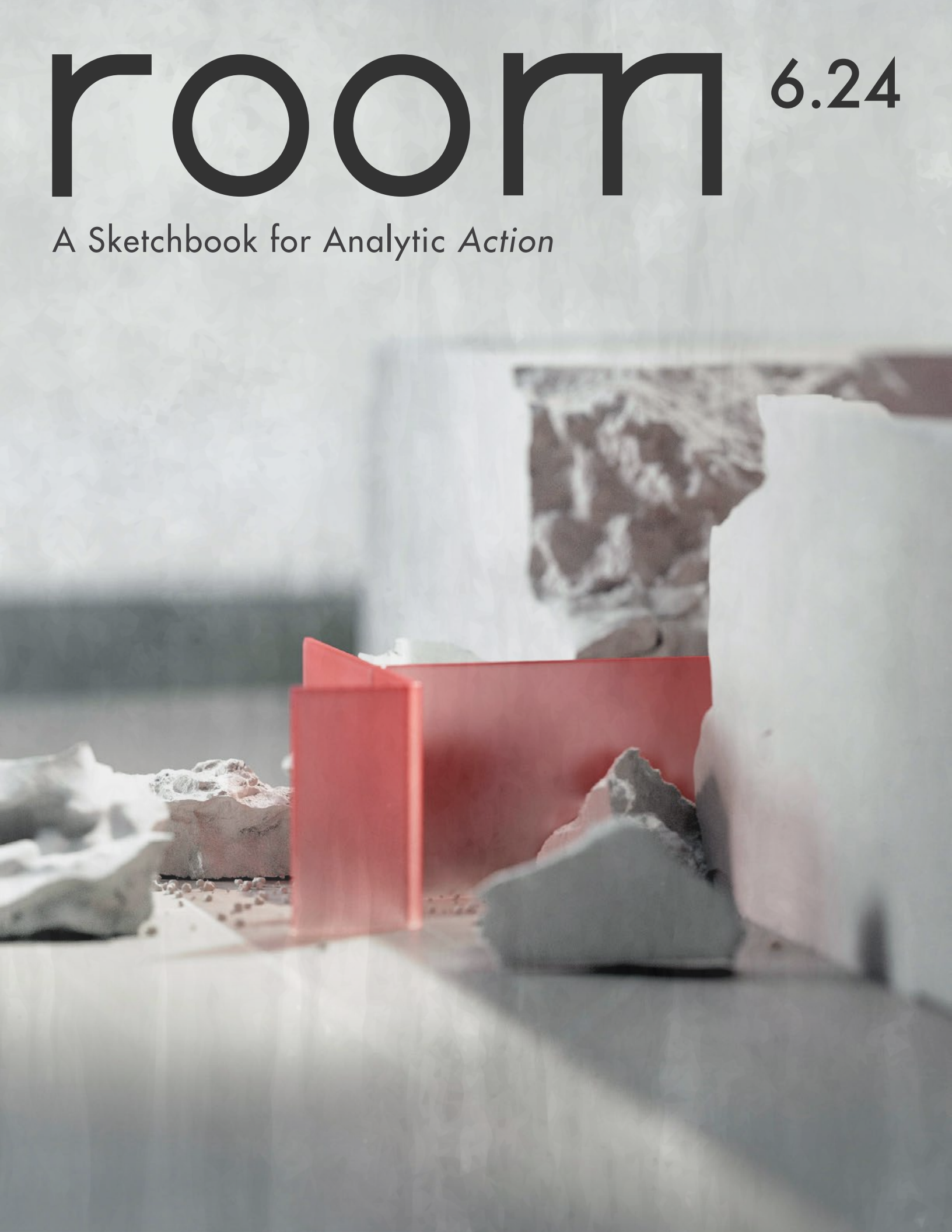
room 6.24

A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action*



ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action* is an open, global, public forum in which individual experience shared through essays, art, creative writing, poetry, and community projects enrich our understanding of the social and political world. We believe that the exquisite singularity of individual expression has universal relevance. *ROOM*'s unique approach offers greater familiarity with psychoanalysis as a lens for social discourse.

Cover photo by Jesper Lindborg

room
A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action*
— 2018 Gradiva® Award for New Media —

INTERNATIONAL PSYCHOANALYTICAL ASSOCIATION
— 2023 IPA in Culture Award Winner —

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APsaA AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION

Funding has been provided by the American Psychoanalytic Foundation through the American Psychoanalytic Association.

CIPS CONFEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETIES

CFS Contemporary Freudian Society

IPTAR Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research

ICP+P Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy + Psychoanalysis

NEW DIRECTIONS
WRITING WITH A PSYCHOANALYTIC EDGE

Contributors

Charles Byrne is an erstwhile teacher of psychology and a writer with other poems forthcoming or recently published in *Birmingham Poetry Review, Meridian*, and *Stonecoast Review*.

Karim G. Dajani, PsyD, is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice with a specialization in treating bicultural individuals. His research and writing include publications on psychological resilience and culture. He focuses on the role culture plays in determining an individual's role within a collective and on the experience of cultural dislocation.

Richard Grose, PhD, is a psychoanalyst who is a member of *ROOM*'s editorial board and book review editor for *ROOM*. He is interested in how culture and psychoanalysis can illuminate each other. He has a private practice in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in Manhattan.

Tom Hennes is a global leader in experiential design. For thirty years, he has led his New York–based firm, Thinc Design, in the development and design of innovative and influential museums, national memorials, aquariums, cultural attractions, and Olympic and World Expo pavilions in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. He has written and lectured extensively on exhibitions as zones of exploration, discourse, and growth, shaped increasingly by an interpersonal–relational frame. In addition to his ongoing leadership of Thinc, he currently serves on the board of the William Alanson White Institute for Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis & Psychology.

Eliza Jaquez, LMFT, is a bilingual psychotherapist based in New York City. She specializes in treating children, adolescents, and adults. Eliza completed postgraduate adult psychodynamic psychotherapy training at NYU's Institute of Psychoanalytic Education. She is also a graduate of IPTAR's Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy program and an advanced candidate in the adult psychoanalytic program. She has a private practice in NoHo. Website: elizajaquez.com

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Nancy Kuhl is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *On Hysteria* (2022) and *Granite* (2021). She has studied psychoanalysis as a research fellow at the Western New England Institute of Psychoanalysis. She is the curator of poetry for the Yale Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University. For more information, visit: phylumpress.com/on-hysteria-notes.

Arsalan Malik, MD, is a practicing psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, psychedelic psychotherapist, and erstwhile resident of Karachi, Pakistan, currently living in Los Angeles, CA. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, where he supervises and teaches psychiatry residents. Dr. Malik is a graduate of the new Center of Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles and completed his psychiatry residency at the Menninger Clinic, Baylor College of Medicine.

