of conspiratorial narratives exhibiting a deep sense of cynicism. These construe the world as burdened by insidious, malevolent figures such as Nazis, drug addicts, and corrupt Western leaders who are building noxious biological laboratories. Their imminent sense of doom resonates with what German psychiatrist August Wetzel's describes as 'end of the world' experiences. These tend to be culminations of sinister and uncanny mood-states. These states are also associated with the sense of being somehow at the centre of the dreadful happenings (Wetzel, 1922, as cited in Sass, 2017, p. 259). What particularly stands out here is the chillingly detached attitude maintained when contemplating such catastrophic end of the world scenarios. This is the case, Louis Sass argues, as the inner life of schizophrenia patients is often devoid of worldly emotions like sadness and joy, and instead it is infused with cosmic euphoria, anxiety, and ironic detachment. It is not uncommon for someone in this state of mind to describe the most horrifying catastrophes with utter indifference or even a trace of smile (Sass, 2017). For instance, we witness a chilling sense of emotional disengagement and affectlessness when envisioning the catastrophic destruction of human civilisation that the Sarmat (the new Russian heavy intercontinental ballistic missile) could cause. Stunningly, the TV hosts on the state-owned Russia-1 channel were giggling as they were discussing striking and destroying New York City in its entirety with this weapon (Bunyan, 2022). A similar disconcerting stance was adopted by Russian television host Dmitry Kiselyov in his rhetorical question: 'Why do we need a world if Russia is not in it?' (Mclaughlin et al., 2022). The casual conversations about apocalyptic forms of destruction, seen repeatedly on state-owned TV stations in Russia, show a profound lack of empathy that is indeed sinisterly cold and frightening.

The sense of doom, depicted by Russian propaganda, also stems from the existence of mighty villains who are secretly controlling societal institutions in the Western world to further their harmful purposes and pervert morals. If not deterred, these would bring about the enslavement or the very end of humanity. Noteworthy here is the stance of Patriarch Kirill, the leader of the Russian Orthodox church. He is a strong supporter of both Putin and the invasion of Ukraine. Kirill places the blame for the violence and destruction generated in war, on what he claims is Ukraine's perversion of Orthodox morals through its support of gay rights and gay parades. In his sermons, he referred to Russia's 'military operation' in Ukraine as a conflict deciding 'which side of God humanity will be on' (Patriarch Kirill, as cited in Kika, 2022, para. 2). Kirill warns that an alliance with the West necessarily involves adopting gay

pride parades. These are, in his opinion, so deeply sinful that failing to eradicate them would surely bring about the end of human civilisation (Kika, 2022). Paradoxically, while worrying about the 'sinful' parades, Russian Orthodox priests are nevertheless dutifully blessing Russian bombs and weapons of mass destruction (Rozanskij, 2021).

The Russian propaganda's exposure of the doom, corruption, and sin, inherent in both the Western and Ukrainian social orders, is followed by Putin's promise of a return to a state of plenitude, as he positions himself as both Russia's and Ukraine's singular saviour. His phantasmatic proposal of a return to an imperial Russia carries a profound sense of nostalgia, as it idealises a glorious past and expresses a longing for a home that is merely imaginary (Boym, 2001). This mythical return to a lost Eden (Boym, 2001) can only be achieved through Putin's mediation and by embracing his version of Russian identity and patriotism. Questioning or rejecting his version of the world comes with harsh punishment. In addition to intimidations, ordered murders, and numerous arrests, Vladimir Putin signed a new law into effect that calls for sentences of up to 15 years in prison for people who distribute 'false news' about the Russian military (Oremus, 2022). Despite his ruthless behaviour, Putin's persona looms over Russia as omnipotent and omniscient mythical figure. As such, he can provide for his supporters, through identification, a state of plenitude. The more threatening and confusing the world appears, the heavier is Russian society's reliance on the apparent strength of its mythological Other.

UNREALITY VISION AND CRYSTAL-CLEAR SIGHT

Peter Pomerantsev traces the extent to which Russian government worked intently on developing a sense of generalised mistrust in Western media and institutions, starting as early as the 1980s, when Radio Moscow broadcasted claims that the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) invented AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) as a weapon against Africa. More recently, it claimed that American factories were pumping out the Zika virus in East Ukraine to poison ethnic Russians; that the US is harvesting Russian DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) to create gene weapons; and that the US is encircling Russia with secret biological labs (Pomerantsev, 2019). The over-the-top fabricated stories hail attention as they centre around potent tropes in Russian society, such as Nazism, biological weapons, drugs, and involve poignant public figures, such as Hunter Biden, the son of the United States' president. The Russian government intentionally socialised Russians in a universe of propaganda and conspiracy theories, moulding a citizenry that appears simultaneously cynical about aspects of life that need to be implicit and gullible enough to espouse enormously improbable belief systems that are clearly delusional, and above all highly receptive to the Kremlin's manipulations (McGilchrist, 2021; Pomerantsev, 2015). Succumbing to this conspiratorial universe of meaning distorts one's thinking and perception of the world. Its inherent ontological confusion creates the condition of possibility for acquiring an 'unreality vision'.

Louis Sass argues that the unreality vision, a main symptom of schizophrenia, is a strange and enigmatic mood that infuses everything (Sass, 2017) and generates an oddly diminished feel of reality. It reveals an alien world of uniform precision and clarity but devoid of dynamism, emotional resonance, and sense of human purpose that prevail in everyday life (Sass, 2017). Life is rendered flimsy and false. People and places appear devoid of depth and authenticity. Objects, akin to the situation in *The Truman Show* (1998), could take on the look of stage accessories or pasteboard scenery. People could seem mere puppets, mannikins, or automatons, or else somehow in disguise (Sass, 2017). To further understand the receptivity to conspiratorial theories, it is worth recalling McGilchrist's (2021) claim that people with a left-brain deficit show a tendency towards confabulating and jumping to conclusions on little or no evidence. He argues that a failure of the right hemisphere to ground the self into the complexly unpredictable flow of life generates a need for closure as well as an acute intolerance to ambiguity and uncertainty (McGilchrist, 2021). One of the appealing features of Russian conspiratorial narratives is the fact that they are akin to simple maps that claim to contain/expose the bare truth about human existence.

Another noteworthy feature of Russian conspiratorial narratives is their poignant cynicism. German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk defines cynicism as enlightened false consciousness, explaining that it exemplifies an unhappy consciousness in modernised form, further articulating an uneasiness that sees the modern world steeped in cultural insanities and false hopes (Sloterdijk, 2001). It entails a search for 'naked truth' and urges one to maintain oneself as a fully rational living being against the distortions of one's society (Sloterdijk, 2001). As such, even though it might appear otherwise, cynical fantasy formations provide the subject with a form of existential reassurance. Namely, although the cynic refuses to take part in the social world governed by the corrupt/immoral Western social authority, the cynic who believes to have had access to the 'naked truth' is vested with a sense of control and of an almost transcendental understanding (McGowan, 2004). Russian conspiracy theories about Ukraine assume an apparent comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the functioning of the human society in past and present, as if it were transparent, where everything could be understood, nothing could remain hidden. This is akin to an illusion of transparency, where everything can be taken in by a single glance (Lefebvre, 1991), as one could see behind the manipulations of the corrupt political order. Indeed, schizophrenics describe a feeling 'of crystal-clear sight, of profound penetration into the essence of things' (Sass, 2017, p. 26). As opposed to the devitalisation specific to unreality vision, in crystal-clear sight, one has the feeling of a heightened reality. Thus, the world appears charged with a mysterious force and laden with meaning, allowing impressions of profound revelation about the nature of society and politics to emerge. In addition, conspiratorial narratives create a sense of radicality for the subject. One gains a sense of existential reassurance through envisioning oneself standing separate from society's malefic ideological grip and claiming a coveted sense of agentic capacity.

LIAR'S DIVIDEND

Ukrainian war is brought to us in real time though videos of injured and lifeless bodies, explosions, destructions, and military assaults filmed by Ukrainians and disseminated widely through social media. Facing this plethora of images and recorded testimonials, the Russian government prioritised controlling what Russians see and what they are willing to believe. The space created by the state-owned media takes its audience to an alternate reality, portraying a strikingly sanitised take of the Ukrainian war. It excludes the haunting images of destroyed apartment buildings, hospitals, and theatres, of children and women severely injured. It also excludes images of civilian lifeless bodies lying on the streets or being buried hastily in common graves. It focuses instead on the military technology, the tanks advancing, the apparent successes of the Russian army, and what the Kremlin claims to be assistance provided to distressed Ukrainians. The only time that war destruction visually enters this sanitised space is when it is portrayed as 'caused' by the Ukrainian military; for instance, showing shelled buildings in the Donbas region and the explosion at the petroleum depot in Russia, or when the images are presented as 'staged provocations'.

Increasingly relying on media to connect and learn about the world, together with technological innovations that allow the creation and dissemination of deep-fake videos, generate an unprecedented ontologically confusing situation, as large communities accept fictional occurrences as real (Chesney & Citron, 2019). For instance, a confusing deep-fake video circulated, at the beginning of the Russian's invasion, showing the Ukrainian president asking his soldiers to lay down their arms and surrender the fight against Russia. Additional doctored videos circulated, portraying Zelensky as a cocaine addict (Loh, 2022). Prior to its invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government engaged in sustained efforts to instil in its national and international audiences the conviction that for the last eight years the Ukrainian government carried out a genocide against the Russian-speaking population of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and that Ukraine is under the leadership of neo-Nazis and corrupt drug addicts. Furthermore, the Russian media fabricated and promoted narratives stating that the US has been developing biological weapons in Ukraine to be used against Russian citizens.

The sustained socialisation in this universe of fabricated information has significant social and existential consequences. Through is unreality vision and crystal-clear sight, it leads to an alteration of human perception, whereas what is exaggerated appears real and endowed with a 'manufactured authenticity', while what was once considered reality is perceived as devitalised, outdated, boring, and empty. Another aspect of concern is the impaired ability to make sense of the world when the very relationship between truth and false are disturbed. When Sergey Lavrov, the Russian minister of foreign affairs, declares that Russia does not plan on attacking other countries, as it did not attack Ukraine, even though at the time of his declaration the Russian army was relentlessly shelling several cities throughout Ukraine (Crane, 2022), communication is simply pushed far beyond the bounds of rationality. Similarly, after almost two months of a horrifically devastating war, the Kremlin's spokesman

Dmitri Peskov warns that 'If Ukraine continues its provocations by attacking Russian cities, Russia will be forced to declare war against Ukraine' (Peskov, as cited in Bolocan, 2022, para. 1). The baffling communication style is not without precedent. During the annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin went on international television and asserted that there were no Russian soldiers in Crimea, when everyone knew there were, and then just as casually later admitted that they had been there, and even publicly awarded medals to the soldiers whom he had earlier said hadn't been there (Pomerantsev, 2019). In the current Ukrainian war, Vladimir Putin insists that we are not dealing with an actual war but instead with a 'special military operation', undertaken with the purpose of de-Nazification of Ukraine. This statement is especially puzzling as Ukraine's current president is Jewish and has members of his family who fought and died in World War II against Germans. The bizarre logic is pushed further by the Russian press insisting that the devastation seen throughout Ukraine is inflicted by the Ukrainian people themselves, who are shooting at each other and destroying their own buildings and infrastructure, using the weapons that the Ukrainian government made available to those citizens willing the fight the invaders.

These are solely a few examples of Russian media's and government officials' statements displaying mind-boggling falsity, that calls the opposition between true and false itself into question. The bizarre beliefs they articulate are not simply unrealistic but flagrantly impossible, contradicting the laws of logic (Sass, 2017). Instead of having scope winning arguments, they are meant to deflect attention and create confusion. Their impossible logic is solidified by a general avoidance to provide concrete information, giving Russian politics a surreal quality that encourages those supporting Putin to trust his ability to magically bring about the best possible outcomes for motherland Russia. All these generate a world in which, as the Ukrainian war survivors recall, the Russian soldiers declaring their intent to liberate Ukrainians, as they proceed to rape, torture, and kill the very individuals they proclaim to save and liberate.

While some lies do involve affirmative claims that something occurred (when in fact it never did), what we also witness in the Ukrainian war are lies that take the form of denials (Chesney & Citron, 2019). The possibility of generating, manipulating, and disseminating false news gives the option of those accused of wrongdoings to create doubt about accusations, by using altered video or audio evidence that appears to contradict the claim. This is what Chesney and Citron call the 'liar's dividend'. The liar's dividend is enabled by the current pervasive truth scepticism. Recent years have seen mounting distrust of traditional sources of news. The expression 'fake news' is often used as a convenient substitute for an argument or an explanation when one is confronted with damaging factual assertions. As deep-fake news is increasingly a possibility to consider in everyday life, the public's cynicism is so pronounced that people simply have difficulty believing what their eyes or ears are telling them (Chesney & Citron, 2019). Hence, a new society develops where a guiding sense of

intuition as well as the trust in the unquestionable foundational domain of the realm of perceptual faith and in the plane of social engagement (Sass, 2017) are in serious jeopardy.

NOTHING BUT ACTORS AND FILM SETS

This ontological disorientation is used by the Kremlin in convincing the public to distrust accurate news reports about Ukrainians' war suffering. The Kremlin instead spreads false claims that Western media outlets have been broadcasting images and videos of 'crisis actors' and 'war film sets' as real events. Crisis actors refer to people who are merely playing the role of terrified or deceased war victims for the cameras. For instance, the accusation of employing crises actors was used to neutralise the impact of the unsettling images emerging from the aftermath of an attack on a maternity hospital in Mariupol. To create doubt and distract attention from the severity of the events, the Russian social media disseminated the statement that the images of an injured pregnant woman being carried out on a stretcher and of another pregnant woman (identified as Marianna Vishegirskaya) photographed fleeing in distress the destroyed maternity building, were both merely performances of the same crisis actor, who was pretending for the camera to be injured, when in fact she was well and happy. To give credibility to this claim, the post included an old image of a smiling Marianna Vishegirskaya promoting cosmetic products. 'Very realistic make-up', the Russian Embassy wrote to the UK in a Twitter post of this callously misleading story (Ahmed, 2022). In addition to previously discussed unreality vision, that leads to devitalisation, the Russian representation of the attack on Mariupol's maternity hospital is in line with another key phenomenon that Sass (2017) and McGilchrist (2021) argue is specific to schizophrenia, namely, that of fragmentation. Fragmentation results from a loss of global or Gestalt perception, deficits in contextual understanding, and difficulty discriminating familiar from strange stimuli. In the case discussed here, instead of one's concern focusing on the cruel act of bombing a maternity hospital, attention is brought to various distracting elements. The authenticity of these elements is brought into question. Hence, attention is diverted from the horrendous act of bombing pregnant women and newly born children, to disputing the authenticity of the pregnant women's suffering. Because the pain of war victims is difficult to convey as explicit facts, the aim is to cloud people's thinking about the war, so that they would tune out or focus on endless debates of aspects that are relatively trivial. Fragmentation renders things uncanny and overwhelmingly confusing (McGilchrist, 2021) and stifles the empathic bond that one might develop with the pain of the Ukrainians.

The disinformation about the attack on the maternity hospital in Mariupol is unfortunately not an isolated case. This technique has been employed repeatedly in the Ukrainian war. For example, one viral video shows a news reporter speaking in German in front of rows of people lying on the ground in what look like body bags. As the camera records, one of the people in the bags rearranges his body position, showing that the person is very much alive. The video

was used by pro-Russia social media accounts to claim that Ukrainians are faking war deaths, and the Western media coverage of the war is staged. Similarly, old footage from a science fiction movie *Invasion Planet Earth*, shows a crowd of people running towards a camera in an urban square, after one of the filmmakers shouts 'action!'. The video has been portrayed by pro-Russia media as evidence that media outlets are falsely presenting footage of actors as images of fleeing terrified Ukrainians. An additional video, from a television series *Cantamin*, displayed on social media as alleged evidence of Ukraine using crisis actors, shows a woman applying blood-style makeup to the face of a smiling man (Dale, 2022).

The resulting impaired capacity to tell apart fiction from reality is an element of concern, especially in Russian society, where it became so acute that it impacts the ability to empathise with and care for members of one's own family. What especially stands out to me are the stories of those finding themselves in Ukraine during bombardments and calling their relatives living in Russia, to share their distress and receive much needed solace, only to encounter a stubborn distrust and cold dismissal of their war experiences. Their personal accounts are distrusted because they simply did not match what the Russian media was reporting at the time. Therefore, when confronted with inconsistencies between experiences in the real world and their representation, one privileges the world of representation, even at the expense of one's own relatives' wellbeing. Ukrainians describe anger and frustration as they are put in the situation of needing to prove the authenticity of their pain, anguish, and trauma of war to members of their own family. To better understand this emotional detachment and distrust of reality, I bring attention once more to the work of McGilchrist on schizophrenia. McGilchrist argues that in schizophrenia there is a curious 'demand for proof' for aspects of life that need to be implicit. How exactly could one clearly prove that one is suffering or demonstrate the authenticity of one's lived experience? When a basic bond with the embodied world is lost, sufferers describe a 'sense of separation, unreality, or deadening' (McGilchrist, 2021, p. 337), which is inherent in a stance of emotional disengagement and mental remoteness. What was once intuitively understood is forced out of its context and could be accessed only rationalistically. The tacit becomes focal, the implicit becomes explicit, and what should be intuitively grasped becomes a matter of calculation. Thus, the nature of the implicit subjective experience, at the core of human mode of being in the world, is rendered inaccessible (McGilchrist, 2021) and human interactions acquire a feeling of utter alienness. For instance, Alexander Serdyuk has stopped talking to his mother, as according to Alexander: 'She doesn't understand me. She says it's just Nazis killing each other, and that we are responsible for all this' (Tondo & Rice-Oxley, 2022, para. 2). Natalia Ivanivna has Russian relatives whom she wanted to alert when the bombing started: 'Fifteen minutes after the shelling started, I sent them a series of messages: "We are being bombed". The first question they asked me: "Who is doing the bombing – our army or yours?"' (para. 9). Artur Kolomiitsev, a young man from Kharkiv, speaks of his frustration: 'They don't believe this war is real. They believe we are bombing ourselves and that our government is on drugs' (Tondo & Rice-Oxley, 2022, para. 25). These examples speak of a generalised ontological unhinging that simply

undermines reality (Sass, 2017). With suspicion infiltrating and eroding the basic building blocks of reality, the world comes to be experienced unnervingly unreal (Sass, 2017). Consequently, people appear to be actors faking suffering and the fullness of life appears dried out. What was once alive is now experienced as only a shell or a mask (McGilchrist, 2021). In this context, I invite the reader to contemplate the Russian reaction to the horrendous images of war crimes emerging from Bucha.

THE HORRORS OF BUCHA

After Ukrainian forces liberated areas around Kyiv, officials and independent photographers reported finding numerous bodies of civilians scattered in the streets of the city of Bucha. Among these are the body of a man who was carrying a bag of potatoes before being shot, of a man killed while riding his bicycle, and another of a man who had his hands bound and a bullet wound to the head. Images of a mass grave located near the church in Bucha show additional bodies buried. Confronted with the horrific scenes, triggering an outpour of global condemnations, Moscow firmly rejected any involvement in atrocities. Russian officials and the Russian press argued instead that the images and videos were staged by Ukrainians with the use of crisis actors. Later, the blame was placed on the 'Ukrainian Nazis' and on the UK for having planned and committed the crimes. Russia's representative to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyansky, referred to Bucha as a 'blatant provocation by Ukrainian radicals' (Reuters, 2022a, para. 2), while Sergei Lavrov decried it a 'yet another fake attack' (Rimi, 2022), that Ukraine attempts to use against Russia. Russia's embassy in France posted on Twitter a photo of the destruction in Bucha, claiming that it shows a 'film set' (Reuters, 2022b). The Russian utter neglect of human suffering is reminiscent of the account by Demay and Renaux of a head-injured soldier according to whom the entirety of the First World War, in which he participated, was a make-believe, elaborate performance (Demay & Renaux, 1919, as cited in McGilchrist, 2021). The fact that these dismissive claims find a large supportive audience raise a warning sign that at the societal level we might be facing symptoms akin to those exhibited by right hemisphere-damaged subjects and schizophrenics. That is, a lack of an intuitive sense of reality, which is replaced with the feeling that life is nothing but 'play-acting' (McGilchrist, 2021, p. 313). A patient suffering with schizophrenia describes this perceptional alteration:

> I see things devoid of substance… They must be hallucinations and not real objects… Things act only on my eyes, not my brain. Doubtless I see everything, without doubt nothing is changed, except that things are not real… what I see is only a play, a Punch and Judy show; it is clumsy, vulgar, unpleasant and, above all, false; it doesn't really exist. (Sass, 2017, p. 229)

Another noteworthy reaction to this incident, comes from the Russian talk show host Olesya Loseva, who suggested that the town of Bucha had deliberately been chosen as the setting for staging horrific scenes to be attributed to Russian soldiers because President Joe Biden had previously used the word butcher to describe Vladimir Putin, so 'for Americans this

word should be clear' (Hill, 2022, para. 6). Here, once more, we encounter the process of fragmentation, namely diverting the mind from understanding the events in a context, and instead bringing attention to separate distracting details, such as the US president Joe Biden and his choice of words. In addition, we see at play another feature of the schizophrenic pathology. This is an abnormally heightened awareness of significance, termed the *apophanous* mood (from the Greek word apophany, meaning 'to become manifest'; Sass 2017, p. 33). In this eerie mood, the world resonates with fugitive significance. Every detail takes on an excruciating distinctness, specialness, and peculiarity as one starts seeing patterns and meaning in unrelated things (Sass, 2017). In the Ukrainian war context, a bizarre association is made between the unrelated town Bucha and the word 'butcher' that Joe Biden chose to describe Vladimir Putin. This association is endowed with a sense of laden meaning and elevated importance, to the extent that it claims to open an apparent path into seeing into the deep essence (nature) of the events analysed.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINTS: REALITY CLASH, VOICES OF PROTEST, AND SOCIAL DUPLICITY

So far, this article has focused on the existential stance that accepts a complete identification with the desire and worldview of the Other. In the case analysed here, this entails fully accepting the world weaved by Russian state propaganda. While this viewpoint holds significant ground in current Russia, there are nevertheless important alternatives, germane to the Ukrainian war. For instance, such an alternative stance arises in the clash between the world of Russian propaganda and the actual situation in Ukraine. This soul-crushing experience is rendered through a Russian soldier's text sent to his mother in Russia, moments before he was killed in Ukraine. Ukraine's UN ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya read out loud the message in the UN General Assembly meeting. This is the text's translation from Russian:

> There is a real war raging here. I'm afraid. We are bombing all of the cities together, even targeting civilians. We were told that they would welcome us, and they are falling under our armored vehicles, throwing themselves under the wheels and not allowing us to pass. They call us fascists, Mama. This is so hard. (Crilly, 2022, paras. 8–11)

In emotionally moving instances, young Russian soldiers visibly disorientated, tired, and hungry are welcomed by young Ukrainians who share food with them and hand them phones to call their families in Russia. The soldiers inform their families that they ended up in the middle of a war as aggressors. While the soldiers were told that their mission was that of de-nazifying Ukraine, they realise that Ukrainians see them as Nazis. In this context, one could understand the reports about Russian soldiers self-sabotaging their tanks, refusing to fight, or turning themselves into Ukrainian custody. Aware of this situation, the Ukrainian Minister of Defense, Oleksii Reznikov, offered the Russian soldiers full amnesty and monetary compensation if they laid down their arms and surrendered voluntarily (*National Post,* 2022).

