



The Contact

Issue 4, February 2010

An Occasional Publication by Students of
The Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis

On The Nature of Occasional Publication or Another Lesson in Temperance

Much has happened in the three years since the launch of *The Contact*. Started by a group of BGSP students with lofty aspirations, *The Contact* began its life as a “Quarterly Publication” which, it was hoped, would capture the rich and complex experience of studying psychoanalysis in the then four East-Coast institutes of modern psychoanalysis—ACAP in Livingston, NJ, BGSP in Boston, MA, CMPS in New York, NY, and VGSP in Brattleboro, VT.

The observant reader will notice that *The Contact* logo has undergone two significant alterations. Where our banner previously had pictures of the buildings of each of the four institutes, it now has one—BGSP. In addition, the frequency of publication has changed from “quarterly” to “occasional.”

We have found through experience that running a publication spanning four different geographical locations has proven to be overly ambitious for a group of amateur graduate students. Similarly, whilst it may technically be true to say that with this fourth edition we have finally become a quarterly publication (each “quarter” being a year long), we have found that it takes a lot of work to put one issue together, let alone the four per year that had originally been planned. So, it is with the benefit of hindsight that we can look back at our heady optimism with gentle amusement and wonder what on earth we were thinking.

The founding editors have gone on to meet new challenges. Kalika Genelin, known for her obsessive grammar enforcement, was inspired by her experience as a managing editor of *The Contact* to seek out a career in publishing and is currently the Deputy Managing Editor of *The American Journal of Human Genetics*! The founding creative editors, Angie Ciostek and Sean Bynon, have moved out to Southern California and are living in a cool, little New England-style town called Redlands (just add palm trees).

With this issue of *The Contact*, we welcome a new group of talented editors who will be taking over the running of the publication. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce *The Contact's* next Editors-in-Chief, Tayloe Denton

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and Janet Pocarobba. I am glad to be passing the helm to such capable hands. - *Alistair McKnight, Editor-in-Chief*



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Early Aubade

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Now I feel the intrusion of the sun,
And your backwards glance against the glare

I was dreaming about the movies,
The projector beaming at the wall

We hold hands before the fire,
The drums beat for the entranced wood

We do our lines for the moon and crickets,
And kiss in close-up against the sky

We dance on the lawn,
And laughing misstep

The celluloid burns a little and peels your face
Which I try to press back down

But time staggers on the wheel
In undone loops, darkness settles in

Now there's just your warmth
We cannot see what we are

We flee through the night-rain,
Under a rising umbrella

To my car, where the pistons hum
Driving the world around us

You might have left me asleep,
But I chased you through the void

Flames chanting at my back,
I found you in a bright-empty room

Exposed to the sun,
Turning from a wall of undressed window

To say "get up, sleepyhead,
The day has just begun."

Thoughts from the 2009 Cape Conference

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What stands out for me is the issue raised by Alistair McKnight and Wes Alwan about what would constitute a therapeutic response by a faculty member to a student's criticism or aggression. It's true that Spotniz suggested meeting aggression with aggression, partly, I believe, so that a patient would feel it was okay to fight, that you were like the patient, and could stand up for yourself and not collapse.

However, if you are dealing with someone who is very shy about expressing any aggression perhaps it would be better to do something else. In the training groups I attended, Spotnitz sometimes told people who attacked him that they were doing a good job. I found that to be condescending and defensive (as if he were saying, "You haven't really succeeded in hurting me.") However, as Dr. Laqueria suggested at the conference, some people are so afraid of expressing their negative feelings that they need encouragement.

It depends on the resistance. For a patient who can only be hostile and aggressive, you may want to cut off the gratification that such behavior affords by being even more aggressive in return. Meadow used to say that if they can dish it out, they can also take it. Yet many aggressive people need to be protected from the anger they provoke in others. What do others think about this issue, and how should an instructor respond to a hostile and disruptive student?

Save The Date!

2010 BGSP Summer Cape Conference

This year's summer conference will take place in Wellfleet, MA from *August 2 to August 6*, 2010. While the exact program has yet to be finalized, the working title is:

Connection or Disconnection: The Media and our Mind

For more information please contact: bgsp@bgsp.edu.

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The Contact Interview: Dr. Mara Wagner



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TC: I understand that you originally trained as a clinical psychologist. What prompted you to come to BGSP to train in modern psychoanalysis, and what did you make of it?

MW: That's right. I was beginning my third year of training, with practicums each year and many supervisors, sometimes as many as seven, and I was very disappointed in the quality of the clinical expertise that they had to offer. The sites were considered good placements, but I was not learning how to work deeply with the patients I was assigned. My husband had trained at BGSP in the old days with Mrs. Clevens, and he said to me, "If you want mastery, I know where to go for really good supervision." And that was it. I worked with Dr. Stephen Hayes, who is now the chairman of our board, and I got exactly what I needed. I never intended to get analytic training, but what I learned deepened my work so much that I never left BGSP.

TC: You have been the Director of Admissions at BGSP for a number of years now. Could you tell us about any changes you have noticed over the years?

MW: It seems that the growth of admissions is like the development of a person. As soon as you think you have your child figured out, she changes. One day, your affectionate toddler is a teenager and begins to walk on the other side of the street. Then, if you aren't in the kitchen, she suddenly needs to sit in your lap. Next, she speaks Spanish and comes home with a visa. As administrators,

it is best not to get too comfortable.