Abidemi Olowonira is a Nigerian-born assemblage artist based in Brooklyn, NY. He received his BFA and MFA in Houston, Texas. His work has been shown around the world, including the Sika Art Fair in Dubai and the Guangzhou Museum of Fine Arts in China, and in 2019 was awarded the Elle Decor Designer of the Year Award for his collaboration with luxury rug maker Kyle Bunting. Largely utilizing recycled hides in his work, Abidemi Olowonira explores the nuances of oral histories and mythologies carried down through generations. In addition, he studies the dissemination of mythologies from varying cultures, finding startling similarities. Olowonira also uses his work to navigate cultural complexity such as heritage and displacement. He is currently investigating the dynamically complex Yoruba culture and its migration and influences in the diaspora.

Jyoti M. Rao is a psychoanalyst and faculty at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. Her article "Social Justice Activism as Interpretation in a Loewaldian World" appears in the December 2023 issue of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.

Eyal Rozmarin, PhD, is a psychoanalyst and writer. He was born in Israel-Palestine and now lives in New York. He writes at the intersection of the psychological and the social, about subjects, collectives, and the forces that pull them together and tear them apart. He is co-editor of the book series Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis, and on the editorial boards of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* and *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. Eyal teaches at the White Institute and the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California. His upcoming book is titled *Belonging and Its Discontents*.

Ray Smith has held more than 50 exhibitions around the world during the last two decades, mainly in the United States and Mexico, but also in Japan, Europe, and South America. He participated in the 1989 edition of the Whitney Biennial in New York City. Smith exhibited at the First Triennial of Drawings at the Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona, Spain, and took part in the group exhibition called Latin American Artists of the 20th Century, which traveled from Seville, Spain, to the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Pompidou Center in Paris, the Kunsthalle in Cologne, Germany, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Smith's paintings are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Wurth Museum in Kunzelman, Germany, the Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporaneo in Mexico City, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, amongst others. He currently splits his time between New York and Cuernavaca in Mexico.

Mark Solms is director of neuropsychology at the Neuroscience Institute of the University of Cape Town. He is member of the British, American, and South African Psychoanalytical Associations and is an honorary member of the American College of Psychiatrists. He has won many awards, including the Sigourney Prize. He has published more than 350 articles and 8 books, the most recent of which, *The Hidden Spring*, was translated into 13 languages. He is the editor and translator of the *Revised Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 vols.) and of the forthcoming *Complete Neuroscientific Works of Sigmund Freud* (4 vols.).

Jamie Steele is a licensed marriage and family therapist and psychoanalytic candidate in private practice in Washington, DC. Jamie is deeply interested in questions of justice, and the ways in which systems of oppression are woven into the core of psychic reality and normative unconscious processes and how these deeply entrenched organizing structures play out in clinical and social processes. Despite many misfittings, Jamie is also involved in the organizational life of psychoanalysis, both serving on the Committee on Gender and Sexuality (COGS) at ApsA and as the Diversities Committee co-chair at the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis. You can find her on Instagram at @jamiesteelemft.

Lisa Zimmerman, LICSW, LCSW-C, has been a psychotherapist in the greater Washington, DC region for over twenty years. She has received training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy from the Washington School of Psychiatry, the Stephen Mitchell Relational Study Center, and the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity. She is currently a student in the New Directions in Writing program.

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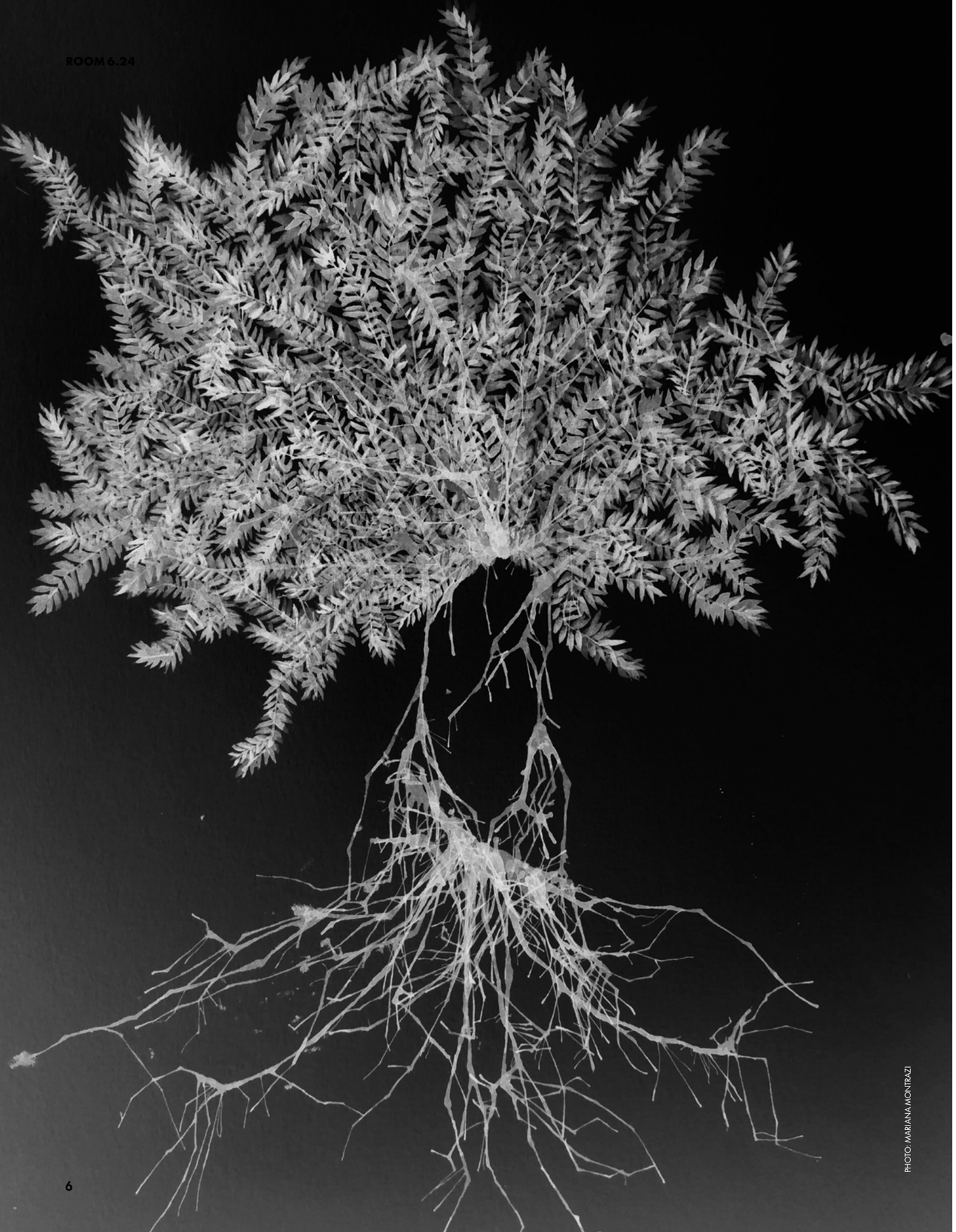

PHOTO: MARIANA MONTRAZI

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These Words

That's how it started
And I don't know how it will end.
But still, from beyond the valley,
From the pain, and from distance
We shall forever go on calling out
to each other: "We'll change."