These developments reveal the extent to which Russian young men have been made part of an absurd logic of war, which they simply do not understand nor support. These are instances in which Ukrainians and Russians together, transcend and undermine the alienating social order, and connect with each other through their shared humanity and traumatic experiences.

A second noteworthy stance entails flat-out rejecting and exposing the hypocrisy of the official narrative about the noble intension of the war. To that end, especially in the first weeks of the invasion, numerous courageous Russians took to the streets in protest, demanding that a war in Ukraine not be fought in their name. In addition, Marina Ovsyannikova, an editor at Channel One television, staged a visible protest by barging onto the set of evening news, shouting: 'Stop the war. No to war'. She held a written message: 'Don't believe the propaganda. They're lying to you here'. It was signed in English: 'Russians against the war' (Reilly, 2022). The government counteracted Russian citizens' protests with mass arrests, intimidations, and implementing a law that punishes with up to 15 years in prison those who provide 'fake news' about the Russian army. Due to this law, Alexandra Skochilenko, a Russian artist that proceeded to replace price-tags with messages against the invasion of Ukraine in a Saint Petersburg shop, faces up to a decade in prison (Lloyd, 2022). Furthermore, several teachers have been turned in to authorities by students or parents for engaging in anti-war speech. We learn that students have secretly recorded instructors, who made negative comments about the invasion, before contacting the police (Sauer, 2022).

The harsh punishment for protesting the violence inflicted on Ukraine speaks loudly about the rigidity of the Other's Law. This very rigidity, prohibiting alternative ways of thinking and demanding that one fully embodies the national ideology, is prone to cause a third stance, one that anthropologist Katherine Verdery (1993) identified as 'social duplicity'. She argues that to survive an overbearing system, one constructs a public self that complies the society's scripted ways, and then in private one reveals a 'real' self, this self being very critical of the rigid system (Laing, 1960; Verdery 1993). Psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1960) took great interest in understanding the complex psychological dynamics of individuals living as divided selves and those experiencing a constant internal conflict between their two identities. In such cases, the hatred for the oppressive system is revealed through a tendency for the 'false self' to assume more and more characteristics of the persons upon whom the compliance was based, to the point that the impersonation begins to turn into caricature (Laing, 1960). Televised Russian state meetings, having Putin in attendance, stand out as absurd theatrical performances. Functioning as blatant materialisation of his mental and social isolation, Putin in his official meetings was seen seated across ostentatiously large tables, far away from other humans, apparently as a COVID-19 precaution. The interactions around Putin emanate an overwhelming coldness, a sense of unbridgeable distance between humans. This is a dehumanised world of structure, where human beings feel out of place and where obedience

is carried to such excess that we witness a sort of grotesque parody, as the 'false self' order tends to become increasingly theatrical and devoid of life (Laing, 1960).

Nevertheless, as Slavoj Žižek (1997) notes, if an ideological edifice is to maintain function, it must find a way to articulate its inherent antagonism. Thus, the dysfunction of the rigid Kremlin political system surfaces as a breakdown in the Russian official communication about the war. Reports emerged about the reluctance of officials to share with Putin basic facts about the war in Ukraine, and about several senior Russian intelligence officials having been detained, interrogated, and placed under house arrest. They were blamed for the failing military campaign in Ukraine (Stewart & Rose, 2022). There were additional reports about embezzlement of significant funds allocated to the war effort in Ukraine, leading to various shortages and difficulties for the Russian soldiers. Hence, one could argue that the absolute control of the Other is simply an illusion. Vladimir Putin, the former KGB agent with a specialisation in disinformation, paradoxically finds himself trapped in the phantasmatic ideas generated by his very web of lies, ending up inhabiting a surreal world disconnected from a shared reality, and hence his bizarre expectation that Ukrainians would welcome his troops and eagerly partake in his imperial dream. As discussed earlier, Putin asserts his absolute control over the Russian national fundamental narrative that orients society in envisioning its past, present, and future as well as in distinguishing between truth and fiction. Despite his desire for absolute control over the national discourse, it turns out that it is Putin who succumbs to its influence. This turn of tables is a cautionary message reminding us that the stories that we choose to tell are not solely tools to be used in communicating with or manipulating others, instead they have the power to constitute the very world that we live in, our community, the mode of engaging others, and our own selves. Persisting in weaving national narratives that portray the world as plagued by corruption, Nazis, and villains, adopting cynicism at the expense of empathy, repeatedly confusing the relationship between truth and fiction, and between real and artificial, could bring about profound long-term social consequences. These could alter our very humanity and the construction of or trans-generational collective self.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this article was facilitated by a Research Reassignment Award offered by the University of North Carolina Wilmington, for which I am grateful. I want to thank Matthew C. Eshleman and Anastasia Kuz for their willingness to engage in conversations that inspired my thinking and writing. My thoughts are with the people in Ukraine and Russia whose lives have been impacted by this war.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. 20, NO. 4, 1–15
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.04

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Crisis, Ψ-trauma, refugees: Psycho-political questions at the edge of fortress Europe

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ABSTRACT

Since 2014 the situation in the Mediterranean Sea has been named and tackled as a 'refugee crisis', and in the name of this 'crisis' migrants have been accommodated in 'hotspots' and camps. Within these spaces, their experiences have often been articulated by the humanitarian sector and the discipline of psychology as traumatic, with refugees being described as traumatised. In this article, I critically discuss the politics of psychology and trauma within the European territory of aid, with a specific focus on Greece, amid the current, so-called 'refugee crisis'. I start by situating crisis and trauma as concepts and their role within humanitarian and state governance. I continue by discussing how the terms 'hotspot' and 'camp' emerged in state and humanitarian discourse and practice, to explore then the politics of psychology and trauma there. Both space and time are important elements for understanding the role of psychology, as they comprise the material landscape of migration amid 'refugee crisis'. At the same time, the discourses of psychology and trauma are implicated in the very production of these spaces. Approaching critically their interconnection through the lens of critical psychology and the work of Frantz Fanon, the article concludes that the gaze of humanitarian aid and psychology, besides medicalising refugees, psychologises the inherently political issues of migration and life lived in hotspots and camps. In so doing, it substitutes the latter with a managerial discourse.

KEYWORDS: refugee crisis; psychology; trauma; hotspots; camps; psychopolitics; Frantz Fanon

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, parts of Europe were experiencing a mass movement of people, most originating in Syria and Afghanistan. In 2015, it was estimated that more than 850,000 people crossed the Mediterranean Sea. Many of those arriving in Greece were detained on the Aegean islands (particularly Lesvos, Chios, and Samos). It was at this moment that the situation became recognised as an emergency and played out as a humanitarian crisis on the outskirts of Europe. The European Union's (EU) response was to open the 'Balkan route' as an emergency measure, showing its inability to respond effectively to the scale of the arrivals (Skleparis, 2017). This caused people to become trapped at the borders of Greece and North Macedonia, so in March 2016 they closed the 'Balkan route' and put into effect the 'EU–Turkey deal' which legitimised the return to Turkey of all new 'irregular migrants' who crossed to the Greek islands (see European Council, 2016).

Scholars from critical migration studies (see New Keywords Collective, 2016) vigorously question the concept of a 'humanitarian refugee crisis'. De Genova et al. (2018) argue that the pluralisation of crisis, to a plurality of crises, allows us to conceptualise migration within the economic crisis (i.e., the fiscal crisis in Greece since 2008 and in Europe); the political crisis of Europe (i.e., rise of far right movements, tightening of migration and restriction of movement, border control) with its internal re-bordering (i.e., Brexit); and the epistemic crisis 'at stake in the governmental labelling and administration of migrants' and refugees' heterogeneous mobilities' (p. 255).

Within this plurality of crises, both Critical Migration Studies (De Genova et al., 2018; Tazzioli, 2020) and Neocleous and Kastrinou (2016) discuss the political expediency of the divisive 'migrant–refugee' or 'migrant–illegal migrant' categories. According to Neocleous and Kastrinou (2016), there is a broader war against the migrant, who is sometimes represented as a refugee and other times as a migrant, the 'good, needed, and vulnerable', and the one who signifies 'illegality, war, and terror'.

It was not by accident, for instance, that when asylum applications increased in 2015, several EU countries started tightening their borders and putting restrictions on the number of asylum applications they would receive. To name a few, the governments of Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and Germany enacted legislation to reduce and restrict asylum numbers (for a detailed discussion on the changes in asylum policies, see Skleparis, 2017).

The decision of European states and the humanitarian sector to represent migration towards European territory as a 'refugee crisis' obscures the political intricacies of different and multiple versions of crisis, including the history of forced displacement—a history rooted in decades of exploitation (as in colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism). It is on this very notion and representation of a singular crisis, named as a 'refugee crisis', that the divisive binaries of 'migrant–refugee' or 'migrant–illegal migrant' are constructed to justify who is considered welcomed vs. illegal.

Europe's response, for example, was different towards people coming from Syria rather than from Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, or Somalia. People whose origin was West Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq, or Iran, etc., were not granted asylum as easily as people coming from Syria. The official narrative was that Syrians were fleeing war and there was an immediate need to respond to this 'crisis', whereas others had to prove their reasons for seeking refuge in European territory. Nor is country of origin the sole, deciding factor for a successful asylum claim; it is also necessary to tell a story that justifies a fear of persecution.

With that in mind, I think that crisis is a concept that links, on the one hand, the partial representation of the political and interconnected crises, and on the other hand, it connects this partial representation (the 'refugee crisis') with an embodied narrative of a psychic response to war. Often, this embodied narrative centres on the concept of trauma as a psychic response to war, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one of the most common diagnoses linked to experiences of war (see Summerfield, 2001).

Humanitarian programmes have a well-established history of defining war by its traumatogenic nature (Summerfield, 1999). A quick look at NGO (non-governmental organisation) websites and articles on the current 'refugee crisis' (see Sköld's article as part of UNHCR's [The UN Refugee Agency] news reports, 2021; Terre des hommes, 2018; Louis' article as part of Médecins Sans Frontières' reports, 2016) reveals the almost automatic equation of war with trauma. Ingleby (2005, p. 9) notes that 'the word "trauma" itself is used to describe *both* the situation causing disturbance, *and* the disturbance itself'. This overlap reinforces the notion that if a situation is considered 'traumatic', those experiencing it will be automatically considered 'traumatised' as well.

Given the rise of what Summerfield (1997) calls 'talk therapies' and Pupavac (2001) terms 'therapeutic governance' to highlight the role of 'therapy' in psychosocial interventions and trauma risk management programmes, in this article I mobilise the concepts of crisis and trauma to discuss the politics of support within the European territory of aid, and specifically in the hotspots and camps in Greece. I also interrogate the way humanitarian aid and the discipline of psychology use and capitalise on trauma to individualise, pathologise, and depoliticise social and political conditions such as migration, in general, and the life in hotspots and camps, in particular.

Drawing on my experience as an aid worker, psychologist, and doctoral researcher in the programme of Psychosocial Support (PSS) in Greek refugee camps, I present, first and in brief, a genealogy of the terms 'hotspot' and 'camp', and then discuss the role of psychology and trauma there. Through an analysis of my research material, I argue that these spaces reflect and embed a 'crisis discourse'. The latter is important to an exploration of the politics of space, and how the discourse of psychology and trauma inform such spaces. I continue by discussing the psychopolitics manifested within refugee camps from a Fanonian perspective. Frantz Fanon (1952/2008, 1959/1965, 1961/2004), with his work on psychopolitics and his

views on colonialism and mental health, provides critical insights that help situate the discourse of psychology at the level of the body and psyche.

ENTERING THE FORTRESS: A SHORT GENEALOGY OF THE HOTSPOTS AND CAMPS

Europe has 'hosted' so far more than 1,259,309 refugees (UNHCR, 2021) in spaces that have been publicly and extensively denounced as hostile (to name a few, Moria in Greece, or Calais in France, which came to be known as 'the Jungle'; see Calais Writers, 2017). Even a quick web search on the hotspot of Moria on the island of Lesvos will bring up the hostilities that flow from asylum law on the European continent. Notwithstanding the public and humanitarian denunciation of spaces like Moria (see Barberio, 2018; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016; V.H., 2018), there is an open question with regard to the role of psychosocial support overall in the formulation, acceptance, and reproduction of spaces such as refugee camps and hotspots in the name of emergency, crisis, and acute assistance.

Doreen Massey (2005) critically observes not just that the 'spatial is political' but 'thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated' (p. 9).

Hotspots and camps were not always part of the humanitarian discourse and practice of disaster management. In the case of hotspots, they were only adopted by the European Council in September 2015 in the four ports of Italy and then on the Greek islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, and Kos in order to identify, register, and fingerprint refugees. As soon as the EU–Turkey agreement came into effect on the 23rd of March 2016, they transformed into the main mechanism of controlling and regulating migration and 'crisis' in European terrain. Additionally, hotspots are jointly administered by the Greek army, police, riot police, Frontex, and Europol. Refugees who are based in a 'hotspot' are allowed to move inside and outside of this space, but they are not allowed to leave the region where the 'hotspot' is based.

As Neocleous and Kastrinou (2016) argue, hotspot is not a new term. Tracing the genealogy and history of the term, they describe how, prior to World War II (WWII), it was used variously to refer to 'nightclubs, points on the skin stimulated by heat, points on metal likely to tear, and areas of non-uniformity on photographs, often in quotation marks to indicate its unusualness' (p. 4). It was during the war that hotspot took on a military meaning, referring to an area of danger or violence. Connecting the historical connotations with the current situation in Italy and Greece, as they critically state: 'Politically speaking, a hotspot is a space of conflict where the enemy will be confronted. *The hotspot is a warzone* [emphasis added]' (p. 4). A warzone, I would add, in the body and psyche of every potential Other who manages to cross European borders and enter this terrain.

The history of camps is more complicated. Malkki (1995) argues that camps have not always been linked with the international humanitarian domain. It was towards the end of WWII that encampments became recognised as 'a standardised, generalisable technology of power in the management of mass displacement' (Malkki, 1995, p. 498). As she describes, between the latter years of WWII and the immediate post-war years, people who were displaced in Europe started to be classed as a military problem. It was anticipated that upon Allied victory, the displaced population would be an enormous 'refugee problem' concentrated in Germany. The camp, already quasi-military in design, offered a place of mass control of refugees. However, the latter view is considered Eurocentric. Forced labour and 'concentration camps' had been established before WWII, during the Boer War (1900–1902) in South Africa. It is also argued that 'concentration camps' existed during the Spanish–Cuban war (1895–1898), even if the term is rarely found in the case of Cuba (Smith and Stucki, 2011). While concentration camps are not the same as refugee camps, it is important to highlight their origins because as the authors succinctly put it, the origins of concentration camps 'lie in the colonial arenas of imperial powers at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Smith & Stucki, 2011, p. 417).

Tracing the genealogy of hotspots and camps makes Massey's (2005) thought-provoking enquiry into the spatial and the political once again fruitful. The genealogy of hotspots and camps indicates that there is a spatial and colonial ideology in place which co-produces the subjects encompassed in it. In other words, hotspots and camps are far from being neutral places which accommodate 'the crisis'. On the contrary, they are part of a political strategy that indicates who and how someone is eligible to seek a place in another's home. In the next section, I discuss how space and time dimensions of refugee camps can help reveal political aspects of the role of psychology and trauma during the so called 'refugee crisis'.

IN THE FORTRESS: THE SPATIAL TEMPORALITIES OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL

During my field study in Moria in 2019, my research participants, all of them aid workers, highlighted the way that refugees had to fight to survive there and did not have access to what are broadly considered to be human rights. When the hotspot first 'opened', refugees lacked access to electricity, water, and other basic amenities. Often, more than 20–24 people were packed into in one tent, and people had to queue for three to four hours to receive food of inadequate quality. There were many power cuts resulting in no heating for days at a time, and no way for people to communicate with their families due to the lack of internet. There were many incidents of violence, including sexual violence, based on gender, ethnicity, and race. Not to mention that in February 2020, Moria housed 18,342 refugees in a space designed to hold a maximum of 2,200 people (see Mahecic, 2020).

Refugee camps in mainland Greece became almost normalised at this time, and a mainstream and dangerous argument emerged that at least they were better than the

hotspots: 'They are not like "Moria"', was a phrase heard frequently during my fieldwork. Refugee camps, mostly on the mainland, became the official waiting room for people seeking permission to enter Greece as a refugee. By offering psychological, social, legal, and educational support (language classes, usually English and Greek), the PSS programme in the camps was aimed at tackling mental health issues, asylum processing, and other local bureaucratic hurdles. PSS was also about establishing a daily routine. Daily group activities attempted to address a range of issues, from experiences of violence and loss to feelings of numbness. It was this nexus of political encounters between space, time, and support that prompted me to query the politics of psychology as a discipline and trauma as a concept within the camps.

Throughout my time in the camps, there was an overall admission that aid workers in general, and psychologists in particular, convene sessions and psychosocial activities in order to help people process experiences of violence and normalise feelings of loss. As one aid worker put it, to '*normalise their life, to continue through activities*'. This form of psychological language approaches refugees within a frame of empowerment, but more precisely it teaches them how to cope with camp life. It allows them to adjust smoothly to conditions which require them to accept whatever they are offered, such as living in camps or hotspots in the first place.

One of my research participants, an aid worker and psychologist, mentioned that some psychiatrists were referring to psycho-affective forms of resistance to the realities of camp life as *adjustment disorder*. By 'resistance' I mean the different ways in which the tensions they experience are made visible. Such tension may be expressed through what in medical language are called psychosomatic symptoms (like headaches, insomnia, loss of appetite, etc.). This is not to romanticise the tensions experienced in the body, but to show how they manifest within refugee camps.

The psychologist noted 'in most of them we can say that they have difficulties in adjustment, to which psychiatrists assign the term "adjustment disorder", ok…[but] it is normal, it is not a psychiatric problem what they experience'. While this transformation of resistance into a disorder is quite shocking, it is worth noting that psychology in the field of migration quite often goes hand-in-hand with psychiatry. It happens when aid workers feel they cannot handle certain 'cases' and refer them on to a psychiatrist, or because what refugees describe as 'symptoms' cannot be understood within their therapeutic field, and the institutional power of psychiatry is mobilised to make sense of them. We then see a medical approach to trauma, resulting in diagnoses such as PTSD, and treatment with drugs such as antidepressants (see Kinzie, 2016).

The transformation of resistance into psychiatric disorder means that refugees' resistance to processing (what is understood from a psychological perspective as) trauma and loss is sometimes being interpreted as them not being 'ready to manage and process the trauma

and loss', in the words of one of my participants. Managerial language is invoked to describe how refugees 'should' process their experiences, showing the influence of a neoliberal and Western mode of understanding. This form of language, which comes from a psychological discourse, is neoliberal (Harvey, 2005) because it requires them to be able to manage their psyche in order to act; furthermore, I name it as Western (inspired by Mohanty, 1984, 2003), because it asks them to manage and process trauma and loss within an individualised framework and understanding which fails to consider the socio-cultural diversities of people from different backgrounds.

Interestingly, when refugees do not respond to this call, they are interpreted as not 'being ready' to process trauma and loss, as if the process and articulation of any trauma is a ritual passage to the new territory. Taking into consideration that the activities organised as part of the PSS are about normalising feelings of violence and loss, it may be argued that the discourse of trauma becomes a stepping stone between violence and adjustment in the new spatiality. As mentioned above, the aid worker described the purpose of the PSS as being to 'normalise their life, to continue through activities'. It may thus be argued that there is a broader intention within psychosocial support that goes beyond processing trauma and loss. Given that refugees are mainly approached as 'traumatised' (Summerfield, 1998), I argue that trauma becomes a primary signifier reproducing a form of discourse that asks refugees to adjust to the daily camp life, structured by the PSS activities.

In the words of another psychologist from a refugee camp in mainland Greece (from an interview conducted during my doctoral research):

> And when let's say someone comes and complains that 'I don't have anything to do, I feel bored, I want to go to an apartment', I know very well that the process for getting an apartment is complicated, and either he will be given one or he won't, but in the meantime, there are the activities in the camp which he can get involved in in order to *fill his day, to be occupied with something and at least not be bored, not be- not be vulnerable to anxiety, not be vulnerable to losing interest or, might I say, to falling into 'depression'* [emphasis added]. But he does not get involved with anything, he sits and thinks about 'what I left back in my country', about the life he had before, and has no motivation to get involved with the present and to do something.