When I began working as Director of Admissions in 1998, students generally heard of us through word of mouth, the way I did. They were older than the majority of students we see today, and they had been in the field for several years. Most were already in analysis, and we recommended analysis before enrollment to those without this experience. Most people attended classes part-time for extended periods of training and took courses many times over.

With the advent of the degrees and the potential to offer student loans, we began to see younger cohorts of incoming students who needed to attend full-time in order to make the most of their loan years. Also, the international students, whose numbers increased once we were able to award the degrees, needed to attend full-time to satisfy the conditions of their visas, and suddenly, we had people who wanted to complete the program in a short span of time. We had age groups who attached more to each other at first than they did to the school, the analyst, and so on. With the new counseling program, which we developed to protect our students from political turf battles and to give them a ticket to get employment that would help them afford the doctoral level, things changed even more. We are still working out the kinks of what psychoanalytic counseling really is, as you can surely tell. Some of these students are choosing to finish their training with this counseling degree, and we are figuring out what will prepare them for the kinds of work they move into and how to support them with things like additional supervision or continuing education programs.

TC: There seems to be a recurrent tension in the training about the appropriate balance between "process teaching" and more academic teaching. Could you tell us what process teaching is and where you stand on the tension between the two?

MW: Process teaching is a way to practice studying the unconscious in the moment and, when necessary, to demonstrate resistance analysis in the classroom setting. At any given time, the material we have prepared for the discussion enters into the actual events in the classroom, either through the thoughts and feelings of participants or through enactments when these are not conscious.



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These *in vivo* illustrations are an invaluable demonstration of the material. It is very persuasive to analysts in training to see how things flow into our minds and become part of living events. I recently taught the Transference, Countertransference, and Resistance course, and it was brilliant to watch how a picture of each student's case emerged as more and more people shared their internal experience when listening to the presentation. Things that one would tend to write off as idiosyncratic or irrelevant experiences proved to be important keys, unlocking the deeper layers of unconscious material. This method helps students learn by working analytically to resolve their resistances to the material, and to the experience of knowing in and of itself, but it is also very valuable to people who are interested in teaching. Upper-level students can study how the professor works with the classroom process, and they can write logs about their observations that help them to learn how to teach.

As far as the tension between the two, I think people have different desires for emotional and academic contact. I like both, and I actually don't see much tension about this in my classes. I recently said in one of our community meetings that it would be interesting to find out from students how they see each of us on this continuum. I said that I would wager that I was considered one of the more theory-oriented teachers, but I heard a few "no's" to that. I do find that students will let us know in one way or another if they want more intellectual or emotional stimulation. Each group is a bit different.

I think it is a lightning rod. It seems that students have heightened tension on this topic when they feel deprived, insecure, or threatened. It becomes a battleground for competition, for example, which is an inevitable but painful part of the training process. Some students come to us with expertise in another field or brilliant abilities. Some have prior training which seems contradicted by our approach. Some of the articles we read are so difficult to understand that they arouse feelings of inferiority or, more difficult, defenses to this kind of feeling such as superiority, grandiosity, regression, or withdrawal. It takes a long time to develop a tolerance for not knowing, for feeling stupid and clueless, experiences for which an analyst must have a very high tolerance in order to really listen with an open mind to another person. All of this becomes part of the mix in the classroom. Eventually, most people

learn to relax into themselves and cooperate in making the classroom a rich and constructive experience.

TC: For students who are starting out in one of the programs, would you have any advice for them?

MW: I always tell new students to be proactive, ask many questions, and get many opinions. Meet a lot of the faculty before selecting a training analyst and talk often with your advisor about requirements of the program. Come to all the events you can and be affected by everything in the moment. Then, think about it later. Talk in class. It makes everything richer, both for you and your classmates.

I guess the most important thing I would say is, "You are here because the admissions committee sees that you have an interest in knowing yourself and learning to use this in understanding others. Be yourself. And tell us how it is going at any time and in all settings." Wouldn't it be good if we could just follow that advice? How hard is it to really be oneself? It may be the hardest thing of all.

TC: Thank you for your time.

MW: You are very welcome!

A Few Words of Gratitude

For their part in making this issue possible, the editors would like to thank all the contributing writers. A special thank you also goes out to Ms. Elizabeth Dorsey for her continued editorial assistance.



I just feel so alienated!



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On Being New and Unknown

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“How’s school?” a friend asks me about my first week of class at BGSP. “Uh, great!” I say. “How’s it going?” another asks a week later. “Um, okay!” I toss in words like “primary object” and “ego cathexis.” “Birth is a torment!” I cry.

The truth is, I’m not sure how it’s going.

I don’t tell them that we sit around in a big circle, call each other by our last names, and hand in index cards in which we “write how we feel about the previous class.” Nor that we drift into debates about motherhood and stripper poles.

“How am I gonna learn the material?” I asked faculty at the welcome back party. “It’s circular,” one told me. “It keeps coming back around until it sinks in.” Another looked at me nostalgically. “We didn’t even use to have readings!”

I paled. No readings? No directions? No how-to’s? As I make the transition from being an analysand to a student of psychoanalysis, things are becoming less clear, not more. What am I supposed to be doing in class? Why didn’t the instructors give us any information? I felt like I was in the middle of something—a new “breast universe”—that I couldn’t quite picture, like one of those blindfolded men feeling a different part of the elephant, unable to see the whole.

“You can’t be afraid of looking stupid,” my analyst told me when I was thinking about enrolling. We were in the middle of what was, for me, a particularly bruising session, in which I was, as usual, attempting at all costs to look good. “People who have to look smart don’t do well here.”