— "These Words," Yehuda Amichai (translated from the Hebrew by Yehuda Amichai and Ted Hughes)

"Think what it would be like," Italo Calvino wrote, "to have a work conceived from outside the self, a work that would let us escape the limited perspective of the individual ego, not only to enter into selves like our own, but to give speech to that which has no language… " Of course we know that no person and no theory can ever escape the limited perspective of Calvino's "individual ego." Taken together, however, the authors and artists in *ROOM* 6.24 are giving language to a world that is rendering us all increasingly speechless.

In **You Know How Mami y Papi Get,** Eliza Jaquez finds ways to enliven the dry universality of psychoanalytic concepts. She describes being stopped in her tracks by a term like "object relations": "This (psychoanalytic) language palette is significantly muted when compared to the vibrant magentas coating my English or the bursts of flamingo pink saturating my Spanish," she writes, "but once I walk through that linguistic portal, my homegrown blend of Spanish serves as a reminder that on this side of the looking glass, we are not *objetos*. We are *gente*."

When they take the psychoanalytic terms "transference" and "interpretation" onto a South African farm or onto US college campuses, Mark Solms and Jyoti Rao also are also walking us through a "linguistic portal." In **Student Activism as Interpretation** Rao explains how the work of social justice activists functions like psychotherapy when activists are "imploring us to attend to our collapsed and curtailed capacity for love." She connects the attributes of psychoanalytic interpretation: introjection, catharsis, insight, identification, and working through to social justice activism in universities. Channeling Freud's 1915 monograph *Why War,* Rao reminds us that "We must find a way to differentiate ourselves from the compelling calls of the past … and be able to bear standing too close to the great changes …."

Freud recognized that underlying our ability to "work through" present difficulties is the flypaper of history, the thing to which everything sticks**.** Mark Solms's **In My Backyard** describes the very sticky, conflictual, and painful process of working out what to do with the land he inherited from his colonial ancestors. "In psychoanalysis, the taking of history is the treatment," he writes. "Much like the analysis of transference, it wasn't an intellectual exercise of learning about *Oh so once upon a time there were settlers who stole the land, and once upon a time there were settlers who brought slaves here.* It was lived."

Historical facts and present experiences, like the bass and treble notes in a minor or major chord, play simultaneously in analysis. But when the past is

whitewashed out of existence as Grose describes in **Kennedy's Death and American Fascism** or when historical traumas harden into weaponry as Hennes describes in **We Say "Never Forget,"** the music grinds to a halt. Step by step, Grose shows us how "the darkness of November 22, 1963, speaks to the darkness of our moment." In example after example, Hennes shows how the mantra of "never forget" leaves us "clinging to the inhumanity and guilt of the perpetrators, even as we cling to the humanity and innocence of the victims." Grose and Hennes remind us in different ways that Solms's "taking of history," the music of psychoanalysis, is not to be taken for granted.

For Solms and Rao, the sea change required to move the world starts from within: from within the analyst, from within the social activist. It requires having the inner strength to hold on to hope in the face of anguish. Solms describes how he found this inner strength by relying on his psychoanalytical experience and knowledge. He realized "this was bad; this was a horrible situation, and [he] just needed to . . . sit with it and let it be the ugly thing that it is, until [he] started to see the nature of it . . ."

Karim Dajani and Eyal Rozmarin are also using their analytic capacities to forge hope where speech has been absent. This issue marks the second series of their ongoing epistolary commitment to bear each other's pain, to move each other's hearts. Much as Freud reconfigured the "borders of Acheron," the hell of being human, when, in *The Interpretations of Dreams*, he first spelled out the nature of our unconscious, Dajani and Rozmarin have embarked on a project that potentially will reconfigure the borders of psychoanalysis.

Drawing on their own histories, in **Learning From All Things** they have been talking and writing about how psychoanalysis is empowered to address our anguished world. The courage it has taken them "to stand" as Freud wrote, "too close to great change," and to tolerate, as Solms has tolerated, "sitting with the 'ugly thing that is' until they are able to see the nature of it" has been heroic—harrowing and hopeful. "We are getting close to where we need to be—an impasse of sorts where we need to figure out how to dig ourselves out." Dajani writes to Rozmarin, "I understand your love for Israel, your belonging there, your deep protective impulse. I too love Palestine, belong there, and the impulse to protect courses through my veins." "My challenge," Rozmarin writes back, "is to find a place to speak from, a place that is not either a complete turning away… or, if I hold to my association, a place of absolute, paralyzing guilt and shame."

Describing how he was taught to live in fear and hate of his Indian neighbors when growing up in Pakistan, in **The Price of Belonging,** Arsalan Malik tells us how he managed to leave the fundamentalist, religious dictatorship that was his childhood home. "One of the most important endeavors in which human beings can engage in," he believes, "is to rise above our belief systems and group ideologies to overcome injustice … and stand in solidarity with those who are terrorized, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or tribe." Poignantly, he writes of loving the Pakistani people and culture and loving his adopted American home, while not fully feeling he belongs to either.

While some *ROOM* 6.24 authors describe the strength and courage it takes to not belong, Zimmerman's and Steele's essays describe the courage it takes to try to belong. "This is the essay my therapist doesn't want me to write," begins Zimmerman's **No More Passing**. "I wish that I could say that I don't understand her concerns, but I do… I've countered [her] that writing about my disability would be empowering, that it would give me a way to openly claim a part of myself that I've tended to keep at arm's length." In **Mis/Fitting,** Steele wonders if there is a space for her in the field of psychoanalysis itself. She loves psychoanalysis, and as a candidate in training she wants to belong. But will the couch collapse under her weight? Will she fit? Will she be judged here, too? Zimmerman and Steele are longing to belong, to be recognized and taken in for who they are.

We know, as Calvino could only imagine, what it is like to have work that lets us escape the limited perspective of our individual egos, work conceived from outside the self that allows us to enter into selves like our own, and find speech where there is no language. This, of course, is the work of psychoanalysis.

ROOM is a work of community psychoanalysis. Since its conception just days after the 2016 US election, the authors, artists, and poets who create each new issue have, over and over again, given speech to a space which has no language during times when, in Rao's words, "Our feelings of helplessness are at the zenith." Most recently, Alyona Esse-Chukanova, an analyst from Lviv, Ukraine, wrote an email and gave permission to share it: "Please use my post for your project! I really want us Ukrainians not to be forgotten. We are holding on with the last of our strength."