Back in 2019, while I was doing my fieldwork in mainland Greece, the urban accommodation programme, which had begun in 2016, was still being implemented. People who were considered vulnerable and/or as having special needs were given apartments to live in or near urban centres. In the extract above (the refugee requesting an apartment and to leave the camp), it is worth paying attention to the psychologist's suggestion that engagement in camp activities was the way to tackle 'vulnerability' to anxiety and depression.

Consequently, it is not only *the space* of the camp, in the sense of 'the spatial', that should be considered in the discussion of psychology and trauma, but also how 'doing something in the present', the present of the camp, is associated with time, the time in the camp. This is why I refer to the *spatial temporalities of the psychological*, to connect the spatial and the

temporal realm (Harvey, 1990) of camps with the role and discourse of psychology on trauma. Understanding and conceptualising the present in camps as engagement with PSS activities psychologises refugees and their understanding of both the camp and their present and presence there.

This form of psychologisation (De Vos, 2014), which almost calls on refugees to submerge themselves in the spatial temporality of camps and within one-to-one therapeutic sessions or group activities designed to motivate and 'empower' them, creates a distorted reality of what is taking place in the present, the present of camps.

Hotspots and camps are part of the crisis and its discourse. In the name of 'refugee crisis' they become a necessary 'solution'; a 'response' that accommodates the crisis. On further exploration, it seems that they encapsulate the way refugees are approached in the new spatiality, i.e., in European territory. Thinking of them as a political strategy to tackle both crisis and forced migration, they in fact trap people in their spatiality and when the discourse of psychology and trauma comes into play, hotspots and camps become a mechanism where a certain form of subjectivity is produced (see Christinaki, 2022, but also Kapsali and Mentinis, 2018).

In the next section, I offer an example of psychologisation (De Vos, 2011) at the level of body and psyche, and I discuss how psychopolitics manifest within camps and push towards the creation of a certain form of subjectivity among migrants. The work of Frantz Fanon provides fruitful insights for conceptualising the intersection of psychology and politics at the level of the body and the psyche and, secondly, for situating psychopolitics within a postcolonial framework and understanding.

FANON AND THE POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF LIVELIHOOD: PSYCHOPOLITICAL INTIMACIES

Fanon's work still feels contemporary to scholars who work on the intersections of psychology and politics, especially those who attempt to invoke the post/de/anti-colonial. As Hook (2005) explains, for Fanon it was important to show the role of political factors within the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Equally, it was crucial for him to depict, critique, and analyse the socio-political conditions of colonialism in terms of their implications for the human psyche. In the context of multiple discussions of the term 'refugee crisis', De Genova (2018) suggests we approach 'migrant crisis' as racial crisis, highlighting the 'unresolved *racial crisis* that derives fundamentally from the postcolonial condition of "Europe" as a whole' (p. 1765). Taking this seriously into consideration, I conclude this article by offering an example of how humanitarian refugee programmes in Greece should be linked with questions of psychology and politics not just in terms of class and gender, but of race. Hence this section focuses on Fanon's contributions to a postcolonial critique of psychology within camps.

According to another psychologist (interviewed as part of my doctoral research) in mainland Greece, most refugees:

> …embody, psycho-embody their problems: there are issues in the family with the husband or the children, the tension is too much—they come and say 'I have a headache and I need medicines'. Most of the cases I had were referred to me by the Doctors of the World staff in the camp—if someone… asks for medicines either for sleeping or for a headache and *the pain does not exist* [emphasis added], they send him to a psychologist, they understand after some explanation that 'the problem I am dealing with is this, I think a lot because I am here and I miss my family', most [of them] do not know how to speak of their emotions...

Additionally, Fanon (1964/1967, p. 8) writes:

> The patient who complains of headaches, ringing in his ears, and dizziness, will also have high blood-pressure. But should it happen that along with these symptoms there is no sign of high blood-pressure, nor of brain tumour, in any case nothing positive, the doctor would have to conclude that medical thinking was at fault; and as any thinking is necessarily thinking about something, he will find the patient at fault—an indocile, undisciplined patient, who doesn't know the rules of the game. Especially the rule, known to be inflexible, which says: any symptom presupposes a lesion.

The objective medical gaze needs to justify the tensions of the body as symptoms which provoke lesions. As Fanon (1964/1967, p. 8) shows, for doctors '*any symptom presupposes a lesion*' [emphasis added]. The asymptomatic patient is a patient whose tensions are not recognised, since they do not show symptoms which can be medically read. In other words, their pain is misrecognised because it is unable to be situated in the medical terminology of suffering.

In the psychologist's extract, a refugee's pain is also misrecognised by the medical gaze. As the psychologist says, '*the pain does not exist*'. The pain in the head, unable to find a substantial medical interpretation, loses its substantial meaning; and without medical meaning, the pain also loses its legitimate existence. It does not have a medical value which can be justified in tensions–lesions and alleviated through the prescription of a medication. The pain is misrecognised in its own embodiment and moved from the level of body to the level of the psyche. Doctors of the World staff, being unable to 'see' the outcome of pain in the body, refer this refugee to the expert of the psyche, a psychologist.

What if pain, though, is an affective emotion able to powerfully signify 'a symptom of its own time'?

In other words, what would it mean to historicise pain and loss?

For pain to be considered, it must either be 'seen' in the body or enunciated in language to articulate its meaning. Recall the psychologist's words: '*most* [of them] *do not know how to speak of their emotions*'. For some people, it may indeed help to articulate the pain and put it into words. However, it depends on how the pain is registered into language. In the

context of migration, if this means to register it into an expression of emotions intelligible to the mainstream language of psychology, then this may only individualise the pain.

When the psychologist states that refugees 'understand with some explanation that "the problem I am dealing with is this, I think a lot because I am here and I miss my family"', the discourse of psychology interprets the pain in a twofold way. The first is that the pain in the head is an effect of constant thought in relation to where the refugee is at that point in time (i.e., in the camp) as well as in relation to their family, who have probably been left behind. The pain is individualised with the argument of constant thought, rather than situated within the broader effects of war and forced migration. Second, the psychologist implies that by making refugees understand how the pain results from constant thought, they help them articulate their emotions. According to the psychologist:

> …they understand with some explanation that 'the problem I deal with is this, I think a lot because I am here and I miss my family', most [of them] they do not know how to speak for their emotions…

This is why I think it matters to focus on and explore the way pain is registered in language: as the extract above illustrates, it fails to connect the psychic and socio-political effects of war together.

As for 'the North African' in Fanon, the past for the refugee is 'a burning past'. 'What he hopes is that he will never suffer again, never again be face-to-face with that past. This present pain … suffices him' (1964/1967, p. 4). The past is burning in a burning present, I would claim, where pain as a form of psychosomatic symptom is misrecognised. The discourse of psychology, by arguing that refugees need help to understand why they feel pain, is a great misrecognition, even more so when it is interpreted as a manifestation of constant thinking.

It is not that the psychologist makes no attempt to address the meaning of the pain, the symptom; but pushing it into another level of psychic elaboration articulates a different form of existence. To '*think a lot*' because '*I am here, and I miss my family*' psychologises their present and presence because it treats the pain simply as a cognitive-psychic manifestation. The attitude of the medical personnel, Fanon argues (1964/1967, p. 7), 'is very often an a priori attitude. The North African does not come with a substratum common to his race, but on a foundation built by the European. In other words, the North African spontaneously, by the very fact of appearing on the scene, enters into a pre-existing framework'.

The pain in the head is an embodied political symptom. A symptom which may seek to understand why 'I am here' in the first place or 'why I am here while my family is not'. Turning the symptom inwards, rather than analysing and approaching it within a socio-political framework which opens questions of war, forced migration, and camps on a political basis, firstly reveals the limits of the mainstream European psychological framework, and secondly, provides an argument that prevents engagement with the role of the West in refugees' arrival. This is what makes Fanon so important for approaching and conceptualising

psychosomatic symptoms, psychology, and trauma in the refugee reality; he adds a postcolonial reading of suffering which moves from bodily integrity into psychic elaboration and positions the West at the epicentre of refugees' subject formation amid the camps spatiality.

CONCLUSION

It remains a question whether and how psychology could be more liberatory, if at all, within camps and hotspots. As shown in this article, both space and time are key to understanding the role of psychology and trauma there. At the same time, the discourses of psychology and trauma are implicated in the very production of these spaces. By exploring how psychology and trauma manifest within hotspots and camps, I have argued that they have become a political strategy for 'tackling' the crisis. When the discourses of psychology and trauma come into play, they become the spatial temporality in which a certain form of subjectivity emerges and is produced.

Drawing on Fanon and his work on psychopolitics, colonialism, and mental health, I discuss how postcolonial thought could shed further light on the way subjectivity emerges amid the spatial temporalities of camps and hotspots, and within the combined discourses of psychology and aid.

Throughout my time in Greece, there were multiple and well-supported sites of resistance: protests outside of the hotspots and camps, demonstrations inside hotspots and camps, hunger strikes, feminist solidarity, and LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and others) solidarity networks among others. It is in these spaces that an eerie hope and beauty was and is flourishing. I believe, then, that to intervene in the way psychology works, we need to connect it with broader movements that not only demand the opening of borders and eradication of hotspots and camps, but that it can also provide alternate spaces of care, support, and resistance. That was also Fanon's aspiration and contribution. Psychic liberation is tightly linked with the struggle for social liberation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my doctoral supervisors Prof. Erica Burman and Dr. Rubina Jasani. This paper is part of my doctoral research, and it would have not been possible without their continuous help and support. Special thanks to Suddhasatwa Guharoy who helped me think and restructure the paper and great thanks to Hannah Berry for proofreading and editing the final version of the paper.

My doctoral research was funded by the School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED) at the University of Manchester, UK.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–14
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.05

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

NOTE FROM THE FRONT LINE

‘The war, with all of its brutality and nonsense, came to my house’: How invasion transformed our clinical psychology course

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ABSTRACT

This article—a collaboration between us as student and educator—shares an example of Freirean praxis in a clinical psychology course. We discuss how our course was transformed when, one day after our first class of the semester, Russian military forces invaded Ukraine and students were suddenly and unexpectedly called on to host and/or provide support for forcibly displaced people from Ukraine. This article is our attempt to describe how the complex political context in which we found ourselves shaped and transformed our clinical psychology course and our experience of our learning environment. We reflect together on how we responded to the immediate consequences of this event, share what we learned through this experience, and discuss the implications for anti-oppressive practitioner educational contexts.

KEYWORDS: anti-oppressive practice; praxis; privilege; teaching; trauma; psychotherapy; war

CONTENT NOTICE: As part of trauma-informed, anti-oppressive practice, we note that this article contains graphic descriptions of armed conflict, forcible displacement, institutional violence, and warfare that might be distressing for some readers. This includes some descriptions of the consequences of food deprivation that might be particularly distressing for some forcibly displaced people and their past hosts. We encourage readers to decide whether and under which circumstances to engage with this content.

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Influential Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970/1972) conceptualised education as an inherently political domain with the potential to catalyse action to challenge oppressive structures, societal inequities, and power dynamics. First published in Portuguese in 1968 and later translated into English, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1972) critiqued what he termed the 'banking model' of education, in which students are treated as passive containers or empty vessels into which educators place their knowledge. This banking model is a dominant approach to learning in colonialist and capitalist contexts. Instead, Freire envisioned a critical pedagogy in which learning can liberate students to take action in response to current events. His approach transcended mere theorising, emphasising the inextricable relation between theory and action, with each informing the other.

Praxis is a key component of Freire's approach. Freire (1972, p. 52) described praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'. Central to Freirean notions of praxis is the belief that it is inadequate for students merely to learn *about* the world, but that they also have an ethical duty to take *action* toward addressing injustice. For Freire, praxis was 'a central defining feature of human life and a necessary condition of freedom', because 'human nature is expressed through intentional, reflective, meaningful activity situated within dynamic historical and cultural contexts that shape and set limits on that activity' (Glass, 2001, p. 16). Freirean praxis is an ongoing process of synthesising theory and practice, so that theory informs practice, which in term informs theory, and so on in cycles that build on each other. Praxis is about immersion, a core aspect of the course we discuss in this article.

Given the international, geopolitical, and cultural diversity of our learning community, it was challenging to balance the limited time and space for each topic with content that would meet students' needs for content that facilitated praxis. In my course, I—the first author—supported students to share more about their social position and lived experiences, so that I could include sources that addressed the region-specific barriers to social and environmental justice and local manifestations of systemic oppression they were likely to encounter. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to explore praxis-based dilemmas in a broader historical context and their impact on students' contemporary praxis, we—both authors—hope to fill this gap in our future work.

When explaining a praxis-oriented approach to caring for young people in the Child and Youth Care (CYC) profession, White (2007) conceptualised praxis as being about 'ethical, self-aware, responsive, and accountable action' that 'involves knowing, doing and being' (p. 226). White conceptualised praxis as something that is highly sensitive to specific contexts. For this reason, it can 'never be proceduralised or specified in advance' (p. 226), asserting that knowledge is *made*, not 'discovered' (p. 232). This description of praxis contrasts with the institutional requirements of the clinical psychology course on which this article will focus. Whereas the official curriculum that I—the first author—was required to produce for approval by the Board of Studies was fixed in advance and reduced to a set of precise tasks

outlined in a formal syllabus, I shifted to a praxis-oriented approach in response to our specific political context.

OUR COURSE

From February through June 2022, we—the authors—were in the nominal roles of student and educator in an online course on psychotherapy with marginalised populations. The institutional hierarchy inherent in these roles contrasted with our shared experience as culturally humble learners co-creating a learning community together. In 2022, the course on Psychotherapy with Marginalised Populations that had been originally created and designed by the first author shifted from an optional elective to a required unit for final year students in the clinical psychology (psychotherapy and neuropsychology) specialisation tracks of the Warsaw International Studies in Psychology (WISP) Program. The WISP Program is a five-year international Master of Psychology degree program based in the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Warsaw in Warsaw, Poland. Taught in English, the course is a unified degree, which means it integrates undergraduate and postgraduate content to culminate in a postgraduate Master of Psychology degree.

English was not a primary language for most students, who joined class sessions on Zoom from rural, urban, and suburban areas across continents, including but not limited to the lands colonially known as Colombia and Turkey, and the unceded Sápmi lands of the Indigenous Sámi People in regions colonially known as Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the Russian Kola Peninsula. Although the original syllabus contained a unit on anti-oppressive practice with forcibly displaced people, this unit was initially scheduled to occur toward the end of the course. Sources listed in the formal syllabus were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles. However, I—the first author—curated additional course content in the online learning platform to provide multimedia resources that centred and prioritised content created by people with lived experience of each topic we explored. This included a range of publicly posted video clips, blog posts, and articles in students' primary languages. This strategic decision to include multimedia and user-generated content that are typically excluded from academic curricula made it possible for students to learn from a range of marginalised people and perspectives whose lives and insights have historically been excluded from, tokenised by, and marginalised in higher education, such as a video clip about the struggles and triumphs of Arsham, a man of trans experience from Afghanistan who had sought asylum and obtained refugee status in Germany (InfoMigrants, 2019), and documentary films about the unjust and abusive conditions faced around the world by people who are forcibly detained for seeking refuge (including but not limited to Arte.tv Documentary, 2021; Democracy Now!, 2022; Hello McSavage, 2017; The New Humanitarian, 2015; and Vice News, 2021).

The first session of our class was held on Wednesday, the 23rd of February 2022. One day later, on the 24th of February, Russian military forces invaded Ukraine. This article is our attempt to describe how the complex political context in which we found ourselves shaped and transformed our clinical psychology course. We reflect together on how we responded to the immediate consequences of this event and share what we learned through this experience.

Gávi (he/him): When I first began creating and teaching courses for the University of Warsaw in 2011, I did so in person for several consecutive weeks at a time. My three-to-four-week intensive modules gradually evolved into requests from my Program Director for semester-long content. Unfortunately, I was unable to accept these requests due to the public nationalist campaign against 'LGBT' people in Poland (Ayoub, 2014; Bielska, 2021; Chowaniec et al., 2021; Yermakova, 2021), as exemplified by the creation of public 'LGBT-free zones/strefy wolne od ideologii LGBT' in approximately 100 Polish cities and towns as part of the nationalist campaign to cast our existence as a danger to Polish society (Chowaniec et al., 2021). After this explicitly anti-'LGBT' campaign began, I taught by distance due to my increased risk of physical violence as an educator with lived experience of being targeted for my marginalised gender, body, kinship, and sexuality.

Back in 2011, I began my first course by sharing a handout with some ideas from Paulo Freire's critique of the 'banking model' of education and Freire's notion of education as a potential site for actions that could achieve liberation from societal injustice and oppression. I was hoping to initiate dialogue with students about how we wanted to create our learning environment and to build a collaborative, responsive space. Although I had some prior experience with teaching, I was a postgraduate student filled with idealistic notions of transformative learning that had yet to be tested under such immediate challenges as those I would later face when the consequences of war would come to my students' homes.

When I introduced these Freirean ideas and practices, some students expressed shock, while others eagerly adopted these new ways of being, knowing, and doing together beyond the autocratic approaches to teaching they had known. One Polish student informed me of an androcentric saying that was often repeated to me by students during subsequent years of teaching, which he translated into English as 'the lecturer is King'. He explained that, although our program was increasingly shifting toward collaborative and interactive learning environments, these newer approaches clashed with a well-established and deeply entrenched Polish tradition of educators who behaved as quasi-monarchs toward students, who were expected to behave as loyal, obedient subjects—a royalist iteration of Freire's (1970/1972) 'banking model'. This student explained that, according to this tradition, lecturers felt entitled to students' respect, adopted an expert position, and conceptualised

their roles as transmitters of knowledge rather than partners in the learning environment as my handout had proposed.

Over the years, I learned from students how to introduce these concepts and practices in a way that was more intelligible to them, as well as encountering students who were already familiar with this framework—particularly those from regions with greater geographic proximity to Freire's Brazilian place of origin or to the origins of leading liberation psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró in El Salvador (see Martín-Baró, 1994).

When the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces began in February 2022, due to the geographical proximity of Poland to Ukraine, students who had no prior training or experience in working with forcibly displaced people were suddenly expected to shift from source-based classroom learning to applying their practice to a situation for which many students told me they felt completely unprepared. Fortunately, my course already included the component of weekly written, audio, or video reflective journals in which students were expected to integrate course material with lived experience across the intersecting domains of their personal and professional contexts.

In their journal entries from those early weeks, many students recognised immediately that academic theories and streamlined clinical approaches were useless and irrelevant to meet the practical, emotional, and political needs of people who had been forcibly displaced by the invasion. Students with ancestral and/or personal ties to the region colonially known as South America and the regions of Northern Africa, Western Asia, Central Asia, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia, Southeastern Asia, and Northern Asia expressed their experiences of profound alienation and dehumanisation when witnessing the outpouring of support for Ukrainian people in situations similar to those to which their families, loved ones, and communities had been subjected without any corresponding public support. Multiple students from racialised backgrounds who self-identified as Black, Brown, Indigenous, First Nations, North African, South Asian, and/or Muslim people described the structural violence of forcible displacement, detention, discriminatory laws and policies, and public vilification to which they and communities with which they felt affinity had been subjected.

One student shared two pictures of a parent and child that had been circulated widely in mass media to elicit care and support for forcibly displaced people. The first image depicted a pale, lighter-skinned mother and child with stereotypically European-associated visual appearance. The second image, which was placed beside the first, depicted a mother and child in an almost identical pose, but the mother was darker-skinned and wearing a hijab (head-scarf). This student described the injustice of witnessing the near-unanimous outpouring of international support and empathy for people from Ukraine, in contrast to the suspicious, hostile, and even violent and homicidal responses to forcibly displaced people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and elsewhere. Similar concerns were echoed by a Jewish student whose relatives had been turned away

from multiple countries when seeking refuge from Nazi persecution following the Sho'ah (a Hebrew term for the Holocaust) in the 1940s and by international students who had recently hosted forcibly displaced Iraqi families and witnessed local hostilities against these families.

The immediacy of the 2022 invasion and its intimate impact on students—and our learning environment—were transformed into sites of political resistance and responsiveness. Instead of continuing to teach the pre-scheduled curriculum content in the order in which I had written the course, I would read student reflective journals and engage with breaking news throughout the week in order to determine our 'living curriculum'. Like many students turned unexpected practitioners, co-author Kasia (she/her), who was living in Warsaw during the semester, wrote about this experience in her reflective journal.

Kasia (she/her): Two weeks into the war, my roommate had to leave the country for three weeks. We both agreed that, given the situation, her room couldn't stay empty. First, we welcomed a family of four, a mother with two children and a grandmother. As we learned later, they left Ukraine on the first day of the war and had been staying in a hotel for those first two weeks.

Soon, the apartment started to be filled with noises, the sounds of children running around, Peppa Pig playing on a loop on TV, and the smell of food in the kitchen. Suddenly, our apartment, usually quiet and overly clean, became the centre of chaos.

For the first few days, I stayed in my room. I was waking up earlier than the family, and then going to the kitchen later in the evening when they would watch TV. Our interactions were restricted to saying hello in the morning. Partly because I wanted to give them a substitute for privacy, but also because I suddenly started to share an apartment with complete strangers with whom I do not speak the same language and I also needed time to adjust to the new situation. I remember one evening sitting at my desk, when through the wall I could hear that Eva (4-year-old) was talking with her dad. She was eating dinner and they started to sing a children's song, and somehow this was the symbolic moment of my realisation when the war, with all of its brutality and nonsense, came to my house. It was devastating to witness the innocence of this little girl and this intimate father–daughter moment juxtaposed with the global geopolitical situation in which they were caught.