The problem is, I hate not knowing. When I entered analysis in 2003, I went for a solution to writer’s block. I thought I’d come in and he’d tell me what to do. He didn’t. He didn’t say much of anything in fact. It was I who had to do the talking. This made me more anxious; I said less. But outside the sessions, I read voraciously about analysis, clutching Karen Horney paperbacks, and talking over coffee with a girlfriend I’d sent to my analyst, too. Between discussions of his license plate and piecing together where he might live, we lamented his weekly

instructions, “Just say what comes to mind,” feeling like analytic failures.

Why is the unknown so scary, the prospect of knowing ourselves so dark? “Why do you always assume it’s going to be bad?” my analyst asked me once. It was true. I never visualized a pillowy meadow of green or a fragrant bosom on which to lay my weary head. It was a hurricane, a tornado, a blinding snow storm. Someone leaving me. Death. One of my favorite stories was Sophocles’ *Oedipus, the King*, a play I taught to my undergraduates, the story of a man who, upon learning who he was, stabbed his eyes out.

Around the second week of class, I had figured it out, I told my cohorts. It was planned! They were leading us into a state of un-knowing rather than a state of knowing. The goal was not knowledge in the usual sense—books, facts, lectures—but a deeper, richer, more ethereal yet permanent induction through the pores of experience! My formulation made me feel a little more in control but didn’t help with class. We continued to segue into the pros and cons of using colored cards for logs and my polka-dotted knee socks.

“Frustration is the root of consciousness,” my first instructor told us. Without discomfort there is no change, no growth.

One heated argument early on in our classes was about the balance of the abstract and the concrete. At first, I thought it was just a discussion of learning styles, but now I see that, in fact, it’s this tricky balance of theory and practice that guarantees that someone will always be unsatisfied. The frustration of the analytic situation—they don’t tell you anything about themselves, they charge you money, and kick you out after 50 minutes even if you’re bawling—starts the process rolling. The withdrawal of information assures that tensions will rise up and people will have to deal with it and, through that process, *discover* something. Each class teeters along and is left alone to find its own homeostasis, and it’s this fact that both thrills and terrifies me. That makes me cling to old ways and demand to be taken care of and protected, while also wanting to leap into the new and unexpected. We’re here to learn how to use our own personalities therapeutically, and to do that we have to pay attention to our responses, our thoughts, our feelings. There are no right ways or right answers. Psychoanalysis, if anything, is about individuality.

“How’s class?” someone asks me (*continued*)

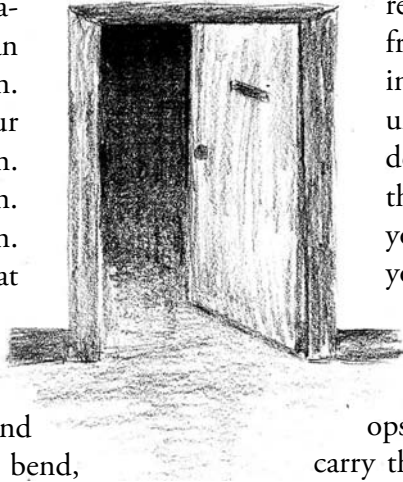


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Why Psychoanalysis? - a meditation

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Life is a race. Out of death. Against death. Toward death. Every move forward carries with it a weight of undoing. Life is heavy-hearted. A billion sperm lunge. One wins. A startled egg stirs. Cells divide. Begin dying. A baby grows to bursting. A mother evicts. They survive. The screaming killer devours. Sleeps. Devours. Sleeps. Dreams. These are the first pictures. This is mind. Pictures painted on your retina by the forces of life and death, pleasure and pain. Deep within the old reptilian brain, forces swirl toward. And away from. This is your engine, the boiler-room of your desire. Blind lunging toward. Away from. Toward pleasure. Away from pain. Pain. Pain. Spit it out. Squirm. Cry. Sleep. Dream. Pictures of fulfillment; pictures of rage. What satisfies. What blinds. In this the rhythm of the first days, the patterns are formed, cuts and ruts form the runways of to and fro. To the extent that pleasure is maximized and synchronized, the paths complexify, soften, bend, take new turns, seek new pleasures, make pictures of green and gold. Life is union, expansion, multiplication. To the extent that pain replicates, it congests, contracts, coagulates, chokes, distends, repeats. The roads stiffen into limitation. The ruts toward destruction deepen and dominate desire. Death is older than life, tougher, darker. (pretty soon) there you are. Barely animate bundle of desire straining against fixity. Some mind. Colors for the world you look out on. Is it black, or green? Is April the cruelest month? Or the most joyful? Do you see what you have? Or



what you do not have? What avenues are available to you to satisfy your desires? Can you go down the road you want to, or do you get stuck? Writhe? Careen? Hit trees? Freeze? Run in circles? Shriveled up? Go nowhere? Go Backwards? Mark time? How congealed in you are the downward pulls? How far did you get in the amalgamation of life and death which is character?