> *Dear All!*
>
> *I'm writing this post to the sound of sirens, for the third time today. Today I turned 52 years old. Today, I'm involuntarily thinking about my life story and thinking about the future. Do I have one? Does my son have a future? Will I live to see my grandchildren? Is it possible that everything will end this year? I see my colleagues trying to understand how psychoanalysis can help. Help with what? To stay alive? At least mentally to the end? What makes you, my dear colleagues, confident that psychoanalysis can help? Your experience? Your involvement? Your human solidarity with others? Your theories? Your clinical and personal experience? What is your hope, my dear? Please share it with me!*
>
> *Warmly,*
> *Alyona Esse-Chukanova (Lviv, Ukraine)*

Dear, dear Alyona,

Yes. Sharing our experience, our involvement, our human solidarity with others, our theories, our clinical and personal experience—sharing all of these things with each other is what gives us hope that we might stay alive, at least mentally, to the end.

Alyona, dear, *ROOM* 6.24 is for you.

Warmly,
ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action

Charles Byrne
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Talking about our feelings

It took time for feelings to enter language.
We began with sibilants, barks,
then pointing, so of course they did –
what is the ostensive for *Schadenfreude*?

Just as vocalizations migrate
toward the front of our shiftless mouths
from the back of our throat. In English,
we had *wrãð*; Norse gave us *angr*.

But it takes time to receive a word
and make use of it: to even say *I am angry*
is still impossible for my father,
near though he is to his story's end,

and were he to say it, it would be
but the first gusts in the anemometer's alveoli
to the hurricane's intricate pedesic fireworks,
not to mention their path back

to the spiracular exhalation
onto an anemone in Lhasa
from an Asian swallowtail.
But who am I to say?

I spend much of my life
monitoring what I am feeling
and I am no Sybil with my guesses.
It feels like catching wind

with your bare hands.
Sometimes people just click
their collection box closed
and say to themselves

mission accomplished –
but I have the suspicion
that we were handed keys
to a just-demolished castle.

Eliza Jaquez
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You Know How Mami y Papi Get

PHOTO: ADRIANA MARCO REMON

Inside and outside of sessions, I am a speaker of different languages.

The slang of Bronx classrooms and Castle Hill housing projects spices my English, and a New York accent peppers my sentences. For clinicians unversed in the lexicon of BX/NY culture, let me put you on.

"Yeah, nah" means "no."

"Mad" is not always a feeling. Patients who "can't process because I have mad feelings," may not be talking about anger. They may be communicating overwhelm with *too many* different feelings. Instead of referring to a loss, they may "take L's." Good friends, regardless of gender, are "sons."

When I am found in the transference, I can span the familial titles. In my consultation room, I can expect to be greeted with, "What's up, bro?" But I can also become, "sis," and, during particularly meaningful moments of attunement, "my good sis."

¿Y mi Español?

My Spanish is a tapestry of a Dominican's playful musicality and a Honduran's more punctuated diction. In a 2024 assessment of countries who rank highest in the Mental Health Quotient, a barometer of overall happiness, the Dominican Republic ranked number one. It shows in our Spanish, which features "chillaxing" as a verb. Instead of asking, "what's new" a Dominican may say, *¡Dímelo cantando!* which means, "Tell it to me singing." A person who perfects a craft is a *matatan,* which would mean that Sigmund Freud is no longer the Father of Psychoanalysis. In *La Republica,* the venerated Austrian would be *El Matatan de Psicoanálisis*.

¿Estamos Clorox?

That is Dominican slang for "Are we clear?"

If Dominican Spanish is the hare, then Honduran Spanish is, by comparison, the tortoise. Like a ticking metronome, my Honduran Spanish is slow and steady, enunciated, and structured. My father's Dominican words speedily tumble into each other, like toppling dominoes, while my mother's Honduran words stand at attention. Fellow Hondurans are *catrachos,* and use *voz* (think, "thou") instead of the informal *tu*. Rather than waste words with prolonged *buenos días* or *buenas noches*, they will instead offer a brief and concise *buenas*.

My blended Spanish often invites the quizzical stares and tilted heads of patients grappling to decipher this unusual mishmash. It leaves no room for a "blank screen" analyst. Instead, the perennial questions of "What are you?" and "Where are you from?" are asked as declarations as soon as I open my mouth.

"Eres Dominicana. ¿O—Puertorriqueña? No hablas como una Dominicana."

"You are Dominican. Or—Puerto Rican? You don't talk like a Dominican."

"Sé que eres Dominicana".

"I know you're Dominican."

Sometimes, in a desperate search to locate me, the complexity of my origins washes out as:

"Naciste en Brasil."

"You were born in Brazil."

Over the past decade, I have honed a new dialect—the language of psychoanalysis. Gradually, I find myself increasingly fluent in this language. Psychoanalysis, for better and worse, has shaped and molded my thinking. Yet, in its chiseling, some words confound my senses. This language palette is significantly muted when compared to the vibrant magentas coating my English, or the bursts of flamingo pink saturating my Spanish. Psychoanalytic vocabulary strikes my eye as austere and monochrome, though occasionally punctuated by fiery reds when reading Klein. Its tonality sounds atonal to my ears, accustomed to something more rhythmic and percussive. How else to describe terms such as "object relations"? People, and the richness of relationships, are drained of all color by two words, one of them lifeless.

PHOTOS (PREVIOUS PAGE): ADRIANA MARCO REMÓN AND DAVE HOEFLER

But once I walk through that linguistic portal, my homegrown blend of Spanish serves as a reminder that on this side of the looking glass, we are not *objetos*. We are *gente*.

Alicia, born and raised in Cuba, dances back and forth between English and Spanish. "When I speak to you in Spanish," she tells me while softly rat-tat-tatting her chest, "I am speaking from the heart." During a session in Spanish, Alicia received an interpretation with booming claps, her head tossed back in raucous laughter, and a resounding, "¡*Sí*! Ya tú *sabe*, loca."

It roughly translates into English as "*Yes!* You already *know*, crazy."

Loca, once stained with diagnostic judgement, takes on new life, morphing into, "Yes, my friend!"

Loca, in all its gendered "psychotic-ness," stands proudly redefined.

It is like *amiga* but, in sounding more *barrio*, becomes significantly more meaningful. Alicia started treatment fearfully defended because of past thorny relationships. Without a need for translation, I know the shift from *amiga* to *loca* is like moving from object to person. With one word, Alicia transforms our relationship into one of deep closeness. While some people can be amigas, I know that for Alicia, not everyone is a *loca*.

Its English equivalent are sessions with patients, often women, who exchange knowing glances with me, smirking, shaking their heads with disbelief, exclaiming, "*Girlllllll!* Where do I start!"

I find myself in awe as I witness how, with each linguistic shift, a vast psychoanalytic landscape unfurls. Themes of sameness, difference, race, class, and gender punctuate sessions, adding a richness and complexity to our exploration. Over time, I realized that embracing these various languages not only facilitates but also enhances the connection that evolves between an analysand and me.