Gávi: Within two weeks, forcibly displaced people were not merely a clinical topic for students to study through peer-reviewed sources. They were the people at students' kitchen tables, the children whose singing could be heard on the other side of the physical and metaphorical walls that separated learning from lived experience, theory from practice. With each kitchen table encounter, in each deeply personal moment, the war invaded the homes and lives of

students, demanding a personal response that transcended the simplistic and elitist conceptualisation of clinical boundaries they had been taught. Here was war, in all its gripping and tangible brutality, calling on all of us to take action.

Kasia: When talking about wars or other events of this magnitude—impossible to comprehend—the most transformative sources are individual stories. For us, as bystanders, personal stories are within the scope of our limited understanding. However, the fact that those individual stories are happening in your home, your kitchen, in generally shared spaces, that is a completely new kind of overwhelming experience that invokes a flood of emotions and existential questions rooted in the intimacy of this moment. It is without exaggeration that I say that I became a stranger in my home. The events and discussions that were taking place under my roof were beyond what I could imagine. In moments like that, due to the intimate circumstances, I was invited to glimpse more deeply into their individual stories.

When I was talking with S., a mother of two who escaped Ukraine when the war started, about how she looked for rooms, and apart from financial issues, she told me that it was important for her to find a place with a kitchen. She asked me several times before moving in if there was a kitchen available and if they could use it. She and her mother were happy that they could cook a proper meal for themselves and the kids. With the help of the food, they wanted to bring a bit of routine to the kids' lives—the tastes and smells that the kids knew, and the ritual of cooking that would bring them a moment of escape. I remember they were constantly cooking.

One time, I was alone with the grandma in the apartment, and as soon as she saw me, she invited me to eat with her. We ate together and talked. She talked a lot. However, I will never know what she said. Was she worried about her family back in Ukraine? Was she talking about the future? Or was she telling me how she said goodbye to her home, maybe her husband? Did she tell me something that everybody knew or was it a secret? I will never know now, but I remember that, in that moment, I was totally invested in our conversation. I tried to respond accurately beyond spoken words, to nod or smile at the right moment, to make her feel that she could talk as long as she wanted. At the end of our meal, she hugged me and said thank you. Somehow, I had a hunch that she meant thank you for our conversation.

S. and her family decided to move to Germany after a week and a half of staying with me. After they left, I could not get used to the silence in the apartment. The next day, I saw that there was a bus leaving from Mariupol, an eastern part of Ukraine. People were looking for temporary housing for a week until a local organisation would find them something more long-term.

When the next family arrived, this time a mother and a seventeen-year-old son, I gave them only simple instructions about the bathroom and where they would find the most necessary products. Then I left the apartment for a bit to give them privacy. Based on the traumatic nature of their travel and events before that, I knew that what they needed first was to take care of their basic physiological needs and that they cannot be overwhelmed with a lot of information at the beginning. I told them when I was coming back, and I returned promptly at that time. We drank coffee together, I showed them the food which I had prepared for them, and they went to sleep. They slept through the whole day and night; the food remained untouched.

I remember all of those details, because I was struck by how their behaviour corresponded with the advice and information (written by a psychotraumatologist) I received from the organisation which helped with their evacuation. I felt that the experience of hosting them would be different from my previous family, but as I was well-prepared, I felt that I had a map to navigate through this unknown situation, to protect both their comfort and mine. We spent more than two weeks together.

While this situation was taking place, I was sharing my experiences during our weekly classes. Sharing real-life examples and observations in class was not only beneficial for me personally, but I also felt that, through our class discussions, we were bringing our collaborative experiences of learning on different levels. We saw how theory could be instantly applied to real life situations. In these unpredictable times, acquiring knowledge about what was going on around me was comforting. I also felt that being taught a module which corresponded with my lived experiences in the moment resulted in my learning faster. As a psychologist who might be working with forcibly displaced people in the future, I know that this experience will have an impact on my work. It is one thing to know about what people in such situations can go through, but different to actually witness the intimacy of those moments.

Gávi: By the second week of class, I invited students to share their recent and ongoing experiences. Students began to share more in class and in their reflective journals about the contrast between their clinical psychology training and the real life needs of the forcibly displaced people who were now part of their everyday lives. The simplistic, reductionist notions of ‘professional boundaries’ they had been taught during their clinical psychology training were inadequate and inappropriate for addressing the dual imperative for political and therapeutic action with people whose lives and needs could not be confined to a therapeutic hour in a consultation room.

Students' concurrent personal experiences with forcibly displaced people also helped them to understand some of the content from our class better. For example, students who had expressed initial skepticism regarding the concept of privilege began to grasp the importance of examining their own privileges and their impact on students' capacity to identify and meet the needs of people who, for some students, were now part of their everyday lives and at their kitchen tables. In her journal on the second week of our class, Kasia began reflecting on privilege.

Kasia: In my reflective journal from week 2 of our course, I reflected on privilege in general and on my specific privilege in helping forcibly displaced people. During my previous course with Gávi, our class often discussed privilege and engaged in exercises to reflect on privilege. By the start of our course on psychotherapy with marginalised populations, it felt natural to think about what was going on and analyse it through the privilege lens. In my reflective journal, I wrote:

During the class, I have shared my experience of helping Ukrainian families by providing a temporary shelter for them. Talking about it made me examine and recognise my privilege in the context of helping. Of course, it is wonderful to help. I can tell that I feel more human than ever, that I am proud of myself, and that I feel that I act in accordance with my values. More importantly, we are all here in Poland in a situation in which we have never been before, and which is fuelled by emotions such as fear, sadness, and anger. It is not easy to find your place in a new world like that.

For the past three weeks, I was able to do so, by channelling all of those emotions into helping and caring for the families who stayed with me. However, I am aware that this is a sum of many of my privileges that I have in my life. I'm not helping because I care more, I am helping because I care *and* I have the means to do so, and those means are my privileges. Starting from the fact that I live in an apartment into which I could invite other people. I earn money and I have parents who are helping me financially, and they are in a good financial position to send me some additional money. I come from a wealthy family. Upper middle class allowed me to comfortably and carelessly slide through life. So when a laptop owned by the boy who was staying with me broke down over the weekend, I could help him. When it was clear to me and my friends that we could not fix it, we had to hurry up, because I., an eleven-year-old Ukrainian boy, was supposed to start online classes with his teachers from Ukraine, and then leave for Germany. Me and my friends and family (and my friends' friends) were able to chip in to buy him a brand-new computer. He could also start those classes on time, and his mum did not have to worry about that.

Of course, it was a very rewarding moment to see his smile and we have a really nice story to tell. However, I know that I wouldn't have been able to get him this new computer that fast if I had not had economically advantaged friends. However, the privilege is not only about money, it's also about being healthy, and not living with any chronic illness. Also, my mental health allowed me to invite strangers to my home, to make some adjustments to my daily routine, and open up and meet new people and listen and smile when they needed it. I have not survived any trauma, so I did not worry about being triggered by something. I felt that I could handle the situation. I'm also an allistic [non-Autistic] person, so I could easily make connections with the strangers who were my guests and adjust to the chaotic environment of my new (temporary) routine. I'm also not from any oppressed minoritised group in Poland. I'm a heterosexual, white woman of cisgender experience, and this social position means that, although I experience marginalisation as a woman, I do not have to face additional stressors due to multiple, intersecting restrictions of my fundamental human rights.

What I wanted to write in this entry is that I had the mental space to offer help, the space that is commonly occupied with daily struggles for less privileged people. Helping brings a lot of satisfaction, but I am aware that I owe it not only to my sensitivity.

Gávi: This recognition that the role of 'helper' constitutes a privileged position was a key theme we explored in our course. In one of the course sources, child psychiatrist Sami Timimi, who described growing up in a refugee family, challenged Eurocentric ideology that conceptualises human distress as psychopathology (Timimi, 1998). This pathologisation of forcibly displaced people's proportionate responses to state-sponsored violence functions to shield unjust institutions and public policies from vital scrutiny. As a mixed, polycultural person who grew up partly in rural and urban China, on the unceded Aboriginal lands of the Eora Nation in the region colonially known as Australia and elsewhere, and as someone with an intergenerational family history of forced displacement, I felt an intimate connection to this topic that was shared by some students and completely unfamiliar to other students. The reflective journal process helped me to meet the challenge of bringing all students into this topic in a way that integrated psychological theory with practice, as did the flexible 'choose your own adventure' approach I took to our curriculum. Despite the nominal roles of student and educator, I added student-recommended sources to the learning options for each week and curated these options into a menu of learning choices on a weekly basis in direct response to the content of students' reflective journals.

I was acutely aware of the moral responsibility to act and the political implications of teaching content on clinical psychology practice with forcibly displaced people while students were encountering demand both for their practitioner skills and for more practical resources such as food and a home. Had our curriculum remained static, had students not been able to

use class time for dialogue and reflection on the events taking place in Ukraine, at Polish train stations, and in their homes, we would have missed a crucial opportunity for learning.

Kasia: It is difficult to reflect critically on this experience, as it is still fresh, and the war is still going on for us here in Poland. It is now winter, and the Russian attacks on Ukraine's power infrastructure (e.g., Tobias, 2022) mean that we are likely to have a lot more forcibly displaced people coming from Ukraine to Poland this winter.

One reflection I already have on the experience of our course and the co-occurring invasion and forcible displacement of people from Ukraine is that, before these events, I was always interested in reading and writing about trauma, but also always somehow avoided content about war-related trauma. I naively thought that covering this content would not be practical for me. Ukrainians with whom I have communicated will correct people on the start date of the war between Russia and Ukraine, which began with the war in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (see Kirby, 2022), eight years before the February invasion of Ukraine. These events occurred in the eastern part of Ukraine, very far from Poland. Before the invasion, I denied the fact that the war zone could spread, and that I could see consequences of this magnitude in the place where I live. I did not think content about forcibly displaced people would ever be relevant to my work. After the invasion, I realised that this content was essential learning for me.

In Poland, our lives changed permanently in February. We are still dealing with the war and its ongoing escalation; even now, we do not have the privilege of emotional or physical distance from these events.

Gávi: This experience reinforced my understanding that the roles of educator and student can be malleable and shifting, as I learned so much from the students as we explored the new challenges they faced, together. Some students living in Poland expressed concerns that they would be next, that Russian military forces would invade Poland, too. In our second session of the course, students with family and loved ones in Ukraine shared a raw and immediate grief, fear, and anger as they described what had happened to those fleeing the invasion. Each week, despite the range of topics we explored, the impacts of the invasion and resultant forcible displacement of people from Ukraine—as well as the forcible displacement of people from many other regions—found their way into our discussions, into students' reflective journal entries, and into our curriculum.

Nestled far from this war in the office of my rented home on unceded Boonwurrung Country in the region colonially known as Australia, I found myself deeply moved and shaken by how close this war had come to me from several continents away. Being so close to war renewed my grappling with the complex combination of longstanding, emerging, and recovered histories of repeated forcible displacement and intergenerational trauma in my

family of origin. Throughout our course, I followed international news closely, responding to the new events and challenges identified each week in students' written, audio, and video reflective journals. Taking this learning journey in collaboration with students meant that I and *our* course (it no longer felt right to call it 'mine') were transformed together. We struggled together with the ethical conundra of how to integrate the acute suffering, loss, and grief of forcibly displaced people into clinical psychologists' teaching, clinical training, theory formation, and career development. How could we not merely *use* people's experiences but be *accountable* for them in ways that would actually improve the material conditions of people's everyday lives?

Throughout our course, I had frequent exchanges with students about the brutalities and banalities of this war: the deprivations and indignities, the triumphs and personal victories. Without realising it would become one of the most important parts of the unwritten curriculum for this course, through our connections across time zones and geographic space, the war had come to my home, too.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Madeline R. Young and Brian W. Kovacs for helpful feedback on earlier drafts, Coach Samantha Cooper for providing strategic support to the first author, Angie Strachan and Keith Tudor for encouraging our work, Wouter de Raad and Zofia Borska-Mądrzycka in the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Warsaw for their unwavering institutional support for our course, and all students in our Psychotherapy with Marginalised Populations course for contributing to our learning and transformation. We dedicate this article to the forcibly displaced people whose lives have shaped ours—including forcibly displaced people whom the international community continues to neglect and devalue. You are not forgotten. You are ever in our hearts, as is our duty to act.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–8
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.06

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Politics of the body in the 'woman, life, freedom' movement in Iran: A commentary

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ABSTRACT

On 16 September 2022, nationwide protests broke out in Iran in reaction to the death of a 22-year-old girl, Mahsa Amini, who was killed by the morality police for not wearing a 'proper hijab 'and led to the first women-led movement in Iran. This commentary explores the importance of this movement and historical moment as it relates to the form of resistance that is being exercised in fighting against the oppression of women under the current gender apartheid of the Islamic Republic. I examine the main slogans, symbols, and icons of this movement in the context of the politics of the body and a reclaiming of women's bodies in a fight against a patriarchal dictatorship.

KEYWORDS: gender apartheid; body; oppression; feminism; Iran; politics

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On 16 September 2022, nationwide protests broke out in Iran in reaction to the death of a 22-year-old girl, Mahsa Amini, who was killed by the morality police for not wearing a 'proper hijab'. For those of us who have been following the recent social movements in Iran, this does not come as a surprise. Although many Iranian women have been fighting against the systematic oppression imposed on them for the past 40 years—since the 1979 Islamic revolution—their movement has gained a new momentum in recent years. One can trace the inception of the most recent wave to what is famously known as 'Girls of Revolution Street', which began in December 2017 (see for example, Rahimpor, 2018 or Kalvapalle, 2018). At that time, a number of brave women removed their hijab in public in a symbolic gesture as a sign of protest against mandatory hijabs in Iran. Many of these women were arrested and imprisoned. (Many names of prominent figures stand out in the Iranian women's movement, some of which are currently serving unusually cruel long prison sentences, such as Nasrin Sotoudeh, Narges Mohammadi, Shirin Ebadi, Vida Movahd, Shaparak Shajarizadeh, Fatemeh Sepehri and Masih Alinejad, amongst others.)

GENDER APARTHEID

The Iranian regime treats women as second-class citizens, nothing short of a gender apartheid. It must be called out for what it is. Woman in Iran are not only forced to wear the hijab from the age of six (basically as soon as they start elementary school), but experience systematic discrimination in all aspects of life. To give a few examples: they do not have the right to divorce; they are not automatically given the custody of their children; they need the permission of the first ranking man in their family to leave the country; and their testimony is worth half as much as a man's.

Gaining control over the body of women was the very first strategy that the Islamic republic employed after the revolution in order to establish its power in the country. According to Milani (1992), the hijab became mandatory for all Iranian women, including foreign visitors, in April 1983. A homogeneous religious attire was most notably imposed on women from early on. For example, schoolgirls are forced to wear uniforms that cover them from head to toe, mostly in dark colours. They are encouraged to keep their head coverings on even in all-girl classes. They are discouraged from any accessories, makeup, or nail polish that would distinguish them from one another. They are regularly chastised by the school authorities for any expressions of their individuality.

It has been nearly impossible to study the impact of early mandatory hijabs on Iranian girls and women due to the restrictions in Iran. However, we can speculate. The bodies of women have been used as the most important means of control for the Islamic regime. By taking away opportunities for individual expression, girls and women are reduced into non-subjects. They do not belong to themselves but to the state. The state comes to determine the most private aspects of their bodies, for example, whether they can remove their facial hair, dye their hair, shape their eyebrows, and so on. In some instances, there have even been

restrictions placed on removal of their pubic hair. The state believes it has the right and the jurisdiction to intrude into the most private spheres of a woman's life. Women have no choice in this. It does not matter if they are believers or non-believers of Islam. It does not matter if they are secular, atheist, Christian, Jewish, or Zoroastrian. The state wants all of them to be exactly the same.

Mandatory hijab (which includes not only a head covering but also long-sleeved knee-length uniforms and loose pants) can be limiting in very practical ways. It makes being physically active extremely difficult for girls and women. For instance, riding a bicycle is almost impossible in that attire. I recall from personal experience that since elementary school, we found very creative ways of tying our uniforms, so we could play basketball or volleyball. The dark colours, long sleeves, and unbreathable material can make the wonderfully hot summers of Iran unbearable. While it is true that over the years Iranian women have come up with very fashionable designs for the hijab, the uniforms remain pretty much the same at schools, government offices, hospitals, and so on. These uniforms are meant to make the woman's body extremely unattractive as well, which can induce a lot of shame for some women who cannot connect to that version of themselves. It is like being forced to wear clothes that do not fit to a social event. It takes away the pride and joy in the body.

I am fully aware that this type of movement may create a dissonance in the narrative of some Western feminists, who are committed to inclusivity, to promoting tolerance towards Muslim women, and to fight against Islamophobia. There is a big difference however between *choosing* to adhere to a specific attire for religious purposes and to be *forced* into wearing a religious attire, as a means of oppression. *When a woman chooses to wear the hijab, it becomes a form of her individual expression. However, when a woman is forced to wear the hijab, it acts to limit her individual expression and therefore it becomes oppressive.*

Underlying the discourse of the Islamic republic is a moralistic view of women's body and sexuality. Iranians are familiar with the icon of the pious woman, who is a model of chastity, subservience, and obedience. There is a sacrificial quality to this woman. She has given up all of her 'earthly egoistic' desires to the service of her family, the religion, and, I would argue, the state. These ideals place the pious woman in the position of the righteous and the woman who chooses to take back control of her body and sexuality in the position of the defiant. The latter has given in to hedonism and Western individualism and is therefore lost in her ways. The former is bestowed with a duty to lead the lost woman back on track. See, for example, the following passages from the leader of the Islamic revolution, Imam Khomeini (translation by Shaw & Arezoo, 2001):

> In response to a question about the need for hijab, 'We are concerned mainly with the younger women who when they make up and dress up draw hordes of young men after them. It is these women we're stopping. They don't need your sympathy.' (September 12, 1979) (p. 54)
>
> Wherever one looks in Iran, one sees women pursuing Islamic activities, religious and even political activities, while at the same time preserving their modesty and their dignity. Whereas

> those women who freely mingled with men in society produced nothing other than corruption throughout the whole of the [*shah*] period. (November 27, 1982) (p. 68)
>
> I ask the youth, the girls and boys, not to sacrifice their independence, freedom and human values, regardless of the trouble and suffering this may cause them, for a life of luxury, pleasure, indulgence and frequenting the centres of corruption which the West and its agents, man without a country, open to you. (June 5, 1989) (p. 83)

MORALITY POLICE

This is the essence of what we call the 'morality police' in Iran. They are there to preserve the order of the state, while they advertise their mandate as maintaining the chastity of society. For them, the defiant woman is a traitor of the state. She is impure and spreads impurity. (Take for example Hamid Rasaee, former member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly's comment about the most recent protests: 'The protestors' demand for freedom is that they want to sleep with someone new every night and graze like animals.' [Mehrabi, 2022].) She threatens the very power structures of the regime. Her hair, her body, her makeup become dangerous. She needs to be stopped at any cost and put back in her place. The defiant woman is dangerous because by expressions of her individuality, she is reclaiming her status as a subject. A subject that can choose for herself rather than just following what she is told by a religious authority. A subject that as Lacan says is a *desiring being* (Fink, 1965) and these desires can threaten the absolute power of a dominant gender-apartheid state that demands submission of its citizens, especially its second-class citizens.

As relational analysts, we are fully aware of how power structures can enter the unconscious and inform individual decisions outside of awareness (Rozmarin, 2017). For the Iranian woman, it has been the fear of removing her hijab, even when she is the only person walking on a deserted street. The school, the insinuations, and the morality police instill fear such that each Iranian woman begins carrying a small version of it in her head. From anecdotal accounts, I am aware that many Iranian women have a shared dream in which they find themselves having accidentally stepped outside of their homes without their hijab and this makes them feel very scared.

Another important aspect of the state's control of the body is manifested in the way punishment is carried out for those who break Islamic law. Public lashing and executions have been another integral part of the exercise of dominance by the Islamic regime in Iran. That lashing is chosen as the method of punishment for 'anti-Islamic conduct' brings forth once more the importance of the politics of the body. Lashing marks the condemned with an intention 'either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy' (Foucault, 1977, p. 34).

The public torture and execution marks the triumph of the state over the body of the defiant, and in the most concrete way imaginable. The Iranian regime frequently exercises

public hangings for political dissidents at major intersections using a very large crane, making the spectacle impossible for people to ignore (see, for example, Amnesty International's report, 1990). This 'policy of terror', as Foucault (1977) calls it, has been a significant mechanism of control, 'to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign' (p. 49).

So, the body of political dissidents swing high up in the air in the most powerless manner. And the body of Mahsa is crushed. So are many other bodies that are easily beaten up, bruised, or scarred on the streets by the morality police, who have the absolute blessing of the ruling power behind them. The spectacle of being picked up by the morality police, happening in public view and often drawing a lot of spectators, is the theatre of power of the Iranian government. So, when Iranian people rise up to protest the death of Mahsa, whose body was brutally treated by the morality police for no real crime, it is not without historical precedence.

POLITICS OF THE BODY

Mandatory hijab does not exist in isolation. It brings with it a whole set of ideologies, limitations, disciplines, and institutions created to maintain it, and so on. It is related to politics of the body in a system that aims to gain control over an individual's mind by means of controlling their body. I would like to draw from the ideas of Michel Foucault to delve deeper into understanding the importance of the body in structures of power and more specifically the dynamics that are being played out in Iran. Foucault writes:

> The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body—to the body that manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its force… A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved… (Foucault, 1977, p. 138)

In what he designates as a '"new micro-physics" of power', Foucault delineates how discipline institutions come to employ techniques of 'a certain mode of detailed political investment of the body' (p. 139) in order to establish their agenda and power. He emphasizes the importance of *details* in creating a kind of discipline that controls the most minute aspect of the body, and therefore of the person. He writes of Napoleon that 'he wished to arrange around him a mechanism of power that would enable him to see the smallest event that occurred in the state he governed' (p. 141). As an Iranian reading these passages, I cannot help but to think of the similarities with the goals of the Iranian Islamic Republic, and its thirst for meticulous control of every aspect of its citizens as mentioned above.