Psychoanalysis has the power to release the energy trapped in these deadly ruts. The analyst enters the energy field of the organism, desire and fixity. A contract is made. Two people meet regularly, out of ordinary time. One pays attention to the desires of the other, responds only to these desires, and by so doing becomes a reflection of the other, a receptacle, a mirror, a familiar, terrifying, friendly, horrible or insignificant image of all in you that is unknown, unknowable, unbearable, lost and forgotten, loved and despised. A twoness emerges and moves through space. The you you know and the you you don't know. The missing pieces of you are lost early, carried away by emotion untamed by language. There is an unrecognized completion in this twoness. An emotional prescription develops. Is applied. You begin to speak. Words carry the lost energy up into consciousness. You speak the unspeakable. Your desires increase. You repeat your stuckness. You repeat your image, the image stuck on your retina the day you first looked out, your perception of the world painted the colors of your conflict. What stops you is not what you don't know. What stops you is what you haven't said. The analyst catches the fire in the belly of the unsaid and helps you say it. And when you can say what you couldn't say, the energy trapped in the ruts of death comes loose, wobbles, snuggles up to some lively impulse, binds, blooms, and blossoms in the alchemy of living.

(continued from page 5) during my third week. At this point it's going badly. Terrible, I want to say. I'm not sure I'm in the right place. But I hesitate. Maybe feeling bad doesn't have to mean it's not going well. It might mean it's going very well.

"Why do you think you have to feel good?" my analyst asked recently when I was claiming discomfort as an excuse to not talk. "Can you come in here and talk when you don't want to?"

The truth is, I don't know, but I think I'll stick

around to explore the question. Something is stirring: connections, tremors, ...*life*. That's all I need to know.

"It's going great," I tell my friend, shifting uncomfortably. "Just perfect."

Epilogue: While preparing this article for publication and discussing it with fellow students and my analyst, I confronted some interesting issues about impulse control that I will share with you in a future issue!



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No Ordinary Note Card

Submitted Anonymously

As I contemplated writing this article for the Contact, terror cluttered my mind....What will my peers think of me? What if they disagree with what I have to say? What if they ostracize me for my thoughts and ideas? And worse, what if my professors and analyst disapprove?

Despite the weight of these worries and fears, I recall how my openness has not distanced me from the BGSP community but has instead helped me to connect with others throughout my first year of study. It has especially been the logs that have provided a forum for the feelings I had vowed to keep to myself. I am fortunate to enjoy the discharge and relief that writing has provided me throughout the ups and downs of analysis, class, and group. When I learned that we would be writing our personal reactions to the class process on note cards which we call logs, it sounded too good to be true, and for me, it is absolutely too good to be true. Of course, the idea is that you say everything in class, but that is easier said than done. It seems there is always something more to say.

After some class sessions that feel tense and chaotic, I find myself recalling all the things I wished I had said or words that I had spoken which I revisited with doubt and regret. I love grabbing one of those note cards and scribbling furiously the thoughts that come into my mind.

I set my pride aside while resting on the faith and hope that the professors will allow me to return the week after they have read my log. And they always do. In fact, they seem to look at me and interact with me as though they understand me more and appreciate the opportunity to learn something new.

One teacher planned out absences for a couple of class sessions, and being one whose deepest feelings of anger are roused by abandonment, I let her know how I felt about this in my logs, blasting her with words of wrath and resentment. I remember creeping up to the table in front of her chair to hand in my log, in which I demanded that she commit to the class like she was committing to her vacations. What a "bad little child" I was to continue focusing on her few absences rather than the consistency and commitment that she exhibited throughout the semester. I returned for the next class expecting her look of disapproval, but, to my surprise, I was met by attentiveness and encouragement. I have since grown to adore this teacher, not because I grew accustomed to her absences, but instead, because she allowed me to be as furious and demanding as I needed to be. I would not have shared the intensity of my anger in class because I was, at the time, terrified of how my classmates might perceive my neediness – yet the needy in me got expressed regardless of my fears. I thank my logs for that.

Of course, there is the irritating shuffling around and scribbling logs at the last minute



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amidst papers and readings that pile up, but even that seems to create more camaraderie among the students, as most shared misery does. We befriend each other with the gesture of lending a blank note card to one in need or accepting one from peers on the days when we forget or “resist” bringing our own. Another gripe on logs is that it provides students the opportunity to avoid openness in class. Some of us cringe at the thought that someone would dare have a negative feeling toward us that they will only share with the professor in a log. Nonetheless, putting thoughts and feelings into words helps, lest that anger remain tucked inside of us... it is sure to come out in some fashion. Better it be words than action. The logs have become a good friend to me, always inviting me to write that extra piece that I was too afraid to say in class or that I remembered only after reflecting on the class process.

In writing the logs, I have learned that, despite my fear that professors may disagree, disapprove, or think poorly of me for my words, there has always been a seat for me to return to, regardless of my tantrum-filled logs. I can write anything there and come back the next week to find that I’m not a bad little child after all. The feelings of anger and longing which I once thought to indicate “badness” are rather wonderful assets, filled with passion, desire, and liveliness. The more I say about these feelings, the better off I am for it. I thank my lucky logs for giving me another place to say a little more. It’s true when they say that a little bit goes a long way.

The “Castle in the Woods”

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Okay, I know that it is not really a “castle,” but it often feels that way to me, kind of like a mythical castle, and I like to think maybe it sprang up there just for me! It came out of my unformed dreams and called me to it, so that I might be able to experience what it might be like to have dreams and to “take a walk” in them, and so I found the place and the



people to be a part of this mythical, magical dream world with me.

The place was here, and the people are you. Maybe we all dreamed up this place together from our separate places in the universe. Maybe before we knew it or each other, we were reaching out toward it and toward each other. Maybe the place disappears when we are not here and reappears when we arrive. Maybe it’s magic. They say analysis is about learning to live in the “real world.” Well, that’s okay, as long as I get to learn about it and live in a magical mythical castle in the woods, with all of you for now.