It means that sometimes, I sit across from patients as an unnamed Spanglish familiar. I am reminded of Ana, whose origins are rooted in Colombia and was born in New Jersey. After trying to understand a family triangulation, that old Oedipal story, Ana simply says to me, "You know how Mami y Papi get."

It is not "You know how my mom and dad get."

It is not "You know how *my* mami y papi get."

It is our Mami y Papi.

As in *There is something about you, dear analyst. It feels like you have sat at dinner tables like mine.*

Other times, shared languages are not bridges and instead serve as sites of ruptures and chasms. Enrique, away on a family trip, tells a story of shame and renunciation—a man, forced to relinquish a language.

"I am considered too dark by my lighter-skinned Dominican family members. Whenever I visit them, they call me *Marta's negrito*. It would almost be endearing but there is a caveat that always accompanies it: 'you're not *really* Dominican.'"

In response to the complexities of his identity, Enrique disavowed Spanish and settled on learning French, his adopted tongue with ties to neighboring Haiti. He often fielded confused looks from Spanish speakers who, because of his name, mahogany skin, and black curly hair, spit out rapid-fire Spanish, leaving Enrique speechless. "Older Latinos got angry when I couldn't understand Spanish."

Though we talk over a tenuous internet connection, the lines of transference hold firm. While I am in my home office during a wintry Brooklyn day, Enrique sits on a beach somewhere beneath a warm Atlantic sun. He quietly says, "It's taken time to admit this, but it's hard to trust you."

Why?

"You are too familiar. I lost my Spanish as a little boy, but pieces are stored in my body, like a muscle memory. Yesterday, I recovered a word. *Pérdida*. I was unaware I knew the Spanish word for 'loss,' but there I was, mouthing to myself, *pérdida*."

Enrique and I are side by side, two separate boxes inside a Zoom window. Though we are so close, we look at each other from across a great distance.

"Spanish cuts deep and I think you know Spanish. I can't conjugate. Most of my words are gone. What if you hear what I have lost? I don't think I can ever let you hear my broken Spanish."

For me, language serves as the nexus of psychoanalysis. Each word is a building block, and the diversity of my blocks allows for playful, expansive creations: spanning bridges that can also become labyrinths into the unconscious. The same blocks used to assemble a liminal space can also be engineered into containers that hold the depths of human experience. Sounding different is a gift to psychoanalysis because each language, dialect, and accent is a new conduit through which we can navigate the intricate landscape of the mind. In moving in and out of my languages, I stand the chance of tuning in to a person's unique frequency. Sometimes, I can match these different, yet familiar, rhythms and sync my words to their song. After all, isn't that an integral part of attachment —matching a cadence?

The "one two, one two."

El un dos, un dos.

¿Me entiendes?

You feel me? ■

Mark Solms
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In My Backyard

My clinical and scientific education helped me tackle the social ills that come with owning farmland in South Africa. My wine farm was granted to my predecessors in title in 1690, and the granting of these farms is really where the trouble began. There were good reasons for the Dutch government to settle farms: they basically wanted a waystation for their ships, a sort of halfway house on their way to and from the East; they needed fresh produce and they needed wine. Wine kept better than water on ships on those long trips. It is also profoundly true that this Dutch settlement was a catastrophe for the local inhabitants. This valley provided hunting grounds for the first people of this area, called the Bushmen, also known as the San. They were hunter-gatherers, so the settlement of these farms was pretty much the end of their economy. And the valley also provided the nomadic grazing grounds for pastural people called the Khoe-Khoe. They moved seasonally with their cattle and their sheep through these parts. In 1690, they came down the valley with their sheep and their cattle only to be told: *You can't graze here, this land belongs to me.* Neither of those two groups of indigenous people had any concept of private ownership of land. It was like, *What do you mean, it belongs to you?* And the Dutch said, *I'll show you what it means to belong to me.* So, there was a genocide here. The Bushmen and the Khoe-Khoe were killed in droves. It was literally the annihilation of a people, not only of their economies and their cultures. The few who remained became farmworkers, and—in addition—slaves were brought from the East. My farm was literally built on the back of several crimes against humanity. It's one thing to say, *This house we're sitting in now was built by slaves; these walls, the roof, every brick and rock that goes into the fabric of this building was put there by slaves*; it's another thing to know what that means. It means that people were brought here against their will, they were paid nothing, and they were compelled to work. But what makes it ten times worse is that their descendants are still here. They still live on this farm, and they still work for me. The current social fabric of my farm is a direct product of that history, and we're living that history today. They live on my land in little houses that belong to me, with jobs which I choose to give them or not, and they own nothing.

I wanted to give them all a piece of this farm, something that they would be able to say was theirs. But, I'm sorry to say, it's not common for white landowners to decide *I want to make it possible for the historically disadvantaged people on the farm to also become landowners.* So, because I did that, I attracted quite a bit of attention. What I did was mortgage my farm, as did my neighbor and friend, the late Richard Astor, in order to buy the farm next door to mine and his for the farmworkers. This changed their lives. Not only in a material way but also in terms of their sense of who they are and what their relationship is to me and to our shared history. Eventually, we worked with the government to improve their landholding. The government in a sense took over the role that we had played, in terms of relieving us of the debt we had incurred on behalf of the workers. But that relationship was complicated. More recently, an African American businessman named Tommy Hall has stepped in to help us, and he has effectively replaced the government. Luckily for us, he decided to help us because he wanted to shift his assets out of Donald Trump's America and invest in the future of Africa instead.

However, returning to my initial relationship with the farmworkers, you can't just say, "*Now we're on the same side*." We're not on the same side. My clinical work influenced what I did here, so I'll tell you the first thing I did before buying the farm next door for the farmworkers. I relied upon my psychoanalytical experience and knowledge to realize this was bad; this was a horrible situation, and I just needed to stick with it. I relied upon that bit of psychoanalytic wisdom: don't do something because you can't stand the feeling. If you don't understand the feeling, then better to do nothing and just stick with it.

I realized that the first thing is not to act impulsively, to concretely enact something, but rather just sit with it and let it be the ugly thing that it is, until you start to see what the nature of the thing is. And it became clear that what was being repeated was this abusive, mistrustful pattern that has characterized this piece of land for 330 years. You can't just say it's gone; it's not gone. That's when I had the idea that we needed to take a *history*. You need to understand where something comes from; that's general medical wisdom, that you take a history to make a diagnosis. In a way, in psychoanalysis, the taking of the history is the treatment itself. You could say that psychoanalysis is just a very big history-taking. And I hasten to point out that when I say I had the idea to take a history, I didn't mean I must take *their* history. I'm not their doctor and they my patient. The patient was the relationship between the landowner and the tenant-workers. We needed professional help. I brought in archaeologists and historians to take our history and we dug this place up. Literally, but, in a way, you could say it was like analysis of the transference in that it wasn't an intellectual exercise of learning about *Oh, so, once upon a time, there were settlers who stole the land, and once upon a time, there were settlers who brought slaves here.* It was lived. Fifty meters from my front door we found a settlement site where Bushmen had lived six thousand years ago. This had the most incredible sort of mutative impact. For example, one of the farmworkers involved in that excavation, who is of Bushmen descent himself, holding those beautiful stone tools, looked me in the eye and said, "You see, professor, my people were here before yours." It was like a personal discovery of this fact, an actual personal realization.