Foucault (1977) writes about 'a military dream of society' that prevailed the ideas of 18th century Europe: 'its fundamental reference was not to the *state of nature*, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the *primal social contract*, but to permanent coercions, not to *fundamental rights*, but to indefinitely progressive forms of

training, not the *general will* but to automatic docility [emphasis added].' (p. 169). I believe this passage summarizes the underlying ideology of the Islamic regime of Iran. One does not have to dig any further than the recent propaganda video clip prepared by the government titled, 'Hello Commander' to discover this. In this video clip, little children are turned into soldiers for the state and their absolute assimilation and subordination is desired. They are not only dressed in the same way, they are also trained to behave the same way.

But this passage also contains within it what Iranian people, especially the women, are demanding at this moment in history. They have decided not to submit to 'automatic docility' anymore, to take back their will, and demand their most natural fundamental individual and collective rights. Indeed, the symbols of this movement have from the beginning revolved around natural aspects of the human body, such as a woman's hair, and a sense of unchaining or liberation of beauty as a force against the restrictive rules of the regime. It stands in sharp contrast to the propaganda video clip. Not surprisingly, the ruling body is continuously warning the public about the dangers of such release, of these women who are 'coming loose' so to speak.

So, the body becomes the battle ground. The resistance starts with liberation of the body. The mandatory hijab has become an important symbolic icon in the individual and collective political psyche of Iranians. It not only symbolizes oppression of bodies, but the general oppression of every citizen, man, or woman in Iran. It symbolizes the oppression of freedom of speech and freedom in general. It is not surprising that the most unifying slogan in the recent uprising has been 'woman, life, freedom'. It starts with the bodies of the women, and it ends with the freedom that every person desires.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The bravery of the Iranian women is exemplary at this time as they risk their lives by removing the mandatory head covering in public and burning it. This act of defiance is another spectacle, the spectacle of resistance, of reclaiming their bodies and their freedom. These women are fully aware that the state will return with severe forms of punishment. At the same time, they have chosen to liberate themselves once and for all from the power that rules over them. Gradually, the bravery has spread and for the first time, we have a movement in Iran that is largely led by women.

So, for those who ask whether this movement is going to bear fruit, I would like to suggest that it already has. What was meant to be done with regard to the issue of the mandatory hijab has already been done. The nightmare of the Islamic regime has already come true, the spell is already broken. The hair is flying, the women are dancing, young people are kissing on the streets of Tehran. It is a beautiful revolution because it stands in sharp contrast to the ugliness that this regime promoted from its inception.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the women of Iran, whose voices have been a never-ending source of inspiration for me.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–2
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.07

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

NOTE FROM THE FRONT LINE

Women's uprising in Iran

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The humiliation and suppression of women during more than four decades of Islamic rule in Iran finally led to the most important revolution in the history of the world in the name of women in Iran. This revolution or change in society's attitude towards women was like a spark in the gunpowder of Iranian women's anger. The government, which during the four decades of ideological domination, always announced the safety of women in the form of following its rules, killed a young woman in its moral police centre. Mahsa Amini was a young woman from Saghez, who came to Tehran for a short trip and was arrested by Tehran's morality police at Haqqani metro station in Tehran on the 22nd of Shahrivar. She was suspiciously killed within two hours of her presence in this morality police centre.

Iranian women, many of whom had been degraded by the morality police in the streets and workplace, were outraged by Mahsa Amini's death. Additionally, this murder became famous worldwide as a symbol of the revolution of woman, life, freedom! In fact, the organised oppression against Iranian women, which deprived women of their natural and human rights, had now manifested itself in the murder of Mahsa Amini.

Legalised discrimination against women in Islamic republic laws is actually the definition of gender apartheid, which has deprived women of all their human rights for more than four decades and defending femininity has become a security crime in Iran. Most of the female activists in the field of protecting civil liberties and human rights are in prison under the title of disrupting national security, and even ordinary women have faced long prison sentences for being women and defying the mandatory veil.

The new wave of the women's movement has been a development over centuries in the region. One could argue this started in the month of Dey 1396, with the protest of Vida Movahed in Enghelab Street. Vida Movahed climbed up from the power box at the

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intersection of Enghelab and Wesal Shirazi, hung her white shawl on a stick, and without any slogans, she just shook her white shawl and uncovered her hair. A close parallel being what Rosa Parks, a Black American woman, did by sitting on a white seat on a bus in America. Great global movements can start from these simple actions.

Vida Movahed and after her, the girls of Enghelab Street, were ordinary women who did not have any grandiose or idealistic claims, rather they are women and girls who simply want to have an experience of being seen, able to achieve the right to choose—a common right in all societies. These ordinary women, who comprise the largest population of Iranian women, have no political or ideological orientation other than to enjoy their human rights.

Because the government has made fundamental human rights subject to the observance of religious laws for women, the moral security police are enabled to oppress, imprison, and kill women who want the right to choose their clothing. Indeed, the revolution of women's right to freedom is the revolution of Iranian women against the government's laws that have deprived women of having a life.

The revolution of 'woman, life, freedom' is actually a modern revolution of the 21st century, which not only focuses on the issue of women but also challenges outdated beliefs and demands social and human rights for all citizens of the society. This uprising in Iran has felt close to me as an Iranian woman and psychotherapist working here in England. The impact and my embodiment of the meaning of freedom in my work with my clients, from the point of working with counter transference and transference, is manifest in many ways. In particular, I am affected when working with clients who are women in domestic violence situations, which seems to represent the psychological hijab they wear without the knowledge of knowing they wear it. They know they are free in the Western sense of meaning of the word, yet they don't feel free or brave enough to leave.

The illusory and the syntonic processes that I have looked at in my supervision and my attention to my inner diversity is close and yet far as I notice how the news comes and goes. The effect being that the support and feeling for these women among my colleagues also comes and goes whilst I personally feel propelled back to my motherland feeling the pain, the anguish, and outrage. In the consulting room, we work to create an atmosphere of reflective space, though right now that doesn't touch the kind of vitality we see with these social uprisings. Such movements burst through our communities forcing the truth upon us, compelling us not to forget.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–15
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.08

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Being a 'barefoot therapist' in a time of war: Offering support to traumatised and tortured children and adults

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ABSTRACT

In 1976, as a poet of 30, I was responding to the murder of President Allende in Chile in 1973 and the attacks on women protesters fighting the regime of Pinochet. I was profoundly affected by the realisation that while one group of similar-minded people could be joyously on holiday, just a short geographic distance away, a similar group could be facing unbearable trauma. Professionals working in a time of upheaval can sometimes take a dissociative defence in exaggerating the difference in their lives compared to the lives of those they are trying to help. Working with extreme trauma in a range of countries can break down those defences so that we see the commonality in the human condition. Whether religious or not, this is best expressed by the 16th century phrase ascribed to John Bradford, 'there, but for the grace of God go I!'. The wish to blame the other for their hurricanes, floods, wars, and torture is significant. Even secular insurance companies do not insure against 'acts of God'.

KEYWORDS: refugees; trauma; relational therapy

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On the terrace of joyful summer houses

There are people smiling out to sea

They are in shorts and swimsuits

And their wine dances to them

And behind all the terraces

Are sleeping dinosaur hills

With paws dipped in sand

And beyond the dinosaurs

Green-muscled and silently dying

There are soldiers in the President's house

There is sky with lashmarks on its face

There is sun with searchlights round its neck

(Valerie Sinason, 1976)

INTRODUCTION

We find we are in different places. People just like us are facing the abyss in ways we are not right now, even if our parents or grandparents did. How do we help them? Can we? How do they bear us?

I recall comments made to me over the decades. The names given re not their real names. '*My address for social services is The Beach, Earth, Infinity'*, said 24-year-old homeless Colin, pointing to the crazy British bureaucracy that will not give you money until you have a fixed address which you cannot get without money. Mary, who shared the same beach shelter, agreed. Running from an abusive home and an abusive church she sat by a stony beach. '*They might as well have stoned me*'. What do they need? What can we give?

Steve, a former English teacher, gave up sofa-surfing when he lost his job, his flat, his wife, and sits by a cash machine rattling his cup. '*I rely on the kindness of strangers'* he said, '*even if they hate me. I am the ghost at the christening*'. Mo sat outside her local supermarket come rain or shine with an assortment of Disney figures around her and a Micky Mouse cup to put

money in. On a cold winter day pouring with rain hardly anyone passed. '*How do you do it?*' I asked. '*Taking the micky are you? Well, you have got to go to work each day don't you'*, she said. Kaya was struggling to read instructions on how to offer AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) advice in her township. She had a headache. '*My sister needed glasses to wear for a job interview yesterday, so I do not have them today. We cannot afford two pairs'*. Maria sat begging with her baby on Charles Bridge, Prague. *'At least my baby is with me. I was put into care'.*

We have all had a different introduction to this subject. What do we want to know? What can we bear to know? I found John Bowlby's (1979) seminal paper 'On knowing what you are not supposed to know' a great help here (Sinason, 2020). Facing mortality is a key issue.

'I held the babies', said Asja, old and bent but with a powerful gleam in her eye. '*I held the babies and they died quietly, peacefully in my arms. The soldiers left us alone'*. The orphanage was in a famine area in the midst of a civil war. The babies were dying. Many staff had left. But she was there. What did she have, this carer, that allowed her to be there, helping dying babies move towards death when they were only just born? She had no formal training but felt what needed to be done.

Janusz Korczak was a highly trained teacher and writer who founded an orphanage in Warsaw. With the rise of Nazism, he went into the ghetto with 'his children' to provide a structure around them to keep them as comfortable as possible and when he could not save them, despite the fact that he could have been freed, decided to go into Treblinka with them.

THE BAREFOOT THERAPISTS

Kaya came to ask for help for her project in a dangerous African township with a high rape and murder rate. '*The men have been hurt by the white police, so they hurt the black women and the black women hurt their children. Everyone is hurting. People talk to me and ask for help. I can listen but I need to know I am doing the right thing*.' Nomfundo wanted to begin a township project on AIDS.

Then there was us, last year, a privileged group of white women (despite some minority histories of generational trauma), responding to a similar group of white men and women who were no longer privileged; who were trained therapists like us but in a country, Ukraine, suddenly in danger. How do we speak of rape and murder in our relative safety to our counterparts who are facing it in reality? How do we deal with the unbearableness of difference or similarities?

In a time of external conflict, extreme poverty, war, or hunger, nearly all adults, however trained we may be in mental and physical health services, find we are 'barefoot therapists'. We do not have the resources truly needed because the situation is so appalling that no-one

can be truly resourced. We have not had the training to deal with this and rarely have had the direct lived experience, even if our parents and grandparents did. We are struggling humans trying to help each other.

The term ‘barefoot therapist’ came from China in the 1960s when farmers and others were given basic healthcare education to provide help in rural areas where there were no doctors. As they often worked barefoot in rice paddies they were called ‘barefoot doctors’. This term has been applied to all of us who take on a new needed role in times and places where help is needed. Highly trained psychotherapists and psychoanalysts who have never knowingly worked with rape and torture before can be, and feel, as new to this field as people who have never been involved in any caring profession. Sometimes we are less resilient or empathic than others. Sometimes we just walk away.

John Southgate, who founded what became the Bowlby Centre, enjoyed calling himself a ‘barefoot psychoanalyst’ (Southgate & Randall, 1990). He sought supervision from John Bowlby weekly for decades and took pleasure in understanding the many different languages of theories. He was also a musician. His original brainchild was The Institute of Self Analysis with the concept that each person needed their own journey to understand trauma in their lives. He especially wanted each individual to learn how to nurture the child within their lives. We not only enjoyed music and poetry together with his wife Kate White, but also collaboration on extreme trauma and dissociative identity disorder. We shared views on what training could and could not do.

After all, teacher training can help someone learn about different aspects of educational and emotional development, the minutiae of syllabuses and techniques but cannot make someone like or relate to a child. Undertaking analytic or psychodynamic training does not mean a capacity to bear trauma. Indeed, within the UK the lack of psychoanalytic involvement in understanding and treating child abuse, domestic abuse and adult rape was astonishing in the 1970s and 1980s and still has not really caught up. It was, after all, Kempe, a paediatrician, who realised that bruised children were not victims of clumsiness, but of assault (Kempe et al., 1962). It was not a therapist. Before, the words ‘rape’ and ‘child abuse’ were seen as minority words for something that rarely happened. Now those terms are understood to include one in four in a lucky country like England. However, professionals hide or dissociate under ‘tickbox’ safeguarding procedures to avoid feeling it. And, feeling it is, at times, looked on as a shameful indulgence, not being adequately neutral or regulated.

I have been taught by great people on how to be a barefoot therapist. It is the more recent examples in the last twenty five years of my adult life that come first to mind. Being privileged to go yearly to Cape Town to aid colleagues with disability therapy and trauma therapy programs there was a huge amount to be learned from them; Professor Leslie Swartz, Professor Sally Swartz, Professor Astrid Berg, Jeni Couzyn, and all from the Cape Town Child Guidance Clinic (CTCGC) and New Bethesda First People Centre. They did not make colonial

visits to poverty stricken townships to impose ideas of help. They waited to be invited and asked in what way they could encourage what was happening. Kaya (not her real name) is an example. CTCGC provided supervision of a relational emotionally linked kind. From the grass roots township counselling groups grew and flourished. They were respected and learned from.

OUR LEARNING FROM OUR LEGACIES

But of course, there was an earlier lesson which came from my father, a first generation Londoner, brought up in the East End of London slums, whose parents had faced the pogroms in Kiev and Odessa. It was Professor S. S. Segal OBE JP who helped to instigate schools and education for children with intellectual disability. Before him, such children were deemed 'ineducable' and left in hospital. His book *No Child is Ineducable* (Segal, 1967) was the catalyst for the Warnock (1978) and Plowden (1967) reports and, although a passionate socialist, he deeply respected Lady Plowden and Lady Warnock as colleagues and friends for their genuine non-patronising concern for people with a disability. In all the council estates we lived in, until I was 16 (and he reluctantly bought a house on gaining a Headship, worried at losing working class roots), he set up community centres and activities minimising delinquency on the estates. As a Head of schools for boys with a disability he had animals in the playground long before city farms, provided nightly bingo for parents to help them with numbers and words, and separated out disability that was intrinsic with handicapping processes in the environment which made everything worse.

Then I go back further. My loving maternal grandmother had a mild learning disability from trauma. My father said, 'to become a professor of mental handicap it is good learning to have a mother who is illiterate and a mother-in-law with a mild disability'. He listened to her, and she always praised his kindness to her. So, for all of us there is some learning that is within us without having to do all the hard work. There is something we will each truly understand without any more therapy and supervision, and some issues that will always be hard for us. It is our task to learn to differentiate between these issues and to find the grey area where we can improve.

FORMING A TEAM IN A TIME OF COVID-19

For 50 years I worked with children and adults with disabilities who had experienced abuse and stigma, and then, through them, with children and adults with dissociative 'disorders' (a sane response to a mad world), and finally until my retirement, with mind control, deliberately installed dissociation, trafficking victims, abuse rings. They all had the pain of having to educate me for me to provide the best I could. So, when a fine group of British therapists asked if I could join their team and help with their work in the Ukraine it took me

out of my COVID-19-induced paralysis and brought up all these issues. They were not trauma specialists and nor were the Ukrainian therapists. But the Ukrainian therapists now needed help in working with rape and torture victims and they morally and relationally responded.

There were five of them—relational transactional analysts—and I had been trained in psychoanalytic child and adolescent therapy at the Tavistock and the adult psychoanalytic training from the British Society. We had overlapping theories and differences and we did not know each other. What we found we had immediately was a shared passion for justice and a respect for colleagues who had woken up into a nightmare. In planning a ten-week course we had the unusual benefit of six equal minds, a non-shaming willingness to support and learn from anything that did or did not work, and an openness and an emotional capacity to grieve. The trauma of Ukraine, unfolding before our eyes, stayed with us, making a shared priority.

Theory needed to live in the inside of us, enriching us and resourcing us, whilst the language that came from our mouths, especially as we needed interpreters, needed to be simple. We had to be authentic and relational. We wanted to provide a course that had structure but was flexible, that tried to resource without traumatising. To do our best we slowly added more thinking and support time for ourselves. Six of us met for 90 minutes each week with interpreter and a group as well as two one-hour weekly meetings between ourselves. It took a safe village of all of us to hold the pain and shock of what was happening. I provided a larger input at the start, which reduced as the participants spoke more, and therefore my colleagues did as well. We all had different points and skills and showed how difference could be enriching. There was no splitting. The task was too precious.

In facing a group of trainees and therapists who were dealing with terrors that might soon apply to themselves and their own families there was a moral dilemma. They needed their defences to face thinking of the possibility of rape and murder, but reality was the most important issue of all.

The written material I provided was therefore political. Here are a few examples:

> ‘Every war is a war against children’ (Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save The Children, 1919) (Save the Children, 2020).

> ‘Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is; it can no longer be treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war.’ (UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms Zainab Hawa Bangura) (United Nations, 2014).

SOME THOUGHTS FOR WORK WITH ADULTS WHO HAVE BEEN RAPED AND TORTURED

Preparing for therapy for women

Never underestimate the power of bearing witness, with or without any training. Never underestimate the power of just being there gently enabling someone to be however they are.

Give the other (usually a woman but also a man) as much power as you can in offering choices. There might not be a safe place to be or a shared time but finding out what would help best, if it is possible, matters. Stay with uncertainty. You hope to see the person at a particular time, not that you will. Only the lucky expect time to be consistently kept to. We might hope to see each other next week but we can never really guarantee it.

Regardless of your own pain and losses and fear, do your best to be there for the wounded other. In that moment of bearing witness, even if you have gone through or are still going through the same fears, terrors, and suffer similar symptoms, you are there for the person you are listening to.

Consider that anything that has ever happened to a raped woman (or man) in war could have happened to the other to prepare yourself. However, do not emotionally go too deeply into those possibilities for fear of traumatising yourself. Sometimes it is easier to think objectively of lists. These lists need to say words bravely and clearly.

Sometimes I include examples of terrible acts of barbarity that I do not think the particular woman has just suffered, even if others have. This is so she knows she is not alone—other women have suffered. Potentially, she can experience small relief by saying to some of them ‘No. That did not happen to me’.

For example:

Some women have told me the man/men:

- Put his penis in my vagina.
- Put his penis in my anus.
- Urinated on me.
- Defecated on me.
- Raped me in front of my children.
- Hurt my children in front of me.

Things to hold in mind during therapy: Some guidelines

- Listen to the other if she can speak and be with her if she is speechless. There is no rush.
- Be prepared for a range of responses: frozen speechless terror, unutterable anguish, strong suicidal wishes, shame. All are natural and normal in such an abnormal criminal situation.
- Do not be surprised by flashbacks, nightmares, inability to sleep, inability to eat, wariness, physical pain, volatile moods, inability to concentrate, suicidal feelings, guilt, shame, anxiety, fear of intimacy. It is normal. The perpetrators were abnormal.
- It might take weeks before she can speak, or she might pour into you details of atrocity that bring fear into your heart. Make sure you have support.
- Trauma survivors can very rarely give a clear account of what has happened. All sense of time and place can disappear and language itself can become fragmented. That is normal. There might not be continuous memory.
- Do not ask 'What happened next?' as that requires a normal mental state. Stay with the broken-up flow. If a question feels a useful way to proceed you can ask, 'What else happened?'
- Do not push for details. People heal in their own way, and some will take weeks before they can or wish to speak. Some might never speak. The shame of the invader which was forced into them they see as their own shame.
- Sometimes it helps to emphasise these are war injuries for women. Some families can accept that their daughter, mother, or wife was wounded in battle, on the frontline, and is alive and is a heroine for surviving the annihilatory force of the enemy.

Practical considerations

Does the woman have physical injuries? War rape includes other brutality. Is there anyone medically trained in a place where her injuries can be tended, if she is able to bear that? Is there even such a person or safe place? Can you be with her for that, if she wishes for your attendance, or is there someone she can go with?

Does the woman have dependent living children? Are they with her and were they physically hurt too? Women who have witnessed injury to their children or whose children have witnessed their own sexual assault carry an extra burden. The woman needs to know that attachment and love are the flowers that grow even in a bomb site, even if she feels dead and numb right now. She needs to know that sometimes it takes time to feel love again because the fear of loss and damage is so great. A lucky few find that love helps even in the midst of great chaos and terror. She needs to know she matters whatever her emotional state.

She is also a political witness to major war crimes.

It needs to be emphasised that what has happened to women and children in war is not only criminal it is a WAR CRIME and therefore can and should be recorded. It matters that a victim can choose whether to make her experience public or anonymous data. It can empower some to know that the world is bearing witness to such crimes. In December 2015, Japan finally made a financial settlement and apology over the raped South Korean 'comfort women' during World War II. However long it takes, truth comes out. However, some women feel more shame at the idea that such internal body experiences could be public, even if anonymous.

We need to understand that while a soldier having his limbs blown off can be made public easily, a vagina or anus is a private and sexual place to receive injuries and accepting this as war damage is harder. It is our task to emphasise this.

Are there family nearby who can support her physically or through telephone or Zoom? Are there any cultural problems about 'honour' or 'purity' that would limit their support? Some will be widows, or not know where their husbands are or if their menfolk will still support them when they know their wife has been raped. Some women will be single and feel as if they are dirtied forever. Some will have religious, political, and cultural beliefs which help them, and others have religious, political, or cultural beliefs which add to their problems. In the absence of supportive family can you and your colleagues form a circle of support?