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The Irony of Fate

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This Chinese proverb tells us that the world is ever-changing, so one cannot predict whether something is good luck or bad luck, a blessing or a curse.

I recently traveled back home to Korea to attend and translate at a seminar. I was filled with joy at being reunited with friends and family, but I got hurt shortly after arriving and was convinced that I had broken my finger. I was afraid that this would ruin my trip, so I went to the hospital. Luckily, my finger was only dislocated and would heal in a few weeks. The seminar was successful and I had a great time, but then, catastrophe struck again. A previous seminar by the same speaker had already been translated into Korean and had just been published, including the original English lectures --- this was something I had spent months working on! However, the books never reached store shelves and had to be destroyed because the English version contained material which had potential confidentiality issues. I saw months of hard work go down the drain.

However, it was soon decided that it would be reprinted, excluding the English version. On the way back to Boston, I carelessly left my backpack on the bus, which contained my passport and all my important documents. After a frantic call to the bus company, I was able to get the bag back in time to catch my flight. It happened to be a very enjoyable flight: I got a seat with extra leg room and, furthermore, made good friends with the person sitting next to me. Was it a good trip or was it a disaster? I don't know, but perhaps a story that illustrates the proverb above can shed some light on the question.

The Story

Once upon a time, an old man who was a skilled fortune-teller lived in a fortress at the northern border of China. One day, his horse ran away across the border into enemy territory. The village people tried to comfort him, but he said, without any grief: "How do we know? This could be a blessing."

A few months later, his horse returned home

together with another fine horse. The village people congratulated him, but the old man said calmly, without any sign of joy: "How do we know? This could be a curse."

One day, the old man's son, who enjoyed riding, fell off the fine new horse and broke his leg. The village people tried to comfort the old man, but he said calmly, without any sign of grief: "How do we know? This could be a blessing."

About a year later, the village was invaded and all the young men died in the battle. Only the old man's son survived because his limp meant that he could not fight.

Blessings become curses and curses become blessings. Our limited perspective does not allow us to grasp the profundity of this.

A Psychoanalytic Understanding

This proverb and story can be interpreted in numerous ways, so I will offer one that is meaningful to me.

The old fortune teller is either wise, or he is a fool. Perhaps he has reached a rare state of enlightenment in which he is not overtaken or overwhelmed by emotions. Or maybe he is a rigid and troubled man who uses a particular defense not to experience extreme feelings of joy and sadness.

Either way, the story is telling us about something very basic to our lives. Good constantly goes with bad, blessings come with curses, and what goes up must come down. This ebb and flow is intrinsic to all of nature, which means that paradox, irony, and the pairing of opposites is crucial to an understanding of the psyche. At the seminar I attended, this was called a constant conjunction, a term rooted in Bion's ideas (see *Cogitations* 218-224). Perhaps this would be a build-up of tension and a release of tension in drive theory terms.

Psychoanalysis can help us get used to this basic rhythm of life, to ride it out, and to go with the flow. Most of us are not the Buddha and are therefore easily shaken up by extreme emotions. We can transition rapidly between feeling that we are on top of the world and that it is the end of the world. Or perhaps we feel nothing and live in an emotional flatland. Either way, psychoanalysis can help us process our experiences, work through our emotions, and survive the blessings and curses of life.



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2009 CMPS Conference: Psychoanalytic Listening - Deriving Meaning from Context

Friday Night Case Presentations

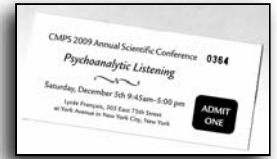
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As analysts and students filtered into the elegant Great Hall of CMPS on Friday evening for the case presentations, the room filled quickly, leaving not an open seat in the house. Dr. Lucy Holmes graciously welcomed us and introduced Dr. Dale Boesky, Dr. Steven Poser, and the two advanced students presenting. The presentations took the audience on a journey to experiencing what it might feel like to sit with the patients. Amongst us were feelings of love, affection, humor, and anger that evoked expressions which vacillated between hearty laughter and utter rage. The presentations, though different in the feelings they roused, were strikingly similar in that each blanketed the audience in a thick layer of emotion.

Dr. Boesky's contribution gave us a taste of the charm and gentility we could expect from him for the duration of the conference. He engaged us in a collaborative discussion which brought us close to the material at hand. The audience was certainly a lively one, especially when one among us remarked that she was no analyst and followed with a comment which expressed the group unconscious so boldly and succinctly that the senior analysts from BGSP remarked, "Sign her up!" and "Straight to level B!" The atmosphere Friday evening was characterized by candor and honesty. The night inspired a collective effort that carried on throughout Saturday's conference as well.

The Saturday Conference

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On Saturday morning, Dr. Boesky spoke on the theme of listening in context. How do analysts formulate interpretations and inferences? Which associations "count"? Which don't? To whom? There can be no meaning if the patient's words are not listened to in context, he said. But to do that, we need to pay attention to the context of our methods. In words that were intelligent and bracing but also gentle and inviting, and not without humor (I particularly liked the metaphor of the Baltics vs. the Mediterraneans as the deprivors vs. the gratifiers), Boesky encouraged the psychoanalytic community to unite rather than divide, to become more transparent to each other, less concealed. A lively discussion from the audience ensued that led to fundamental questions, like, what is psychoanalysis? It's not only a quest for meaning, but relief from suffering, he said. An analyst needs a tough mind but a soft heart. He must have love for the patient. He must say the father's words without the father's intentions.