That discovery carries with it implicit questions like *Just explain to me again how come I work for you?* And *Why do you own the land?* So, I think to see it like an analysis of transference and countertransference is not such a stretch, actually. They were concretely going through the history, seeing the physical evidence of this farm having been taken from their ancestors, and those of slave ancestry, to see the physical evidence of who their ancestors were, and where they were brought from and the conditions under which they were compelled to work here, and what happened to them. We went through detailed stories from the records of the "Slave Protector's" office in which the slaves' point of view is only recorded when there were legal proceedings, and it's just one nightmare after another.

Since going through the process on my farm using those psychoanalytical tools, I have seen all around me in this country opportunities for what we learned to be applied to psychoanalysis. There's a special role for psychoanalysis in South Africa, and it's a little different from other places. What we did on my farm is similar to what Archbishop Tutu did on a national scale at the time of the transition. He was in charge of a thing called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). And that was a deeply psychoanalytical project. Rather than have Nuremberg-type trials to punish the perpetrators of apartheid, the TRC created forums in which the perpetrators had to confess fully to the victims of those crimes and what they had done while those victims were literally present in the room. If the commission felt it was a full and frank admission, with an opportunity for the victims to question the perpetrators, they would be given amnesty. If they sought to hide what they'd done, they were subject to criminal proceedings. The opportunity to look them in the eye and confess what had been done led to very moving episodes of forgiveness and remorse. The country went through a massive cathartic process.

One of the roles that psychoanalysis has to play now in this country is to try to continue that sort of process for ordinary people. Every one of us who lived through the apartheid years, on either side of the racial divide, was deeply affected by it. The ways we related to each other, the ways in which we subtly or not so subtly took advantage of our privileged position, and the ways in which we were subtly or not so subtly humiliated and degraded on an everyday scale—this needs to be confronted in the analytic setting very specifically.

Everywhere in the world, psychoanalysis suffers from being a relatively elite treatment and profession. And

we're not exempt from that here in South Africa, but it does have a special meaning here, which is actually twofold. One is that wealth in South Africa pretty much goes with whiteness, and poverty goes with Blackness, so if you have an elite treatment and an elite profession, they will pretty much all be white. What I mean is that elitism in South Africa is racialized. You can't offer something for the privileged without it having a meaning and relation to our apartheid past.

The other implicit thing is that not only is it elitist, it's also European. The colonizing of this country was the Europeanizing of this country, and psychoanalysis can easily be experienced as some further sort of colonial imposition. Those are some of the ways in which psychoanalysis has a special status here. We've made all sorts of efforts to try to address it, but we don't have a proper national health insurance and we only have free health care for the indigent. In the hospital where I work, my patients are all poor, but there's also a private health care system, and there's a gigantic gap between the two. And again, it's racialized. So, almost all my patients in the hospital are Black, and almost all the private patients are white.

We have gone to great lengths to break this cycle in the South African Psychoanalytical Association. I do not have time to describe it all here, but the upshot is that—as of now—30 percent of our members and candidates are Black. Hopefully, we will do still better than that in the future.

It's all too easy in a country like ours to think only of what is needed materially, that physical health counts for much more than mental health. But we have a very sick society, and it's expressed in all sorts of ways. We have out-of-control crime, substance abuse, domestic violence, and the abuse of women and children is second to none. So, our pitch to the National Department of Health is that we need to build into this national health insurance scheme basic psychotherapeutic services and programs that are psychologically mindful. For example, just having somebody visit new mothers in their home to see how they're coping and talk to them about their relationship to their baby would be beneficial.

We've engaged with the government, showing them the "not-for-profit" things that we were doing ourselves. We've gotten serious, and our psychoanalytic society applies psychoanalytical ideas in various ways, in various communities. We don't sit in our ivory towers waiting for people to come and ask for help. We offer supervision in the state hospitals, to the psychiatrists and psychologists and social workers dealing with these overwhelming problems. We show them psychoanalytical ways of thinking, not only about the patients but also about themselves and their institutions, and how they are functioning; because they are all overwhelmed, they're burnt out. Interestingly, when we spoke to the minister of health about the role of psychoanalysis, he said, *Well, what about us, in government!? We need your help too!*

These are some of the lessons we have learned. But there have been setbacks. Our government is deeply corrupt and progress has, therefore, been complicated at times. But, as they say, *a luta continua*! ■

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Student Activism as Interpretation

AS I WRITE, student activists across the United States are protesting our collective complicity in the rampant human rights abuses underway in Gaza, including mass starvation and the confirmed death of nearly eight thousand children, with thousands more likely lost and injured under the rubble.

PHOTO (PREVIOUS PAGE): STEVE JOHNSON

These students—our students, who learn from observing us even if we do not directly teach them—are offering a multifaceted communication to us through their activism, a communication that is in deep engagement with unconscious domains. Because of its conversance with unconscious workings and psychoanalytic ethics, as well as its clear therapeutic action, this student activism may be considered a form of psychoanalytic interpretation, spontaneously emerging at a moment of need.

Social justice activism functions much like psychoanalytic interpretation does in clinical settings, creatively engendering introjection, catharsis, insight, identification, and working through. Student activists in the United States have been a source of solidarity and hope for Gazans. Refugees fleeing for their lives in Rafah have expressed gratitude for the activism on college campuses, speaking to support that has been both proffered and received. Leaders of protest movements serve as figures who may be identified with and taken in by others, and their action and speech provide opportunities for catharsis and insight. Importantly, activists offer themselves for these functions when the feeling of helplessness is at its zenith. Their activism holds out the possibility of change in the face of overwhelming circumstances that cause us anguish, as the assault on humanity in Gaza does for many global citizens.

Intensely negative perceptions of the student activists have emerged, reflecting a type of transference I have termed the negative social transference, directed toward marginalized groups (student activists) from the dominant social surround (campus administrators, monied interests, and government power). Working through occurs first within activists and activist groups, who undertake internal psychological work as a precursor to their outer action. In order to undertake their activism, student activists must distinguish themselves internally from these negative transferences, which issue compelling calls from the past and its pre-patterned repetitions. Such a process of interior differentiation within activists sets the stage for the activism that will then create change in the outer world.