If the rape victim was not alone, and was raped alongside others, it can help to keep them as a group together.

This is not an individual situation, even where someone was alone and raped. They are each part of the whole of their country which is being attacked. In being alive they are survivors holding their national banners up.

I provided similar information for working with men and with children. Once it was possible for these terrible events to be discussed as reality there was a freeing up but providing a case example was too shaming and painful. After discussion with my colleagues, with great trepidation between us but a sense of rightness, I included the following one.

Anna: A case example

Anna, aged 24, had arrived into a safer country. She was alone and had been helped by two women who tended her wounds and provided food and basic lodging. They felt she had 'died inside' and wanted help with her.

I saw her sitting in the corner of the room her arms wrapped around herself.

She was rocking up and down.

V: Hello Anna. I'm Valerie. Your friends asked me to come and see you.

Anna raised her head a little. Her face filled with grief and terror.

A: Baby

V: Baby

A: dead.

V: Oh no. Baby is dead?

A: My baby—called Sweetness.

V: Your baby, Sweetness is dead.

A: Ah my baby. Yes. My Baby Sweetness. Dead and she is/was only two months old.

V: Two months old. Your little baby. Sweetness. Dead, your daughter.

(*I chose to introduce the word 'daughter'.*)

A: My daughter.

Silence.

V: Yes. Your daughter. Sweetness.

A: So sweet.

V: So sweet and that is why you called her Sweetness.

A: And she only lived for two months.

V: Such a short baby life, only two months, for a little baby girl called Sweetness who was so sweet.

A: (*head up more*) Aieee, my body.

V: The precious baby from your body is dead. Little Sweetness only two months old. Your poor body and heart without Baby Sweetness. Your own daughter.

(*Using her own language to respond to her with little additions.*)

A: My breasts are full of milk although I am starving and no baby.

V: Milk, food from your body was all there for Baby Sweetness even though you went hungry. She is not here to drink it. Her poor mother has love and food for her, but Baby Sweetness is dead after only two months in this world.

Silence.

A: Killed.

V: Baby Sweetness killed?

A: They killed her. Soldiers with guns.

V: Oh no. Soldiers killed Baby Sweetness, two months old.

A: Yes. The soldiers killed her, and they didn't kill me. They snatched her from my arms, and they threw her against the wall. She could not even cry—it was too fast. There was a huge scream in the air, and it frightened the soldiers, and it was coming out of me.

She collapsed banging the floor with her fists.

A pause.

V: What a huge scream came from you! You did not have guns, but you had a huge scream.

A: And the soldiers… they said, 'shut up'.

V: Because your scream frightened them. But they did not kill you.

A: They said, 'shut up' and one put a gun in my mouth.

V: Oh how terrifying.

A: And they shouted 'shut up' even when I could not speak, and they put their thing in me.

V: Their penises?

A: Yes.

Silence.

V: And there is more.

A: Yes. And I wanted them to blow my head into pieces like my baby's head, but they did it to me front and back and then they pissed on me.

V: They didn't kill you—they raped you in your vagina and anus and they pissed on you. And you wanted your head to explode from their guns like your baby's body. But they killed your baby. And you screamed for your baby and your body screamed with all its milk. You screamed for Baby Sweetness only two months old.

(*I emphasised her power and agency in her scream and the fact she was alive*.)

A: Baby dead. Sweetness killed. Murdered.

She screams and screams.

V: You scream because there has been a murder, a baby has been killed. Murdered. Baby Sweetness. It is mad and obscene. And you were raped and had to run away.

She screams.

A: I left her. I left her.

V: She was dead. She could not even cry it was so fast.

A: I ran away. I left her.

V: You left her tiny dead body because there was nothing more you could do. Your body makes milk, but Baby Sweetness cannot drink from you. She is dead.

A: And I should be dead.

V: Why?

A: I could not save my baby.

V: And in a mad war parents cannot save their babies. Or their partners. Or their parents.

She lifts her head again.

V: However big or tall or strong we are there is always someone bigger and stronger or with worse weapons. An angry penis or a penis-shaped missile.

Anna laughs bitterly.

V: You could not save her and there was no spiderman or superman to help. A mother's love is emotionally powerful, but it cannot fight a missile or an angry penis!

A: And my scream could not fight an angry penis.

V: But it is possible your scream was so powerful it disturbed the soldiers and they raped you because your scream frightened them, and they felt dirty and shamed and wanted you to feel dirty.

Silence.

A: I shat myself when they did it from behind and—and—

V: They spread it over you?

(*I took it further to reduce her shame in saying it.*)

A: And in my mouth when he took the gun out.

V: So that scream was really powerful as it exposed their shit and their shame, and they needed to pass it back. And you are alive because they didn't want to kill you and you managed to run and if you had not run no-one would have known what happened to Baby Sweetness.

Thinking silence.

A: You mean my scream did have power?

V: Your scream was you bearing witness to the madness and cruelty of her murder. You did not care if you were killed or what happened—you just showed what mother love is. And that is why they had to rape you. To try and shut you up because your scream frightened them. They raped you in your body where Baby Sweetness was born. They could not bear what they had done. They did not kill you.

A: War is hard time for women.

V: Yes. So, so hard for women and women who are mothers.

A: My husband has not returned. May be dead. Hard for women who are mothers and wives.

V: Very, very hard. Cruel. Obscene.

Silence.

A: My husband may hate me for not saving Baby Sweetness.

V: Yes.

A: My husband may hate me for being raped by six men.

V: Yes. He might.

Silence.

A: Or his family.

V: Yes.

A: Shall I light a candle for Baby Sweetness?

V: Yes. What a moving idea.

A: And I will invite the two new friends who have helped me. And I invite you.

V: Thank you. I will be honoured.

A: My scream made them need their penises. Their baby missiles. Babies with poo and piss. Boys and their toys. My scream frightened them.

Anna (not her real name) became a barefoot therapist. One of the two women who helped her became her partner, and the other joined with them to counsel raped women. My words, coming from deep inside me, from my lived experience with my family and my 25 years of work in South Africa, and Anna's words, welcomed and appreciated by my five colleagues and our Ukrainian brothers and sister who heard it, completed the circle.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Facing reality, looking into the abyss of the worst humans can do is devastating. And yet there is a linking of minds and souls that brings the clarity of truth. Barefoot therapy is a beautiful term. Think of Shakespeare's (1609/2001) Sonnet 29 raising to 'heaven with my bootless cries'. Walking into a war zone whether in the next street or the next country requires strong shoes. Yet barefoot, accepting vulnerability, using language as links instead of as theoretical one-upmanship brings beauty of the deepest kind. This particular course could not be repeated by me. Our texts and thinking and speaking came from a structure that was permeable and followed our transferences and counter-transferences. I have never had a collegial experience like this before and it may never happen again. It came from the deepest part of our hearts and stayed open between us throughout. To have a group of 'sunflowers' with whom to face the daily onslaught of news of atrocities and deaths and the courage of colleagues was profound. Our analytic understanding was needed for our own containment and all the knowledge and experiences we had from our lives and the lives of our ancestors were relevant. At times we had practical ideas. At times there was a painful silence. Each week we looked to see their faces to know if they were alive. 'See you next week', we knew, was a delusional phrase. 'We hope to see you next week'. John Bowlby's (1979) awareness was that all humans need a nest, a home. But the security we got from providing a home between us did not get clouded by the delusion it could offer safety. For Bowlby too, safety was secondary to having a nest. May we all continue to reach out to others to form nests.

I am so grateful to have been asked, with thanks to the Ukrainian colleagues for asking their English colleagues and to the "Sunflowers", Carole Shadbolt, Heather Fowlie, Suzanne Boyd, Karen Minikin, Tess Elliott, for the finest circle of light to enter the darkness.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With thanks for the support of the sunflowers, Suzanne Boyd, Tess Elliott, Heather Fowlie, Karen Minikin, Carole Shadbolt, and to Lisa Shaverin, Jo Stubley, Leslie Swartz, Sally Swartz, Astrid Berg, Jeni Couzyn, and all from the Cape Town Child Guidance Clinic (CTCGC) and New Bethesda Bushman Heritage Centre.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–9
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.09

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Freud on war and violence: From disillusionment to hope, back and forth

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Sigmund Freud's reflections on war and violence, especially in his two main works on this issue: *Thoughts for the Time of War and Death* (1915) and *Why War?* (1932). After presenting these two essays and placing them in their historical contexts, I briefly review what authors have written about them in recent years. I then attempt to contribute something new to the discussion by examining four of Freud's propositions: his justification for disillusionment caused by war; his suspicion about peoples and states; his denunciation of the primitivism and hypocrisy of human beings; and his determination to maintain hope in culture and history. I consider these key points of Freud's essays separately, showing their importance for Freud's social theory and for his critique of modernity and civilisation in general.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis; war; violence; culture; history

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FREUD, HIS HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND HIS REFLECTIONS ON WAR AND VIOLENCE

Sigmund Freud witnessed the devastating violence of war in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. He lived through the First World War (WWI) and died just after the Second World War began. The two conflicts greatly affected his life: two of his sons fought in the first, and the events preceding the second forced him to flee Vienna and take refuge in London.

The war had important consequences for Freud's work, leading him to study war neuroses, influencing his reflections on culture, and highlighting human aggressiveness, prompting his conceptualisation of the death drive. Additionally, as posited in this article, Freud directly approached the issue of war and violence in two works: *Thoughts for the Time of War and Death*, written in 1915 during WWI (1915/1998a), and *Why War?*, which was a response to Albert Einstein in 1932, a year before the Nazis took power in Germany (1932/1998b).

Freud's two essays on war can be read as two aspects of the same reflective theme. The first, more pessimistic than the second, outlines a social psychological view of war as the truth underlying an illusion and as an expression of the violence of human beings and their hypocrisy in times of peace. The second essay, although somewhat optimistic about culture and human history, nevertheless introduces the death drive and offers a sharp critique of morality and law.

The 1915 and 1932 essays reveal as much as they conceal Freud's feelings and the historical context in which they were conceived. The pessimism of the 1915 essay, written between March and April, discloses Freud's horror at WWI beginning a mere few months before, but hides his 'warlike enthusiasm' and his 'complete sympathy' for one of the warring sides—that of Austria and Germany (Jones, 1953/1985, pp. 368–371). The optimism of the 1932 essay obliquely reveals something with its emphasis on the death drive and its critique of morality and law: what had happened and was happening at the time it was written, in September of that year—the rise of Fascism and Nazism, the failed coup led by José Sanjurjo in Spain, Pope Pius XI's ostentatious reception of Mussolini in Italy, the political leadership of Hitler in Germany, and the *Heimwehr* conspiracies to seize power in Austria and force the country's annexation to Germany.

Several scholars have recently analysed and discussed the 1915 and 1932 essays, as well as Freud's overall relationship with war. Some studies have examined the broad scope of Freud's reflections (Belilos, 2018), finding a limitation of the absolute knowledge that underlies war (Rose, 1993), a unique approach to human cruelty (Derrida, 2000), and an unparalleled analysis of a topic as current as the technological hyper-sophistication of archaic violence (Dana, 2012). Other works have emphasised the validity of Freud's reflections on war, either extrinsically, on the horizon of a possible nuclear conflict (Botstein, 1984), or in terms of their intrinsic theoretical and conceptual aspects (Sampson, 2005).

Freud's essays on war have been placed in their historical context (Ruthrof, 2020) and in the context of Freudian thought (Benhaïm, 2007). They have also been examined through the lenses of other authors, including the French poststructuralists Michel Foucault (Sampson, 2005), Jacques Derrida (Dana, 2012), and Jacques Lacan (Ansermet, 2018). A number of works have also gone beyond the 1915 and 1932 essays to connect them with Freud's contradictory attitude towards WWI (Koteska, 2020), the roles of psychoanalysts as actors in and spectators of the war (Castro, 2003), and the importance of the war for the development of psychoanalysis (Koteska, 2019).

Based on an analysis of the 1915 and 1932 essays, in this article I concentrate on four of Freud's propositions, the importance of which is insufficiently appreciated: his justification for disillusionment caused by war; his suspicion about peoples and states; his denunciation of the primitivism and hypocrisy of human beings; and his determination to maintain hope in culture and history. I examine these key points in Freud's essays separately, showing their importance for Freud's social theory and his critique of modernity and civilization in general.

JUSTIFICATION FOR DISILLUSIONMENT

The word 'disillusionment' (*Enttäuschung* in German) appears eight times in Freud's 1915 essay *Thoughts for the Time of War and Death*. In fact, the title of the first part of this essay, which is generally forgotten, is 'The disillusionment of war' (*Die Enttäuschung des Krieges*). The meaning is clear, and Freud confirms it on the first pages: there is disillusionment caused by war in general and specifically by WWI.

The word 'disillusionment' best summarises what the war meant to Freud in 1915. The conflagration that had broken out in 1914 offered a disappointing image of human beings, constituting a war—in Freud's (1915/1998a) terms—'at least as cruel, as fierce and as merciless' as the previous ones, 'transgressing all the restrictions' of international law, and ignoring both the 'prerogatives' of doctors and the wounded and the 'distinction between the combatants and the peaceful population' (p. 280). All this meant disappointment for those who trusted in an illusory progressive process of appeasement, reconciliation, unification, and improvement of humanity through the development of culture.

Dispelling the illusion of cultural progress, WWI divided the human community, alienated its 'world', fragmented its 'great homeland', ruined its 'common heritage', and alienated and debased its 'citizens' (Freud, 1915/1998a, p. 282). Freud, far from seeing it as something negative and deplorable, positively appreciated this disillusionment. He dialectically justified and defended disillusionment as something good, favourable, and even liberating because it meant the 'destruction of an illusion' (*Zerstörung einer Illusion*), an 'illusion of which we were prisoners', the illusion of cultural progress that only served to avoid 'displeasure' (pp. 282, 286). It is clear that Freud preferred the displeasure of truth to the pleasure of illusion.

The German term that Freud used in 1915 for illusion (*Illusion*) is the same term he reused in 1927 in *The Future of an Illusion* (*Die Zukunft einer Illusion*). The illusion of cultural progress resembles a religious illusion; it is something that 'always derives from human desires' (Freud, 1927/1998c, p. 31). Just as religion expresses desires related to parenthood, so too does excessive reliance on culture manifest in desires associated with life, love, and the human community unified by Eros. They are the same desires that underlie the illusion Freud (1932/1998b) attributed to the Bolsheviks in his 1932 essay: the illusion that the 'satisfaction of material needs' would ensure peace in the world (p. 195). These illusions must be overcome to access the truth that Freud linked with disillusionment.

In Freud's political thinking, his defence of disillusionment complemented his critique of illusion. Both demonstrate Freud's commitment to what he interpreted, pessimistically, as the truth of humanity and human culture, revealed by war as much as by dreams, symptoms, and failed acts. War violence parallels the formations of the unconscious. This parallelism is at the foundation of what Freud exposed in his 1915 and 1932 reflections, especially in 1915, both by denouncing the primitivism and hypocrisy of human beings and by suspecting peoples and states.

SUSPICION ABOUT PEOPLES AND STATES

Reflecting on war, Freud (1915/1998a) conceived of peoples and states as the 'great individuals of humanity' (*Großindividuen der Menschheit*) (p. 280). This conception, which insisted on the unitary and indivisible aspect of peoples and states, shows how far the Freudian perspective had gone beyond psychological individualism, which systematically reduced society and politics to small individuals and their interindividual relationships. For Freud, in reality, the individual and the social were not sharply distinguished since they are constituted and manifest in each other. In Freud's terms (1921/1998d), 'from the very beginning individual psychology is simultaneously social psychology' (p. 67). The social and political *Großindividuen* are inseparable from the small individuals or individuals proper.

Like small individuals, *Großindividuen* act irrationally by obeying the drives studied by Freud. His 1915 essay gave the lie to those who misunderstood him by supposing that he set up an opposition between individuals who obey their drives and the society and government that proceed to rationally repress individuals or encourage them to sublimate their drives. The truth, as revealed by war, is that both peoples and states, as well as individuals, act irrationally and are compelled by drives.

In WWI, Freud (1915/1998a) desolately observed that belligerent states give in to their greed and their 'lust for power', making use of injustice, censorship, violence, 'conscious lies', and 'deliberate fraud' (p. 281). The behaviour of people in times of war was no less shameful for the founder of psychoanalysis. Freud, as early as 1915, put forward the idea that he would

develop six years later in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*: it was as if, in the masses, 'the ethical acquisitions of individuals vanished and only the most primitive, archaic and brutal attitudes remained' (p. 289). These attitudes, he claimed, manifest during times of war in the barbarism of soldiers and in hatred between the citizens of warring nations.

Freud's reflections on war and violence demean both peoples and states. Here, we can see a reaction to the terror that the revolutionary crowds provoked in bourgeois intellectuals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Reicher, 2012). However, we can also observe a precise critique directed at the nationalist, warmongering, Nazi-fascist masses (Reich, 1934/1970), who do not encompass all the possible social mobilisations of modern times (see Pavón-Cuéllar, 2021a, 2021b).

DENUNCIATION OF PRIMITIVISM AND HYPOCRISY

What is certain is that Freud's suspicion about peoples and states reflected his pessimism about humanity. In each human being, Freud (1915/1998a) glimpsed a core of radical 'evil', of 'primitivism', that manifests itself flagrantly in war, is composed of egoistic drives, and cannot be totally 'uprooted' by education (p. 283). The most that culture can do is 'reform' each subject in two ways: internally, by stimulating erotic or loving forces that allow 'egoistic drives to be transmuted into social drives', and externally, through educational coercion that impels subjects to 'renounce drive satisfaction' (Freud, 1915/1998a, p. 284). This renunciation and eroticisation of egoistic drives are at the core of Freud's ideas about society, culture, and history.

In Freudian social theory, the renunciation of drive satisfaction constitutes the economic–sexual basis of culture (see Freud, 1927/1998c, 1929/1998e), and the eroticisation of drives allows society to maintain cohesion and preserve hope in historical and cultural development towards more peaceful inter-human relations (1932/1998b). One of the reasons why there is no peace among human beings is precisely, according to Freud (1915/1998a), because of erotic insufficiency, which, in turn, results from cultural and educational methods guided not only by love but by 'rewards and punishments' (p. 285). These methods generate selfish, hypocritical individuals who only behave well for their own convenience and are 'many more' than 'really cultured man' (pp. 285–286). Those who support culture because they believe in it are, from the pessimistic Freudian perspective, an insignificant minority compared to the majority who support it solely for the benefits they receive from it and who do not hesitate to turn against it when it suits them, as happens in times of crisis and war.

Freud (1915/1998a) even went as far as to state that culture 'is built on that hypocrisy' of those who only act well in a logic of punishment and reward (p. 286). By pointing this out, Freud's critique makes it possible to question the ethics of not only behavioural and cognitive-behavioural methods but also the whole of the disciplinary, coercive, and meritocratic

bourgeois society in which we still live today. Freud directed his critique at the entire human cultural superstructure, which, resting on an economic base of renunciation (not only on the eroticisation of drives), also rests on a bio/psycho-political base of punishments and rewards, discipline, control, subjection, seduction, selfishness, and hypocrisy.

Freud's denunciation of hypocrisy in his 1915 essay continued in his 1932 essay, which questioned a human community unified by the 'compulsion of violence' rather than by 'identifications' and 'ties of feeling' (Freud, 1932/1998b, p. 191). The problem is that cultural unity derives not only from love and life drives, but also from violence and death drives, which was undoubtedly evident to Freud as Fascism and Nazism arose. It is highly likely that this context favoured Freudian social theory by revealing a structural opposition between life and death drives rather than a contingent contradiction between social and egoistic drives.

HOPE IN CULTURE AND HISTORY

The 1932 essay presented a precise critique of law and morality as examples of what lies at the violent and deadly base of culture. Freud (1932/1998b) conceived of law as something that originates in 'brute violence' and that represents the 'violence of the community' against the 'violence of the individual' (pp. 188–192). Regarding morality, Freud conceived it critically as an introjection and a return of the death drive 'inwards' towards individuals themselves (p. 194). This double critique of morality and law did not exclude, for Freud, another ethical–legal horizon: precisely one that allowed him to place his 'non-utopian hope' in a cultural-historical development towards peace and a relative overcoming of the logic of war, violence, punishments, and the death drive (p. 198).

In his 1932 essay, Freud no longer explained war and violence according to egoistic drives but in terms of a death drive that tends towards 'decomposition', leading life back to the 'state of inanimate matter' that manifests in the selfishness of those who 'destroy the lives of others to preserve their own' (1932/1998b, p. 194). This conceptualisation of the death drive, which seeks the disintegration and dissolution of the living, allows us to retroactively read the passages in the 1915 essay in which Freud (1915/1998a) lamented that war divides people and thus fragments humanity and its 'great homeland' (pp. 280–281). Against the death drives that separate human beings by urging them to 'destroy and kill', Freud (1932/1998b) bet on love, on Eros, on the life drives that tend to 'preserve and reunite' and that also underpin the building of culture and its historical development (p. 192). It is these impulses that can ensure peace and provide a hopeful aspect of Freud's 1932 vision.

As early as 1915, Freud maintained some hope by accepting the 'temporary' character of the psychic phenomena associated with war, such as the 'involution' of drives and the intellectual weakening evidenced by 'the stubbornness, the lack of penetration and uncritical credulity' of peoples and governments (Freud, 1915/1998a, p. 289). Freud also relied in 1915

on the historical development of culture leading from 'external compulsion' to 'internal compulsion' that could pacify society (p. 285). This confidence remained in 1932, when Freud counted on the pacifying effects of the 'internalization of aggression' through cultural and historical development (1932/1998b, p. 197). However, Freud maintained hope mainly because he recognised, in cultural and historical development, an erotic-pacifist component that manifests itself in identifications and 'bonds of feeling' (p. 195). The life drive, more than the superego's moral return to the death drive against the individual, is what led Freud to place his hope in culture and history.