In the afternoon, Dr. Dolores Welber presented a case and was joined by Ms. Newsome, Dr. Snyder, Dr. Bernstein, and Dr. Boesky. After reading a summary, some notably lyrical process notes, and a quote by Emily Dickinson, the audience jumped in to discuss. Soon a pervading confusion became apparent that was not the audience's but had been induced by the case. A heady discussion ensued, probing the case with tips, suggestions, questions, associations, and as many different lenses as there were commenters. We stopped early because the discussion was so deep and intense. I felt like a tuning fork as I left, with many notes buzzing inside. One of the most provocative ideas of the day for me was when Boesky questioned the successes that we're more apt to report in our case studies, and wondered, Without sharing our failures—the how's and why's of what *didn't* work—how can we adequately articulate, share, and reveal what does?



Turns out it was a fear of flying, so I'm good!



The Contact

Impressions of Psychoanalysis in Latin America: An Interview with Dr. Rodrigo Barahona

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Dr. Barahona presenting in Guatemala

TC: You originally trained in modern psychoanalysis at BGSP, and over the last few years, you have been presenting papers and clinical cases at various conferences in Latin America. Could you tell us about your impressions of psychoanalysis in Latin America?

RB: I think that psychoanalysis in Latin America is in a very exciting place right now, partly due to its rich history and partly to the present socio/cultural/political scene. Latin American psychoanalysis is usually associated with the schools of thought originating in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, and it was only after the 70's and 80's that the Lacanian schools became hegemonic. Prior to this, it was mostly Kleinian and classical Freudian thinking that influenced clinicians, many of the Latin American pioneers having been trained early in the last century in London, Vienna, and other parts of Europe. Recently and worldwide, there has been a renewed interest in Bion, and this has found fertile ground in Latin America in particular. Some recent papers have traced the influence that old Latin American thinkers are having on the current Bionian analysts.

As far as the recent turn to intersubjectivity in psychoanalysis, this is not so new to those familiar with the work of Enrique Pichon-Riviere, Jorge Mom, and of course the Barangers, to name a few of the principals, all beginning around the 1940's in South America. And any serious attention to countertransference, which in Latin America went hand in hand with intersubjectivity, was initiated by Racker, a Pole who went off to become one of Latin America's greatest psychoanalysts. Theories of intersubjectivity in Latin American psychoanalysis have been there almost since its

origins, and I think this is why Bion is not so hard to grasp among the current wave of young Latin American practitioners. Attention to the interaction between the unconscious of the other and the subject's own unconscious may have also been influenced, to a great extent, by another Latin American tradition, that of violent political upheavals—throughout the 20th century a constant force in dynamic tension with the collective psyche. Psychoanalysts and people in general could not deny the influence on their psychic lives of the overwhelming forces of civil war, social upheaval, and political violence.

TC: That reminds me of the influence of the First World War on Freud's thinking, and it makes me wonder about the effects of local politics on local psychoanalysis. How have your ideas been received in the different countries you have presented in?

RB: In February, I presented a case to colleagues at the Costa Rican Association for Socio-critical psychoanalysis, and in July, I presented the same case in Guatemala to psychology students and faculty of both the Landivar and Francisco Marroquin Universities. This case, called "Forgetting Margarita," was a study on enactment of the defense of repression in both patient and analyst. What was an intrapsychic defense pattern of motivated forgetting, as it were, became an enactment in which both she and I tended to repress certain elements of her experience in the sessions, elements which had to do with unbearable emotional pain. In the case of this patient, a good amount of these memories not only had to do with personal suffering at the level of family dynamics, but also of terror experienced growing up in Pinochet's Chile during and after the coup of 1973.

This captured the attention, not to mention the imagination, of young psychology/psychoanalysis students for a number of reasons. First, in Latin America, psychology in general and psychoanalysis in particular tends to be associated to left leaning political views, the connection being between the polarities of the liberation of the unconscious/repression at the service of the ego, and the liberation of the masses/repression at the service of the militarized-fascist state. This is a connection that, like it or not, is such an ingrained part of the signifier psychoanalysis as to be inescapable. Many think, and I agree, that this is why psychoanalysis has, in fact, survived in a much more vital form in Latin America than in the US—it wasn't married to medicine like it was here. Instead, excluding a brief period early in the century in Argentina, it was mistress to all the social and human sciences. Everyone wanted her, yet no one in particular could claim her—probably why she



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remained so cheerful. The other reason why this case was interesting, particularly to those in Guatemala, was that it involved the importance of coming to terms with anguish in the face of the possibility of forgetting.

In postmodern times like these, we would like to think that the past is no longer important and that action and work are what is needed to maintain life as a livable enterprise. As Zizek puts it, buying a certain type of water at Starbucks is all you need to do nowadays to save a billion lives, or what have you. You don't even need to think about how the situation came to be or how your contribution actually helps sustain a system that creates the need for this type of contribution. That would involve history or some degree of self-reflection. Similarly, the type of enacted, mutual forgetting in the face of nameless dread that I describe in the case has its parallels in the national struggles Central Americans sometimes endure to forget their violent past and move on, so to speak. I think the emphasis on moving on, or as it is put over and over again in contemporary discourse, 'going forward,' sometimes comes at the expense of acknowledging what one has been capable of in terms of violence and that remains a potential in one's repertoire for dealing with intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict.