Negative social transferences insidiously support the use of state violence against our students, such as police action and surveillance. The FBI relentlessly harassed social justice activist leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mario Savio, the student civil rights activist who is now revered as the leader of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. As the police enforced inequality by brutalizing civil rights activists, the FBI collected Savio's personal information and planted informants in his personal life to undermine his activism, while sending letters to King insinuating that he should commit suicide. Such outrageous abuses of power were and continue to be justified though invoking negative social transferences toward activists, to whom personal attributes are assigned and against whom action is taken as if these attributes were real. Abuses of power are also bolstered by arguments that activists and their nonviolent activism are threatening and dangerous, not merely to the status quo but to life itself: a parallel to ways in which the psyche may resist a well-timed interpretation as if it were an attempt at annihilation. These resistances rest on methods of invalidation, attack, and evasion that must be addressed by the analytic clinician when they occur in analytic clinical work. Similarly, we must see through attempts to erode the efficacy of the interpretive action given to us by campus activists, who beseech us to stay alert and act in the defense of those who remain utterly unprotected against trespass.

In a democracy, a society is a perpetual analysand, submitting to analytic self-scrutiny aided by activist citizen-psychoanalysts, who periodically produce their needed interpretations. What is the content of the interpretation our students are delivering to us? They are imploring us to attend to our collapsed and curtailed capacity for love. The humanitarian catastrophe underway calls for a redoubling of our commitment to care about the lives and well-being of others, a central aspect of psychoanalytic ethics that does not end at the consulting-room door. Our students, with a view of the future yet to emerge, are teaching us that maturity means taking responsibility for our unconscious and the actions we undertake that originate within it. Through their humanity and courage in the face of repression, they inform us that we have not yet learned the lessons of history, and that our defenses make us poor students of the present. They are teaching us that an analysis of the psyche requires being able to bear "standing too close to the great changes," and to use our ethics as a guide in the midst of our confusion. Like a beloved and helpful analyst, our students are telling us what we need to know about ourselves and the world we have created. ■

I know not
Leather, fur, stainless steel
48 x 34 in
2015

Abidemi Olowonira
abidemi.art

One world
Leather, fur, stainless steel, epoxy resin
60 in cir
2015

My works are engaged in a dialectic discourse, which finds grounding in transcultural dynamics, a notion that enables me to frolic in the nerves of globalism, as both migrant and human, while using my works as a platform to narrate my story within a larger story. Growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, with its rich history of sculptures and contemporary regenerative arts, I was able to get my first art lessons in my grandma's tie and dye workshop. The experiences I have absorbed in my travels have also impressed upon me not only a wide range of sensibilities but a trove of material to use when conveying my artistic vision: living in Texas, I was exposed to leather as a medium of expression while working as a gun-holster designer. Then, during my travels, I was exposed to both Chinese and Arabic calligraphy in the two and a half years I spent in Central Asia and the Middle East. Ultimately, my goal is to explore the concept of storytelling through the nuances of modernity while exploiting space, shapes, and voids, and enhancing these elements with the luminosity of light, to create a metaphors around the human experiences. I intend to continue using leather, a pliable and durable material, to promulgate—however subtle that might be—a version of a modernist concept. My intention is to layer and infuse this concept with my multidimensional outlook.

Almost human var. I pos. I
Bronze, leather, fur, lime plaster, epoxy resin
48 x 36 in
2024

Element II var. II
Leather, polyester thread, brass
67 x 49 in
2024

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Learning From All Things

Dear Eyal,

Thank you for your courage to engage with me. I say this knowing full well that the risks to me for speaking about Palestine are far greater than they are to you. Nevertheless, I am grateful.

The first thing I want to say is that your approach makes sense to me. It is similar to mine. You are trying to be brutally honest while maintaining your allegiances, or while speaking from personal and collective dispositions. For me, psychoanalysis is about truth, and a real psychoanalyst is one who refuses to lie, refuses to flinch away from painful realities.

I felt appreciative of you for being willing to write the material facts. Israel has dropped the equivalent of two nuclear bombs in Gaza on a helpless and trapped population. It has killed tens of thousands, maimed hundreds of thousands, destroyed almost all habitable structures and almost all infrastructure including healthcare. In fact, health care facilities are being intentionally targeted and destroyed. Doctors are routinely killed by sniper fire when they walk by hospital windows. They are being arrested, tortured, and killed. Dr. Adnan Al Bursh, who was the head of the orthopedic department at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, was taken from the hospital while caring for patients. He was detained at Ofer detention center in the West Bank and tortured to death. He died on April 19th, 2024. He was loved and appreciated by everyone who knew him. In other words, he was a national treasure who was deliberately erased. The Israeli government has yet to release his body.

We were speaking earlier of not being on an even playing field. My group is hated by the global northern powers and it is being decimated. Your group is loved by the global northern powers and is being given EVERYTHING it wants, regardless of its actions. The numbers speak for themselves. Twelve hundred Israelis were killed by Hamas fighters, some in a most brutal and inhumane way. Millions of Palestinians are being decimated in response. Furthermore, Israel is a nuclear state with one of the world's most sophisticated and well-equipped armies. Palestinians have been displaced and dispossessed for seventy-five years, occupied and blockaded for fifty-six years. They make rockets out of plumbing pipes. They do not have an army. They are fighting a giant with sticks and stones, with handguns and plumbing pipes. It is their way of saying NO to this reality. The material unevenness of the playing field speaks for itself.

In the world we live in, this unevenness must remain hidden, or denuded from its meaning even though it is lying in plain sight. And it goes back to the very beginning of this "conflict." Moreover, it is reproduced in individuals because the collective is a mental structure, and cultural systems are shared codes that organize perception, shape thought, and determine comportment. You reproduce it, Eyal. I will show you how and rely on you to show me what I reproduce that keeps me from seeing the full picture.

> You write:
> *the war between the Jews and the Palestinians, or perhaps better said between the totalitarian-supremacist Jews and the totalitarian-supremacist Palestinians, is a morbid symptom, a scape-goating process, where our civilization manifests its terminal sickness, yet again.*

I am going to analyze every word of the sentence in the hope of opening a new window of shared understanding. First, the word "war." It is not really a war. Israel is occupying land and people in Gaza and the West Bank. It is creating a two-tier system where citizens of Israel who are of Arab descent are treated badly, kept in their place in more ways that I care to recount. The occupied and oppressed are resisting. This is natural. What is happening, from our perspective, is an occupation that is spawning resistance, again naturally. Second, the characterization that a war is unfolding between two groups you call "totalitarian-supremacists" suggests some kind of horizontal playing field. The field is not horizontal; it is vertical. Israel controls land and treasure. It has an unlimited supply of weapons and enjoys untold riches, technological advances, and world support. The Palestinians are beleaguered, maimed, deprived, controlled, humiliated, helpless. That is not to say they are broken. Far from it. They resist, they live, they make culture, they take care of their own. But they are resisting the might of a nuclear state with pipes and handguns. Israel has the power to end this nightmare today: end the occupation and empower cohorts of moderate Palestinians to lead. To do so, you would have to give up on your expansionist ideologies and aims. You must return the land that is not yours and make peace with those whose land you took to make a homeland. It is possible. Yitzhak Rabin thought it was possible. He was killed by an extremist Jew for trying to make peace. I grieve for him and fear for us.