CONCLUSION

Freud's hope did not last long. One year after his 1932 essay, the Nazis seized power in Germany and began to burn books, persecute Jews, and prepare for World War II, which was even more extensive than the first. Human beings once again revealed their primitivism and hypocrisy; peoples and states again deserved Freud's suspicion, and it was again a time of disillusionment.

Freud's books were among the first to be burned in 1933 in Berlin and other German cities. Five years later, after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, Freud had to take refuge in London. His sisters were arrested and died in concentration camps.

Shortly before his death, Freud (1939/1998f) observed that 'progress had sealed a pact with barbarism' in Soviet Stalinism, Italian Fascism, and German Nazism (p. 52). This pact caused the death drive to sweep across Europe and other parts of the world, supported by the full force of technological advances. The modern historical development of culture served not the peace and cohesion of humanity but war, division, violence, and death.

The triumph of the death drive once more disillusioned Freud towards the end of his life, reinforcing his disillusionment of 1915. This disillusionment has been justified, after his death, by the Shoah and by the successive wars in Indochina and Algeria, in Korea and Guatemala, in Vietnam and Cambodia, in El Salvador and Nicaragua, in Rwanda and the Congo, in Iraq and Syria, in Palestine and Ukraine. What happened in these places and in many others have confirmed the primitivism and hypocrisy of humanity, as well as the other observations on which Freud based his suspicion about peoples and states.

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–17
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.10

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Power: Its biological nature and its human elaborations

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the evolutionary reality of power-driven competitive humans. It documents how evolutionary biologists describe successful power-driven males as 'alpha males' and later references Darwin's extensively documented account of 'the law of battle' that drives male–male competition for females on behalf of reproduction. The article proceeds to show how male–male competition across species has been exapted by humans in their harming and killing of other humans in wars of all kinds: ethnic, religious, territorial, racial, and so on. The article questions whether war is an inevitable practice of humans. It continues by exemplifying wars in today's global world; wars activated by power-driven autocratic leaders and their power-driven followers. The closest psychotherapy comes to recognizing the sickness of such power-driven humans is via diagnoses of narcissism that take addictions into account. Self-addiction, however, is not among the addictions taken into account. In effect, no matter the cost to other humans, power-driven self-addicted humans are not recognized as psychologically deficient but remain free to perpetuate their own glory.

KEYWORDS: alpha males; war crimes; transformation of 'the law of battle'; pan-animate territoriality; self-addicted leaders; Wotan

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BEGINNING OBSERVATIONS

The present 21st century human world is replete with examples of both powerful and power-seeking humans. The most notable in terms of excessive displays of power are those who wantonly and violently harm and kill, who threaten, and/or use militaristic force to oppress and decimate those humans they regard as inferior, as foreigners, or as contaminators of their purity, whether religious, national, ethnic, or racial. As pointed out elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, in press), Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Kim Jong-un, Xi Jinping, Bashar al-Assad, and Naftali Bennett (following Benjamin Netanyahu) are far and away the most exemplary. They have all had and continue to have varying but far-reaching global as well as national impact. They are furthermore all exemplary in various ways of a dominant male macaque. Primatologists Sarel Eimerl and Irven DeVore (1965) describe this alpha male in fine detail:

> There is no mistaking a dominant male macaque. These are superbly muscled monkeys. Their hair is sleek and carefully groomed, their walk calm, assured and majestic. They move in apparent disregard of the lesser monkeys who scatter at their approach. For to obstruct the path of a dominant male or even to venture, when unwelcome, too near to him is an act of defiance, and macaques learn young that such a challenge will draw a heavy punishment. A dominant animal controls the space around it … It can invade an inferior's space as a right, whereas no inferior would dare to venture into its space without first making a gesture of appeasement … On being threatened by a definitely dominant monkey, a subordinate is likely to display submission. Confronted with a fixed stare, it will look away. Faced with a possible charge, it is likely to crouch close to the ground, its head turned away. And if it flees and is chased, it will cringe away from the threatened bite or try to avoid punishment by presenting its hindquarters. (pp. 106, 108, 109)

A cautionary note might well be inserted here to avoid any misinterpretations in what follows. I add this to avoid any misinterpretations of the subsequent text, particularly in light of the deep concern and seeming alarm expressed by a reviewer about what they termed the 'reductionism' of this article and of their related deep concern and seeming alarm about what they term the article's reliance on 'existing stereotypes and deep rooted prejudices' regarding male behavior. What is written of the biological nature of power and its human elaborations is not meant in any way, shape, or form to deny or to dismiss the influence of familial upbringing or of cultural or societal practices, nor is it in any way, shape, or form meant to castigate males. In this context, it is of additional and utmost importance to recognize variation, a biological fact of animate life discussed and exemplified in the text, thanks to Darwin's specific attention to its reality, to his emphasis upon it, and to his descriptions of it at length. Indeed, Darwin begins Chapter I of *The Origin of Species* titled 'Variation under Domestication' with the following observation:

> When we look to the individuals of the same variety or sub-variety of our older cultivated plants and animals, one of the first points which strikes us, is, that they generally differ much

> more from each other, than do the individuals of any one species or variety in a state of nature. (Darwin, 1859/1968, p. 71)

In Chapter II, titled 'Variation under Nature', he writes,

> No one supposes that all the individuals of the same species are cast in the very same mould. These individual differences are highly important for us, as they afford materials for natural selection to accumulate, in the same manner as man can accumulate in any given direction individual differences in his domesticated products. (p. 102)

As pointed out in an earlier article in *Psychology and Politics International* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017a), the actions of the above-named human alpha males are more deadly than those of a dominant male macaque. All, however, are coincident with what Jung describes as the *Ergreifer*: males who, with their executive power, autocratically dominate the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of those in their society in whatever ways necessary to perpetuate their power and even increase the extent of their power. They are like an incorrigible sponge that always wants to soak up more. Jung pointedly describes them as akin to Wotan, 'the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle' (Jung, 1936/1970a, p. 182). Jung later characterizes them as hysterics, that is, as suffering from '*pseudologia phantastica*, that form of hysteria which is characterized by a peculiar talent for believing one's own lies' (Jung, 1945/1970b, pp. 203–204). He elaborates this characterization in the course of writing of the rise and fall of Hitler, specifying further deficiencies in what he calls 'this scarecrow' and 'demagogue': a 'sorry lack of education, conceit that border[s] on madness, a very mediocre intelligence combined with the hysteric's cunning and the power fantasies of an adolescent' (p. 204). However great their deficiencies, they pursue their power-driven 'passions and the lust of battle'. Power is indeed the driving force motivating demagogic males.

In light of Eimerl and DeVore's description of a dominant male macaque, we may ask whether there is a relationship in humans between physical features and power? Human males are not only commonly stronger than human females but are larger than human females. Size is in fact an archetypal biological marker of power in the animate world. Primatologist Frans de Waal, for example, points out that the 'habit of making the body look deceptively large and heavy is characteristic of the alpha male … The fact of being in a position of power makes a male physically impressive, hence the assumption that he occupies the position which fits his appearance' (de Waal, 1982, p. 87). While de Waal's description of an alpha male does not mention archetypes, it aptly identifies an important feature of the dominant male archetype. Archetypes are thus not learned forms of behavior but are intuitively played out and understood. Jung exactingly describes them as structurally homologous to '*a priori* instincts' that are integral to human nature, in fact 'common to man and animals alike' (Jung, 1968, p. 43). The alpha male apart, those males who are naturally large are able, and are looked upon as able, to defend themselves successfully against predators, to win in interspecies competitions for resources, and to win in intra-species

competitions to attract females for mating. Some nonhuman male animals in fact have the power to enlarge themselves—e.g., the common male European toad (Attenborough, 1979) and male sea-elephants (Darwin, 1871/1981). In the human animate world, those who are naturally large and even those who increase the size of their bodily parts through surgery as in penis or breast enlargement are regarded as more powerful in one way or another: as well-built and even vigorous, as more desirable and even inviting, and so on. As pointed out elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, in press), the value of size in the human world 'has been evident for centuries in practices such as lip enlargement, buttock enlargement (steatopygia), tendril-like nail elongations, and head elongations (Rudofsky, 1971), all of which practices are thought to enhance one's power of attraction in some way'.

Further insightful observations are made by anthropologist Raymond Firth in his studies of Tikopia culture, and in particular, in both of his studies of Tikopian spatial practices with respect to intercorporeal power relations and his comparison of those practices with those in British culture. In effect, how individuals relate spatially to one another is not only a basic feature of different cultures, but a basic indication of the different status of individuals and thus their power—or dominant position—with respect to others. As Firth writes (1978),

> In the vertical plane degree of elevation is a very important Tikopia status index. In Tikopia language there is a direct correlation between physical elevation and social elevation … Consequently, in bodily posture in an immediate personal context standing is ordinarily superior to sitting, squatting, crouching or kneeling … Standing children are continually told 'Sit down' in the presence of adults who are sitting … When a chief is seated in a house people will crawl over the floor in his vicinity … In Tikopia the sitting and kneeling postures of men and women differ considerably. (p. 96)

Contrasting Tikopian and British social practices, Firth points out that in some situations, 'degree of elevation is not a mark of status in present-day British society, but rather an acknowledgment or salutation, as when one briefly inclines one's head toward another in greeting' (Firth, 1978, as cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 2008, p. 45). But Firth also points out that 'degree of elevation' can vary from a bow, as on formal occasions, to kneeling, as on ritual occasions and in ceremonials when dignitaries of a church kneel in homage before their seated sovereign, for example, or when a man is knighted by his sovereign (Firth, 1978). Firth even calls attention to the fact that one can prostrate oneself before another, and though this is not a common British practice, it is not completely unfamiliar since it occurs in Catholic ordination rites. Firth's conclusion is that 'degree of elevation' in Western societies plays a highly restricted social role, and that it is maintained primarily as a formal rather than everyday measure of status and power with respect to others (see Sheets-Johnstone, 2008, for further details and discussion).

ALPHA MALES AND THE PRACTICE OF MALE–MALE COMPETITION IN THE ANIMATE WORLD

However oppressive or harmful their actions might be—indeed, whatever their actions—alpha males in the nonhuman animate world do not face criminal charges. Over time, however, they may be deposed by stronger and more powerful males. Some may furthermore be defeated at a special yearly battleground—a lek—where male–male competitive displays regularly take place on behalf of mating. David Attenborough devotes a substantive part of his chapter on 'Courting' in his book *The Trials of Life: A Natural History of Animal Behavior* to a range of animal species that participate in leks, describing some in fine detail. For example, of the blue-backed manakin, a South American bird, he writes:

> The blue-backed manakin is particularly strange in that, in order to raise the choreographic complexity of their displays, two males collaborate like circus acrobats … When a female appears the two go down together to a special perch close to the ground and begin to bounce up and down alternately, rising only few inches and accompanying each jump with a call. If the female flies down to them, then their acrobatics increase in intensity … If the female if still sitting in front of them, presumably transfixed by this extraordinary display of virtuosity, the dominant male calls two sharp noes and the junior bird, having played his part, leaves the court. The dominant male, now left alone with his female, starts to court her directly, fluttering round her and repeatedly alighting beside her, vibrating his slightly opened wings and lowering his head so that his scarlet cap is presented squarely to her with his brilliant blue back showing above it. If after all this performance she is still there, he mates with her. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 276)

It is of interest to note that at the end of this description, Attenborough points out that this particular dance is not 'the most complex of manakin dances' and continues to remark that:

> The blue manakin of south-eastern Brazil gives a similar performance, but with teams of males that may include three or even more birds sitting in a line on a display perch and taking it in turns to bounce into the air. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 276)

Attenborough thereafter points out that 'It is not only birds that form leks. Even insects do so'. Following examples of insect courting, he notes that 'Mammals too have their leks', and proceeds with an extensive description of the African hammerhead bat, beginning specifically with the heads of males who 'have grossly enlarged mouths and muzzles with puckered lips and huge cheek pouches', all of which are quite unlike female African hammerhead bats. Attenborough dismisses the earlier explanation of the difference in terms of diet, explaining it now in terms of an adaptive evolutionary distinction—actually in terms of what Darwin terms 'the law of battle': 'The males compete with one another for the attention of females in leks' (Attenborough, 1990, p. 279; see further below on Darwin and 'the law of battle'). Attenborough gives a lengthy description of the male hammerhead bat as an example:

> The male bats, twice a year at the beginning of the dry season, assemble in the forest, usually along the bank of a waterway, hanging beneath the trees in a long spaced-out column, … for distances of almost a mile. When they first arrive, they squabble for positions, but once that is settled, they take up their accepted places every night and start a loud metallic honking, uttering several notes to the second and flapping their wings twice as fast … When a female appears, the male responds by clasping his wings tightly around him and increasing this frequency of honks until they become almost a buzz. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 279)

Interestingly enough, Darwin mentions leks in his discussion of the length of courtship in bird species. For example, he points out that 'in Germany and Scandinavia the balzens or leks of the Black-cocks, last from the middle of March, through April into May. As many as forty or fifty, or even more birds congregate at the leks; and the same place is often frequented during successive years' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 100). Interestingly enough too, historian Johan Huizinga, in his chapter on 'Play and War' in *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1955), writes, 'In the year 1400 a certain Count of Virneburg offered battle to the town of Aachen on a fixed day and place' noting that 'Such appointments regarding time and place of a battle are of the utmost importance in treating war as an honourable contest which is at the same time a judicial decision' (pp. 98–99). In effect, rule-governed battles in a specifically spatiotemporal sense were not simply the practice of species in the nonhuman animate world, but of the human species itself.

Present-day human practices of war hardly conform to such rule-governed battles. On the contrary, surprise attacks are common and killing predominates. The website HistoryNet (Green, 2021) lists the nine most memorable surprise attacks, beginning with the Trojan War in the 12th to 13th century BCE and ending with Pearl Harbor in 1941, Operation Focus (also known as the Sinai Airstrike) in 1967, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968. Alan Green, the author of the article, states, 'These memorable instances of cunning and ingenuity demonstrate that, in warfare, there's nothing like catching the enemy off guard' (2021, para. 1). In such instances, actions can end up as war crimes. We see this possibility in today's Russian bombings of hospitals, theaters, schools, and apartment buildings in Ukraine; in other words, bombings not of military quarters or fields but where civilians are being cared for, gathered, or live. Journalist Fintan O'Toole (2022) takes up the issue of war crimes in terms of what one might call the general issue of 'catching the enemy off guard'. In his article titled 'Our Hypocrisy on War Crimes', he perspicuously points out:

> There have long been two ways of thinking about the prosecution of war crimes. One is that it is a universal duty. Since human beings have equal rights, violations of those rights must be prosecuted regardless of the nationality or political persuasion of the perpetrators. The other is that the right to identify individuals as war criminals and punish them for their deeds is really just one of the spoils of victory. It is the winner's prerogative—a political choice rather than a moral imperative. (O'Toole, 2022, p. 10)

O'Toole goes on to specify at length how the United States has both evaded responsibility for its own war crimes and failed to join the International Criminal Court (ICC),

and how in doing so, it has avoided any moral imperative. Indeed, as O'Toole (2022) specifically notes, 'What the US must give up is the comfort of its exceptionalism on the question of war crimes. It cannot differentiate itself sufficiently from Putin's tyranny until it accepts without reservation that the standards it applies to him also apply to itself. The way to do that is to join the ICC' (p. 13). O'Toole's (2022) earlier description, questions, and observations with respect to Putin are compelling to consider in this regard:

> There is the war, and then there is the war about the war. Vladimir Putin's assault on Ukraine is being fought in fields and cities, in the air and at sea. It is also, however, being contested through language. Is it a war or a 'special military operation'? Is it an unprovoked invasion or a human rights intervention to prevent the genocide of Russian speakers by Ukrainian Nazis? Putin's great weakness in this linguistic struggle is the unsubtle absurdity of his claims—if he wanted his likes to be believed, he should have established some baseline of credibility. But the weakness of the West, and especially of the United States, lies in what ought to be the biggest strength of its case against Putin: the idea of war crimes. (p. 10)

O'Toole (2022) begins his identification of 'Our Hypocrisy on War Crimes' with a deft claim: 'The test for anyone insisting on the application of a set of rules is whether they apply those rules to themselves', immediately adding that 'It matters deeply to the struggle against Putin that the US face its record of having consistently failed to do this' (p. 12). To document his claim, O'Toole writes of the massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians by US Marines in the town of Haditha on 19 November 2005, of Marines taking 'five men from a taxi and execut[ing] them on the street', and of subsequently 'enter[ing] nearby houses and kill[ing] the occupants—nine men, three women, and seven children' (p. 12). O'Toole specifies the subsequent lies the US officially told of the slaughter and of its eventual cover-up explanation. He asks, 'How does the "tragic incident" at Haditha differ from the murders of civilians by Russian forces in Ukraine?' He points out 'some important distinctions', but later states, 'uncomfortable truths remain' (O'Toole, 2022, p. 12). Indeed, they do—actions in wartime that result in war crimes can be explained away and thereby altogether discounted. As O'Toole (2022) documents:

> Perhaps most importantly, nothing that happened in these or other atrocities in Iraq or Afghanistan changed the way the deliberate act of violence against foreign civilians are presented in official American discourse. The enemy commits war crimes and lies about them. We have 'tragic incidents', 'tragic mistakes', and at the very worst, a loss of discipline. When bad things are done by American armed forces, they are entirely untypical and momentary responses to the terrible stresses of war. (p. 12)

A BASIC QUESTION CONCERNING HUMAN NATURE AND ITS FOLLOW-UP

Is war an inevitable practice of humans? In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes wrote a book on social and political topics. On war in particular, he affirmed a human disposition 'to

contend in battle' (Hobbes, 1651/1930, p. 252), and furthermore affirmed that 'during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war'. He then pointed out that 'the nature of war … consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE' (p. 253). Hobbes (1651/1930) goes on to point out the consequences of war, ending with a well-known characterization of 'the life of man':

> Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (p. 253)

The 'known disposition thereto' is a disposition to fight, 'to contend in battle', hence to compete with others.

Darwin gives lengthy descriptions of male–male competition across numerous species in what he terms 'the law of battle' on behalf of mating and reproduction. Darwin (1871/1981) does not mention war but gives extensive and highly detailed accounts of how males from beetles to birds, to mammals, and specifically to human mammals, compete to win females and mate. For example, Darwin begins his account of the law of battle in birds with the following observations: 'Almost all male birds are extremely pugnacious, using their beaks, wings, and legs for fighting together. We see this every spring with our robins and sparrows. The smallest of all birds, namely the humming-bird, is one of the most quarrelsome (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 40). Moreover, in all his descriptive accounts, Darwin highlights the size difference between males and females. He writes, for example, of the size of the South Chile male beetle *Chiasognathus grantii* and includes illustrations that graphically show the impressive difference in size of the male and female. The male, he comments, 'has enormously-developed mandibles … he is bold and pugnacious; when threatened on any side he faces round, opening his great jaws, and at the same time stridulating loudly' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. I, p. 377). In his discussion of birds, he points out that 'The males of many birds are larger than the females, and this no doubt is an advantage to them in their battles with their rivals, and has been gained through sexual selection' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 43), but he also most interestingly points out in this context that 'In some few cases, as we shall hereafter see, the females apparently have acquired their greater size and strength for the sake of conquering other females and obtaining possession of the males' (p. 43). Of mammals, he writes, 'All male animals which are furnished with special weapons for fighting, are well known to engage in fierce battles' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 240), and notes after a number of examples, 'When the males are

provided with weapons which the females do not possess, there can hardly be a doubt that they are used for fighting with other males, and that they have been acquired through sexual selection' (Vol. II, p. 242). Finally, of human mammals, Darwin writes, 'There can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with his broader shoulders, more developed muscles, rugged body outline of body, his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from some early male progenitor, who, like the existing anthropoid apes, was thus characterised' (Vol. II, p. 325). A few sentences later, he states, 'With civilized people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased', though he goes on to comment that 'on the other hand, the men, as a general rule, have to work harder than the women for their mutual subsistence; and thus, their greater strength will have been kept up' (Vol. II, p. 326). Whatever one may think of Darwin's 19th-century view of women, his observation that 'With civilized people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased' is highly significant. It in fact feeds into the exceptional human transformation of the law of battle across species into the historically documented human pursuit of war.

Before launching into that transformation and to further detailing of the law of battle, it is critically important to call attention to the fact that the initial topic Darwin discusses and discusses at length his first book, *The Origin of Species*, is variation, specifically, the difference of variation under domestication from variation under nature. He ends his analysis of variation under domestication with the following conclusion: 'Over all these causes of Change I am convinced that the accumulative action of Selection, whether applied methodically and more quickly, or unconsciously and more slowly, but more efficiently, is by far the predominant Power' (Darwin, 1859/1968, p. 100). His analysis of variation under nature focuses on the formation of species and its relation to variability in the course of natural selection, a topic that readily introduces his next chapter titled 'The Struggle for Existence' that early on includes the following observation: 'Owing to struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring' (p. 115). In short, variation is a natural phenomenon across the animate world. We may well recall Darwin's initial description of male birds: 'Almost all male birds are extremely pugnacious, using their beaks, wings, and legs for fighting together'. Indeed, not all male birds, but 'Almost all…'. *In The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin specifies just how selection makes a difference, namely in dispositions. In particular, some males are more alert, more agile, more aggressive, and so on, than other males. In effect, male–male competition is a built-in, but not a built-in without variability. While natural selection is a prime factor in male–male competitiveness, so also in humans, in particular, are ingrained cultural practices and familial upbringing.