Prior to presenting at the two universities, I presented a different though related paper at the 32nd Interamerican Congress of Psychology in Guatemala City that examined Costaricans' attitudes towards such things as state sponsored violence, torture, and war. This study was just published as a chapter (with Eddy Carillo) in *State Violence and the Right to Peace*, by Praeger. The results were somewhat disheartening, showing a significant gap between Costaricans' ordinarily positive self-identity in regards to war/peace related issues and their cognitive/emotional sense of what these issues were. Costa Rica as a country is known for its peace and diplomacy- embracing stance. One of our presidents won the Peace Prize in 1987 for helping stop the 40 years of civil war experienced throughout most of Central America at the cost of over 300,000 lives. The peace treaty had been signed in Guatemala, and just when we thought that those days of murder and mayhem were over, the day before I gave this paper (the theme of the conference, by the way, was "A Path Towards Peace and Democracy") the Honduran military a few hundred miles away decided to conduct the first coup d'état the region had seen in over twenty years. The next day, I was talking about the importance of a country's citizens coming to terms with their murderous past lest they suffer shaky self-identities rooted in myths rather than actual substance, making it easier for the past to come back to haunt them—I was thinking about a theme that appears as a constant preoccupation in Kundera's novels: that

BGSP Welcomes a Generous Gift

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Dr. Weinberg presents the photo to Dr. Kettell

Dr. Henry Weinberg, esteemed Professor Emeritus of Boston University's Clinical Psychology Department, called last year to tell me—one of his many former students—about a signed photograph of Sigmund Freud that he was thinking of donating to a graduate school. He wondered what a suitable place would be for the picture. I expressed the feeling that it would be appropriate for the Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis and was very pleased that Dr. Weinberg decided to donate it to us. It is a thrill to hold a picture that Freud himself signed! The occasion was at the end of a seminar Freud gave in Vienna (in the 1930's) for physicians who might be interested in psychoanalysis. Freud signed photos and gave each participant a copy. Some years later, a psychology student whose father traveled abroad to hear Freud came to see Dr. Weinberg and offered him the picture, explaining that his father decided he wasn't interested in psychoanalysis, but he did bring home the picture! It has been carefully cared for ever since and now the Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis has become its guardian. With deepest appreciation, Dr. Weinberg, on behalf of the entire Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis, thank you for this precious gift. We will think of you and your generosity each time we look at the picture and you are welcome to visit it any time!

of forgetting as the only memory of those who cannot face their own identity—suddenly, the past came back to haunt Central America. As far as my presentations were concerned, however, the timing couldn't have been better.



The Contact

Dr. Meadow's Questions for Exiting Patients

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When patients announce that they want to leave treatment, it raises lots of feelings – fear, anger, confusion, worry, you name it. Then, there are the questions of meaning: What is this all about? Why now? What is going on in terms of the resistance and transference? When does it make sense to end treatment anyway?

When I was starting out as an analyst, it also raised the obvious question: what do I say next? I felt overwhelmed. Sometimes, I was afraid that I had missed something; at other times, I was just angry that the patient was not able to say more about what was going on; in other instances, I was just worried (“Oh, no, there goes my practice!” or “There goes my treatment service patient!”). More often than not, I found myself tongue-tied.

At the time, I was fortunate to have Dr. Meadow as a supervisor, and I asked her how she dealt with such matters. What questions did she ask her patients at these moments? On one occasion, she decided to gratify me and answer my question directly. (We had already spent lots of time analyzing my confusion). Here is what she said:

1. *Should I let you go?*
2. *Should I command you to stay?*
3. *Are you getting anything out of therapy to warrant your staying? If yes, then should I command you to stay?*
4. *What should I do in order for you to stay?*
5. *Should I order you to leave right now? If yes, will I be giving you what you want? If not, why not? Should I want to keep you?*

These days, I keep her questions on a card in my filing cabinet. At times, I take the list out and study it if I know a patient will probably be discussing termination. Her words (and no doubt my transference to them) help contain my feelings.

Since then, I have developed other questions. But these are still the basic ones that help me stay centered when these challenging moments come up. Having these questions as an option also seems to give me the space to stop and think more about what is happening within myself and the patient during these times.

The Earring

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A feather weighted with unsayable words
Falls slyly away, disturbing the
Piece of the world where things stay found.
The search parties organize and off they
Tramp, on a wild peacock
Chase through bitterest October.

Difficulties mount, chief among them the
Roguish leaves and their conspiracies
Of imitation, infuriating street lamps
Illuminating nothing, and peculiar voices
Issuing from sidewalk cracks commanding:
Let lost things stay that way!

The detectives weary and the trail grows cold.
They envy the feather:
To be lost is to be desired, sought
Ceaselessly and immortalized in memory;
To be found is to be safely tossed
Aside, to the room where sure things
Lie honestly forgotten.

For this bauble, no such posterity: one shout
And one dash and one triumphal hoisting
Collapses infinite points of uncertainty into one hole
In the ear of one woman now securely filled
With one well-traveled and mischievous earring.
Immortality shall have to wait.





Fragments (continued from back page)

Is it a bird, is it a plane, or is it an unconscious communication?



At a campaign rally in Florida in November 2008, Barack Obama scratched his face with his middle finger while congratulating John McCain on a hard-fought campaign. The gesture grabbed headlines and led to media speculation about whether Obama was really “flipping the bird” at his Republican challenger.

Since this time, I have been interested to observe my patients’ use of various hand gestures in the session. In the outpatient clinic where I work, I see patients face-to-face and have been able to notice how patients might scratch their eye with their middle finger after I make an ill-judged intervention or may begin to rest their head on their hand with two extended fingers in a V sign.