In Darwin's rendition of humans and the law of battle, it is notable, considerably so, that there is no mention of war with respect to male humans' 'greater size and strength', not to mention their 'greater courage and pugnacity' in comparison with females. Such endowments are not just an indication, but a substantive anchor point of male power, a personally felt sense of might, skill, and efficacy that are essential personal securities in launching a war and in defending in war. Clearly, and specifically, from Darwin's perspective of sexual selection, war may be seen as an exaptation of male–male competition that defines 'the law of battle'. Paleontologist/evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould and paleontologist Elizabeth Vrba (1982) coined the term 'exaptation' to specify traits co-opted for a purpose different from the one they originally served. Male–male competition for females has indeed been co-opted by humans for centuries and even millennia. Nonhuman animals certainly compete for territory and territorial resources (see below reference to Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*), but not to the extent, planning, weaponry, militaristic forces, and so on, of humans. Moreover, as described elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, 2008), 'The ferocity and atrocities of wars can be and often are proportionately exacerbated by religious doctrines that promise one salvation, eternal life, or some form of immortality, and whose enactment at the same time makes one's life immediately and indelibly meaningful' (p. 94). War is indeed a human cultural elaboration, an exaptation of the biological law of battle.

In light of these facts of human nature, the biological underpinnings of humans can hardly be ignored. Yet male–male competition is not reducible to 'sperm competition', a topic that particularly engaged many male biologists at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century (e.g., Birkhead, 2000; Parker, 1998; Simmons, 2001). The thesis of these biologists is that when females mate with different males, sperm compete for reproduction. Thus, from the point of view of sperm competition, males do not compete head-on, but compete biologically with other males for females.

A directly experienced fact of animate life elucidates the real-life biological realities of male–male competition far more effectively than sperm competition. As documented in the quote above about the behavior of an alpha male macaque, 'A dominant animal controls the space around it'. Anthropologist/paleoanthropologist Robert Ardrey, in his book *The Territorial Imperative*, elaborates at length on just that, beginning with the fact that 'A territorial species of animals … is one in which all males, and sometimes females too, bear an inherent drive to gain and defend an exclusive property' (Ardrey, 1966, p. 3). He points out that 'In most but not all territorial species, defense is directed only against fellow members of the kind' and that 'In most but not all territorial species … the female is sexually unresponsive to an unpropertied male' (p. 3). He furthermore calls attention to the fact that 'in all territorial species, without exception, possession of a territory lends enhanced energy to the proprietor' (p. 3). We can thus appreciate even further the personal sense of power and the forceful drive of the alpha male, and not only to exert power and to retain power,

but to do so on behalf of territorial rights. Lest there be any doubt, the human species is not an exception with respect to the alpha male. In emphatically calling attention to the fact that the territorial imperative is 'an evolutionary fact of life', Ardrey specifically calls attention to the fact that 'man is a territorial animal' (Ardrey, 1966, p. 116). He has in fact earlier pointed out, 'That man's territorial nature is inherent and of evolutionary origin is scarcely a new thought; it is merely an ignored one. It has been pressed aside by our political antipathies, by our sexual preoccupations, by our romantic fallacies concerning the uniqueness of man, by our contemporary dedication to the myth that man is without instinct and a creature solely of his culture' (p. 102).

MAN'S TERRITORIAL NATURE

When we look about the global world today, we can readily find multiple documentations of man's 'territorial nature' and its relationship to war. At the forefront of that world is Putin's invasion of the Ukraine, but we can also effectively document Kim Jong-un's threats of violence toward South Korea, China's threats of violence toward Taiwan, and Israel's long and ongoing oppression of and violence toward Palestinians, all on behalf of 'man's territorial nature'. That nature may, of course, be strongly anchored in religious beliefs, but that further anchorage does not diminish anchorage in territorial aggression. On the contrary, it makes territorial aggression all the more forceful.

From yet a further perspective, the territorial imperative that leads to aggression and war is basically an 'Us against Them' mentality that is rooted in a disdain and even hatred of Others who differ from Us and a consequent subjugation of those Others on the basis of their differences, as apparent in apartheid societies, in racial discriminatory practices resulting in segregation, in caste systems, and so on. In his lengthy discussion of the amity-enmity complex—a human complex initially described by philosopher Herbert Spencer and later specified more finely in evolutionary terms by anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith (see below for more on these writers)—Ardrey quotes 18th century philosopher David Hume: 'Should a traveler give an account of men who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition, and revenge; who know no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit, we should immediately detect the falsehood and prove him a liar with the same certitude as if he had stuffed his narration with centaurs and dragons' (Ardrey, 1966, pp. 288–289). In short, the full nature of human nature warrants acknowledgment, full study, and subsequent full public awareness of the driving force of war, namely, full public awareness of power-driven 'passions and the lust of battle'.

In her review of Spencer's *The Principles of Ethics*, titled 'Spencer's Theory of Ethics in Its Evolutionary Aspect', psychologist Kate Gordon sums up Spencer's basic sense of human nature as an amity-enmity complex: 'A life of constant external enmity generates a code in which aggression, conquest, revenge are applauded, and conversely a life of settled internal

amity generates a code in which harmonious cooperation prevails. If conditions stay constant long enough, men will develop the emotions and conscience appropriate to this code' (Gordon, 1902, p. 595). Gordon (1902) later strongly criticizes Spencer's 'moral code':

> Spencer fails to recognize the organic connection between the competitive and the cooperative forces at work in society in all its stages. The codes of 'amity' and 'enmity' are not different types of moral injunctions, the one intrinsically good and the other merely imperfect and expedient; but each represents a different stage in the same process of social evolution. Warfare among savage peoples and industrial competition in a civilized community both stand for the same selective method by which society secures for itself the survival of its best and fittest members … Cooperation without competition and antagonism is conscious life without selective attention. A society in which the code of 'amity' prevailed, in which there was no tension, would be a perfectly static and unprogressive community. (p. 605)

Oddly enough, Gordon does not mention 'the law of battle' and hence male–male competition in her evolutionary view of Spencer's account of human nature as basically an amity-enmity complex, but instead simply emphasizes 'selection' leading to 'the survival of [society's] best and fittest members' (p. 605). She thus insists that competition is integral to human nature by implicitly referencing the major focus of Darwin's 1871 book, namely, his finely detailed account of sexual selection across species, a pan-animate selection that clearly highlights and documents at length the law of battle, a built-in of male nature across species.

Spencer's introduction of the amity-enmity complex and his *Principles of Ethics* aside, those who humans regard with enmity are Others, Others who are looked upon—literally looked upon—with disdain and even hatred based on their skin color or religious beliefs and practices, or on their subverting the avarice or ambition of one who considers himself of a higher human order, or that same human who desires revenge for infringing on an overlord's domain in some way. In effect, Others are treated as second-class beings who must live on entirely separate grounds from those who are existentially above them and who must even be exterminated.

Whether a matter of money, property, or bigotry, amity is definitely in short supply in today's human world. Clearly, the territorial imperative that leads to aggression knows no bounds, which is to say that power is displayed not just by alpha males—autocratic leaders and autocrats generally—but by humans who consider their self-value to far and away exceed that of others. Their amity indeed extends only to those who support them. Such self-valuing humans are self-addicted, a malady that present-day forms of psychotherapy have yet to recognize and to treat (see further below on this topic). The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (*DSM-5*) lists 'Narcissism' and gives criteria for its evaluation that one might well ascribe to self-addiction. It states at the very beginning that 'Narcissistic Personality Disorder' 'is defined as comprising a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), a constant

need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts' (pp. 767–768). The relationship between narcissism and addiction arises specifically in an article on the website 'Medical News Today' (Lewsley, 2022). The article begins with the following claim: 'People with narcissism and those with an addiction share similar character traits. These include a lack of empathy and a willingness to put themselves at risk in the pursuit of feeling superior' (para. 26). It then points out that 'Narcissism may leave people more prone to problematic substance use, including alcohol use disorder, as well as other forms of addiction, such as sex addiction and social media addiction' (para. 2). It later summarizes its perspective: 'This article looks at the links between narcissism and addiction and explains why people with narcissism may be more likely than other people to engage in addictive behaviors' (para. 3). In short, the article gives references to, and discussions of various kinds of 'object addictions': alcohol addiction, drug addiction, sexual addiction, and social media addiction. It contains no reference to *self*-addiction. The need for such a reference is urgent.

Self-addiction is a serious malady that is actually detailed as such in a letter to the editor. Its opening paragraphs read as follows:

> Self-addiction is a serious malady that warrants identification and description in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DSM) that is published by the American Psychiatric Association.
>
> The malady has come to the fore in the most exemplary fashion in today's political world, and in so public a manner that it cannot properly be ignored. While addiction is most commonly related to drugs and to a lesser degree to psychologically driven activities such as gambling, self-addiction involves a different kind of relationship, one that is in fact inordinately public. It can be succinctly described as a psycho-sociological craving that demands making a spectacle of oneself. Just as drug addicts cannot live without drugs, gambling addicts cannot live without gambling, and so on, so self-addicts cannot live without a spotlight, a spotlight focused incessantly upon themselves.
>
> The symptoms of self-addiction are readily apparent. They include 1) a flamboyant, self-aggrandizing presence, 2) a perpetual insertion of oneself as the center of attention, 3) the assertion that nothing can or does outstrip one's knowledge, abilities, or judgments, in particular, one's knowledge of the way things are, one's abilities to improve or correct what needs improvement or correction, and one's judgment of what or who is right and what or who is wrong. In brief, self-addicts are cognitively, actively, and ethically infallible. (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b, p. A6)

An easy availability of weapons and of military forces can and does exacerbate all psychological aspects of self-addiction. Racial and religious killings in America alone testify to the problem of easy access to guns, and in fact to military rifles. Such killings are commonly followed by 'thoughts and prayers' of sympathetic persons and politicians for the victims' families and friends, 'thoughts and prayers' that actually do nothing to address the

basic problem of everyday citizens' ready access to guns and rifles. What in fact do 'thoughts and prayers' do except recognize the killings momentarily and lamentably as one more incidence of human violence? Clearly, thoughts and prayers have no power whatsoever: they neither block easy access to guns and rifles nor do they restore the lives of those who are killed. They are a wholly routine, perfunctory personal response.

Present-day forms of psychotherapy fail to address the violence of humans just as they fail to address the power-driven self-addiction of humans. Intra-human violence is not just ever-present in daily news but appears to be expanding. Guns and rifles, especially when easily accessed, expand not only the possibility of violence, but the power of an individual and their equally power-driven comrades over fellow humans. The insurrectional march on the US capitol on 6 January 2021 is a case in point. Such power-happy humans are addicted to their superiority over others, including those sycophantic others who duly acknowledge and applaud their superiority.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Our present-day human world gives ample testimony to the presence of self-addicted leaders and their followers. They are in fact supreme and indomitable exemplars of a power-driven self-addiction who are not only tethered here and now to their own glory but tethered to maintaining their own glory—and at all costs, no matter what those costs might be to others. Moreover, they are not alpha males who simply control the space around them. They are alpha males who aggrandize themselves as all-powerful leaders of the world. They are indeed akin to Wotan, 'the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle' (Jung, 1936/1970a, p. 182), killing or oppressing others in their distinctive territorial claims, and in their distinctive lies and deceits. Their self-addiction knows no bounds. Indeed, they will not die—they will live on historically, remembered and revered like Peter the Great, to whom Putin compares himself (Roth, 2022), remembered and revered like Abraham Lincoln, to whom Trump compares himself (Blumenthal, 2019), remembered and revered like David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first president, to whom Netanyahu compares himself (Mualem, 2018), and so on. In sum, our present-day world is filled with self-addicted leaders, leaders who are powerful and who want to remain interminably ever-powerful.

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Maxine Sheets-Johnstone is an interdisciplinary scholar affiliated with the Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon, where she taught periodically in the 1990s and where she since holds an ongoing Courtesy Professor appointment. She began her career as a choreographer/dancer, professor of dance/dance scholar, and has an incomplete second doctorate in evolutionary biology (all course work completed; no dissertation). She has published over 90 articles in humanities, science, and art journals and has given conference keynotes and invited guest lectures in a variety of academic disciplines, in Europe, the UK, and North and South America. Her book publications include *The Phenomenology of Dance* (1966, University of Wisconsin Press; 1979, Dance Books Ltd.; 1980, Arno Press; 2015, Temple University Press); *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations* (1985, Bucknell University Press); "Roots" trilogy: *The Roots of Thinking* (1990, Temple University Press); *The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies* (1994, Open Court Press); *The Roots of Morality* (2008, Pennsylvania State University Press); *Giving the Body Its Due* (1992, State University of New York Press); *The Primacy of Movement* (1999, 2011, John Benjamins Publishing); *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (2009, Imprint Academic); *Insides and Outsides: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Animate Nature* (2016, Imprint Academic); *The Importance of Evolution to Understandings of Human Nature* (2023, Brill). She was awarded a Distinguished Fellowship in 2007 for her research on xenophobia in the inaugural year of the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University, UK, the theme of which was 'The Legacy of Charles Darwin'; an Alumni Achievement Award in 2011 from the

University of Wisconsin where she did all her graduate work (M.A. in Dance; Ph.D. in Philosophy and Dance; incomplete second doctorate in Evolutionary Biology); and was honored with a Scholar's Session at the 2012 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in Rochester, NY.

Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–3
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.11

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

ART & POETRY

London: Peace on Earth

Gottfried Maria Heuer, * Association of Jungian Analysts, London, UK; Independent researcher

London: Peace on Earth (composition with pigeon-wing & abalone; photograph).

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This poem is not just about the war out there which we all may be thinking of—and a hopeful peace—SOON!—we're praying for. This is also about our very own personal wars we may feel tempted to fight—with those we know and love, *as well* as the wars inside. They are all interlinked—are, actually, one and the same…

WAR & PEACE

A pigeon taking off to fly

from the top of my *neighbour's* home

carries in her beak across the sky

a branch to build her own.

For two, three beatings of her wings

she *becomes* the symbol so well known:

Peace on Earth—and Glory from up high!

People say, "A war begins"—or "ends"—

as if it were an entity all of its own:

Yet it is *us* who go to war,

and it is *us* upon whom peace depends.

So, let's attend to that,

before all other things!

Gottfried Maria Heuer

London, UK.

with *Dreamcat* stretching, purring on my lap.

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Dr Gottfried M. Heuer is a Jungian Training-psychoanalyst, supervisor, and seminar-leader with the Association of Jungian Analysts, London; a Neo-Reichian/Biodynamic body-psychotherapist, supervisor, and teacher; in clinical practice for over 45 years in London, UK; has worked all over the world; and is an independent scholar with some 70 published papers in English, German, Finnish, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Serbo-Coat in the major analytic journals, including *Analytische Psychologie*, *Cuadernos de Psicologia Biodinâmica*, *Erich-Mühsam-Magazin*, *Harvest*, *International Journal of Jungian Studies*, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, *Juni*, *La Vouivre*, *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, *Spring*, *Theory*, *Culture & Society*, *Transformations*, and others, as well as in a number of books. His own books include 10 congress proceedings (LiteraturWissenschaft.de, 2000–2015) for the International Otto Gross Society, which he co-founded, and of which he is the past president; *Sacral Revolutions: Cutting Edges in Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis* (Routledge, 2010); *Sexual Revolutions: Psychoanalysis, History and the Father* (Routledge, 2011; Russian edition 2017); and *Freud's 'Outstanding' Colleague/Jung's 'Twin Brother': The Suppressed Psychoanalytic and Political Significance of Otto Gross* (Routledge, 2017).

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Psychotherapy and Politics International

2022, VOL. *20*, NO. 4, 1–3
https://doi.org/10.24135/ppi.v20i4.12

Online ISSN: 1556-9195 Journal homepage: https://ojs.aut.ac.nz/psychotherapy-politics-international

POSTSCRIPT

End(ing) words

Keith Tudor,* Professor of Psychotherapy, Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa New Zealand

As this is my last issue of *Psychotherapy and Politics International* as the editor (2012–2021) and as a co-editor (2022), David and Karen have suggested that I write a few words.

Firstly, I would like to thank Nick Totton, my predecessor as editor (2003–2011), and Andrew Samuels, consulting editor, for their faith in me being able to take up the editorial task. Although there have been times over the past 11 years when I have cursed them for inviting me to take on the role—and myself for having agreed!—mostly, I have enjoyed it, though I have felt both its privilege and responsibility. Secondly, I would also like to thank my university, Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and especially the School of Public Health & Psychosocial Studies, which, between 2012 and 2019, supported me specifically in having some editorial assistance, to whit, I want to acknowledge and thank Karen Begg, Leah Royden, Dr Shoba Nayar, and Angie Strachan for their fine editing skills, patience with and facilitation of colleagues submitting and reviewing articles—and, of course, with and of me! Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Louise Embleton Tudor, for her unwavering support of me and the journal, which has included stepping in and undertaking reviews, sometimes at the eleventh hour—tēnā koe e hoa rangatira, thank you, my friend, comrade, partner, and wife.

In my time as editor, I have edited and/or overseen the production of 34 issues of the journal. I introduced special, themed issues, of which, there have been 12—issues *10*(2), *11*(1), *12*(1), *12*(3), *14*(1), *14*(2), *15*(3), *16*(2), *17*(3), *18*(2), *18*(3), and *19*(3)—five of which I co-edited with colleagues (David Pavón Cuéllar, Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, Jonathan Fay, Brian Rogers, and Bill Cornell), and three of which were edited by trusted colleagues (Nick Totton, Deborah Lee, and David Pavón Cuéllar), to all of whom I am most grateful. In addition to the usual peer-reviewed articles, the journal has always published a number of other types of articles such as book reviews, and "Notes From the Front Line", which under my editorship, has been ably curated first by Deborah Lee and, more recently, by Karen Minikin. I have encouraged this diversity firstly, by expanding Reviews to include reviews of art, film, and theatre, and, secondly, by introducing sections on Art & Poetry (currently curated by

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Gottfried Heuer), Controversial Discussions (currently curated by David Pavón Cuéllar), and Talks, i.e., previously unpublished talks given by colleagues in the field. I have also encouraged diversity by expanding the Editorial Board to include more people from different countries (other than the UK and the USA), and cultures, an expansion that is also reflected in the more diverse identities of the contributors in the past 11 years, something I know that both Nick and Andrew were keen for me to initiate and foster.

With regard to the standing of the journal, we had a big breakthrough in 2016 when we heard that, after some years of lobbying, *PPI* had been accepted for inclusion in Scopus. Scopus is a bibliographic database containing abstracts and citations for academic journal articles, which covers nearly 22,000 titles from over 5,000 publishers. The journal was evaluated for inclusion in Scopus by an independent Content Selection & Advisory Board, comments from which included the following:

> The editor and editorial board are internationally diverse and of good standing in this rather limited field. Although the field of study represents a somewhat narrow niche and, in spite of the fact that the journal publishes a limited number of articles per year, this publication is well cited in the literature. Thus, it must be providing an important outlet for studies on psychotherapy and politics…. We wish the publisher and editors continued success.

Despite being a relatively small, bespoke journal, representing a narrow—but nonetheless, important—niche in the field and discipline of psychotherapy, and (in my case), being mostly edited in and from a garage in West Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, the journal, to use a boxing metaphor, punches above its weight—and I am proud of that.

I am also pleased to have seen the journal through to its 20th anniversary, with regard to which, I am working with a colleague on a document analysis of all the contributions to *PPI* over the past 20 years, an article which we plan to submit to the journal next year. I am also working with Nick Totton on an edited book—or books—comprising key articles from the past 20 years of the journal.

Notwithstanding all the work, the milestones, and these successes, I regret not having engaged more with the Editorial Advisory Board I inherited, some of whom have been engaged and supportive, and with others of whom I have had little or no contact; and with the Associate Editors as a group, though, by and large and individually, they have been supportive and active.

I had always intended to step down as editor at the end of 2021. However, at the end of 2020, the journal received notice from Wiley that it would cease publishing the journal as of 31st December 2021, and so, after consulting with Andrew and Nick, I agreed to stay on for another year. So, in addition to ensuring the production of the journal, 2021 was a busy year of negotiations involving Wiley; other publishers; Psychotherapists & Counsellors for Social Responsibility (which had originally supported *PPI* as its society journal); the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN) (https://www.baatn.org.uk/); and Tuwhera Open Access Publishing (https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz). In the end, I was—and am—delighted:

1. That BAATN agreed to take over the formal ownership of the journal and responsibility to employ the Editorial Assistant (Angie) on an annual, renewable basis. In this, I was—and am—particularly grateful to Eugene Ellis, Founder and Director of the BAATN, and Rotimi Akinsete, a member of its Leadership and Advisory Team, for their involvement in this process.

2. That Karen Minikin and David Pavón Cuéllar agreed to step up from being Associate Editors to join me as Co-Editors of the journal for this year—and, for them, beyond this year.
3. That Tuwhera Open Access Publishing at AUT agreed to add *PPI* to the publications it hosts (see https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/publications). In this, I am grateful to Luqman Hayes and Donna Coventry for their ongoing facilitation of this—and, as ever, to Angie Strachan for working with these colleagues.
4. That other Associate Editors (Neil Altman, Gottfried Heuer, Deborah Lee, and Augustine Nwoye) agreed to join the Editorial Board, and that other colleagues (Rotimi Akinsete, Gávi Ansara, Divine Charura, and Eugene Ellis) agreed to join a new, streamlined Editorial Board.

Tēnā koutou katoa—thanks to all.

Finally, I have agreed—with David, Karen, and BAATN—to take up from Andrew and Nick, the lighter role of Consulting Editor. In this capacity, I look forward to contributing what I can to the journal, and especially to supporting the new Editorial Team, though, from now on, more occasionally. As I step down from my roles with *PPI*, initially as a member of the Editorial Board (2003–2009), then as an Associate Editor (2010–2011), and more recently as Editor (2012–2021) and Co-Editor (2022), I wish all associated with the journal—and, of course, the journal itself, tante buone cose—all good things. Nunc dimittis.

A view of the Manukau Harbour from Ruatuna/Laingholm, Auckland (Photo: Keith Tudor).