Culturally speaking, the V sign (with the palm inward) is very ambiguous. In the U.S., the sign (with palm inward or outward) is used to mean “Peace,” a meaning that supposedly became popular during the peace movement of the 1960’s.

However, in Northern Europe the sign has a very different meaning. According to a popular legend, the V sign (with the palm inward) derives from the gestures of longbowmen fighting in the English army at the Battle of Agincourt in the 15th century. The story claims that the French threatened to cut off the arrow-shooting fingers of all the English longbowmen after they had won the battle at Agincourt. In response to this, the English archers approached holding up their two fingers as a sign of defiance. In modern times, the V sign is at least as offensive as the birdie.

Being British, it took me a little while to work out that the V sign in the US is really a sign of peace and hope - a good thing to know in trying to understand a patient’s non-verbal communications. I suppose that if there were a moral to this story it would be that it has proven helpful to be open to the possibility of cultural signs having very different meanings.

Shame in Psychoanalytic Training

Throughout the course of my own psychoanalytic schooling, the topic of shame in the training process has not featured as a topic openly discussed – a curious phenomenon given that the centrality of shame in analytic training has been widely acknowledged in the psychoanalytic literature (e.g. Arlow 1972, 1982, Kernberg 1996). Why, I wonder, should this be the case in our institute?

Although I am presently unable to offer any coherent thoughts on this issue, I would like to direct the interested reader to a thought-provoking online panel discussion on the subject of “Shame in Psychoanalytic Training” that can be found at: www.thecandidatejournal.org. Click on ARCHIVE, and then click on Volume 2, December 2007.

Catatonia

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The Contact

Fragments

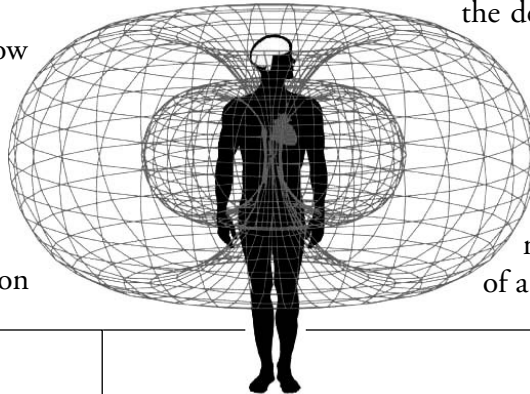
Alistair McKnight
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A thought on the mysterious operations of unconscious communication

The mechanics of unconscious communication have continued to both intrigue and baffle psychoanalysts since Freud first wondered about how two “unconsciouses” might directly influence each other. I recently came across some research that made me wonder about the influence of physical proximity on the analytic situation.

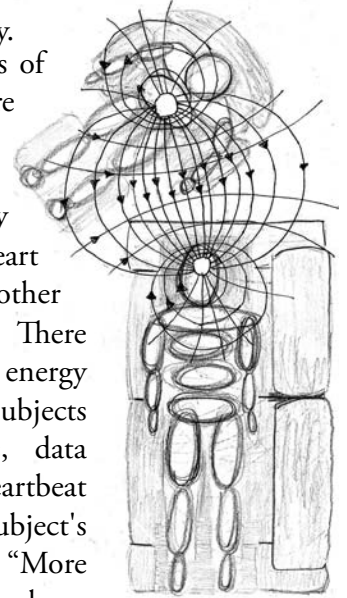
Scientists at the Institute of HeartMath (IHM) have been studying emotions and the electromagnetic energy generated by emotions and the body—paying particular attention to the heart. Gabriella Boehmer, an IHM spokesperson, explains, “Measured with modern magnetic field meters, the heart's electromagnetic field is approximately five thousand times greater in strength than the field produced by the brain. The heart's field permeates every cell in the body and radiates up to eight feet outside the body, but theoretically it travels even further.”

Previous studies at IHM show that heart rhythms reflect our emotions. These rhythms “modulate” the field produced by the heart, kind of like a radio tuner. This implies that people can exchange emotional information



through electromagnetic energy.

In a study, seated pairs of subjects four feet apart were instructed to sit quietly and not think or do anything. Researchers simultaneously monitored one subject's heart signal waves (ECG) and the other subject's brain waves (EEG). There was no indication of an energy exchange. However, when subjects were asked to hold hands, data showed that one subject's heartbeat was registered in the other subject's brain waves. The study says, “More refined techniques have since been developed by IHM that indicate there is an energy exchange that occurs up to five feet away from the body even without touching, but when people do touch—even a simple handshake—there is a surprisingly large exchange of subtle electromagnetic information being transferred.”



Aerial View of Analytic Session

Something to bear in mind when we are debating the efficacy of psychoanalysis and the nature of therapeutic action? I find this interesting in the context of the debate about therapy on the telephone/Skype versus being physically present in the room. Beyond the effects of fantasies that are stimulated by the physical separation during phone sessions, might the “something is missing” be the unconscious reception of a softly pulsing electromagnetic field?

Call for Submissions

Please submit original writing, and/or artwork about your experiences of being a student or faculty member at BGSP, or ideas about interviews and content you would like to see in future issues.

Send material to:

Tayloe Denton - tayloe.denton@gmail.com
or
Janet Pocorobba - jpocorob@lesley.edu



I'm sorry. I only deal with them metaphorically - you need a vet...

Put It Into Words!

Spend time writing with other students every other Friday 6pm-7:15pm starting **February 5th**.

Location TBA.

Contact:

tayloe.denton@gmail.com
or
jpocorob@lesley.edu.