You refer to civilization's "terminal sickness," which makes me associate to Freud hating to distinguish between civilization and culture. In this context, you are referring to Western civilization with its Eurocentric cultures. The assumption that Eurocentric culture with its civilizations equates with civilization as such is a manifestation of a tendency toward supremacy, toward assuming that one's position and culture are the apex, the real thing, the whole thing, the natural thing.

Freud thought civilization's terminal illness is related to our instincts. We are innately destructive, he claimed. We will keep waging wars until we accept our innate destructiveness and work toward compromise and sublimation. This view is interesting and relevant, but it is not my view. I need to elaborate some of the context and references that inform my perspective.

I am convinced that psychoanalysis has great potential to heal individuals and to address trenchant social problems. Ideally, the two go together. I am also convinced that the psychoanalysis we have is necessary but woefully inadequate. The psychoanalysis we need is the one we are going to make together, *all of us*. But first, we must face the lack.

The lack, as I see it, is related to the field's early rejection of the social unconscious and its sequelae in which the social is internalized into unconscious mental structures that organize, shape, and direct subjective experience in ways that correspond with (are recognized by) the culture's norms, ideologies, and practices. This idea keeps being pushed into the margins or denuded from its meaning by relating it to super-ego development. Cultural systems, the collective within the individual, is *antecedent* to individual development. It precedes development because it provides the tools, enigmatic as they might be, to shape experience and establish communication with other subjects.

I will use a seminal idea of Jean Laplanche to illustrate my point. He thought the mother communicates a message about her sexuality to the infant, who cannot translate it. This message becomes an enigmatic signifier that cannot be entirely known. The trauma of being injected or of acquiring a sexual message from an "other" that cannot be translated (enigmatic) puts an enormous pressure on the mind to do what it cannot do—understand the other's enigmatic sexual message. This initial trauma, Laplanche thought, creates the unconscious. This initial sexual trauma makes it necessary to repress the enigmatic message and the unconscious fantasies that emerge from it. For Laplanche, the unconscious comes from the outside. Or when the external

becomes mental, it gives rise to the unconscious because enigma and excess must be managed out of awareness or consciousness.

Let us apply this idea to Trigant Burrow's observations about the social unconscious, or the way collectives and their shared systems of meaning-making are reproduced in individuals in the form of unconscious psychic structures. The social is mental and it is largely unconscious. Burrow observed: "The image which every individual carries in the locket of his unconscious is the mother image."[1] This idea corresponds with Laplanche's thesis. The mother is lodged deep in the infant's unconscious. However, the mother is simultaneously a singular person as well as a communal agent. He writes: "As we observe the outlines of this early implanted image, that what is called the mother-image is but the sum of the impressions reflected by the mother from the social environment about her and that these impressions are again transmitted by others through their reflection within ourselves." He concludes: "With the social mind the important image is the immediate community about it. The community occupies the central position within the social unconscious that the mother-image occupies within the individual unconscious."

If we extend Laplanche's idea to include the structuring structures of the social surround, we can then say enigmatic messages regarding the mother's sexuality and the social systems that organize her (her culture or habitus) are lodged deep in the child's unconscious. The mother's culture or her social unconscious is imported or reproduced in the child's mind. They become a set of tools that derive from a shared matrix that organize and shape subjective experience. The acquired system contains enigmatic messages that cannot be fully translated. It lies in plain sight while remaining deeply unconscious. Culture is to humans as water is to fish. It is obvious, necessary, and unrecognized because it is the medium in which life unfolds. Culture pulls, pushes, and shapes subjective experience along normative lines. The main point here is that collective and culture are unconscious mental structures.

The mind traffics in illusion; we fabricate much of what we see. Illusion turns to delusion when we turn our fabrications into concrete facts. There is some degree of unknowing that makes knowing possible. Psychopathology tends to emerge when we can no longer tolerate not knowing. This is true on the private and social levels.

The main illusion that suffuses the social unconscious is the illusion of absolutism. Again, let us draw on a more familiar metaphor to illustrate the point. Donald Winnicott made a distinction between object *relating* and object *usage*. In object relating, the mind is suffused in an illusion of absolutism (omnipotence) of sorts. It does not locate the object outside of itself. Instead, the object becomes a self-image, a cluster of projections that can be controlled. Winnicott suggests crucial developmental processes must occur before the mind can tolerate not knowing, before the mind can perceive the object as separate, unique, distinct, and existing outside the person's immediate and omnipotent control.

On the social level, the collectives and cultures within us are invisible, just like mother's enigmatic message is invisible. The collective and cultures of others are perceived through our collectives and cultures. However, the social unconscious is suffused in an illusion of absolutism. We are disposed to "see" the cultures of others as "lower." Difference is organized along a vertical axis, with our perspective occupying the zenith, and others are placed on lower rungs of the hierarchy. Here is a good example of what I mean. Freud thought we are all alike because we are all instinctual. Our minds are fueled by instinct and impulse. However, he thought the cultures of his collectives are superior to the cultures of other collectives. They are savages or uncivilized. We are cultured or civilized. "They," ultimately, will become like us—the natural incarnation of progress, exceptionalism, and greatness.

Forgive this long foray into theory, but these ideas form the basis for what I am going to say about Zionism and the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and about you. Zionism was conceived in Europe by European Jews. The Balfour Declaration was produced by Britain, a European colonial entity. You have acquired the European system and your perception is partly shaped by it. Fortunately, it is also shaped by your beautiful sensibilities and other systems of thought, like the psychoanalysis we are making.

Before I go on, I must say a few things so that we can be on the same page as much as possible. I do understand the Jewish diaspora (millennia ago albeit). I do understand antisemitism and the extraordinary persecution the Jewish people endured for millennia that culminated in the crime of all crimes—the Holocaust. I do understand the need for the Jewish people to have a state, to have a safe heaven. I do understand the significance of Historic Palestine, particularly Jerusalem, to the Jewish people. I understand and respect it. However, Zionism was conceived by Europeans, and the Balfour Declaration was issued by a colonial state. In both cases, pathogenic cultural dispositions and practices were baked into these systems. And you, naturally, reproduce some of them.

Colonial Britain operated on the maxim of *divide and conquer*. The more division it sowed between people of a nation, the more control it could exert over them. The British mastered the art of dividing and conquering. This philosophy is evident in the way borders were drawn in the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Borders were there to divide a common people rather than to demarcate territory. Furthermore, the Balfour Declaration was about dividing the land into a Jewish and Arab partition. On the surface that seems sensible. But the land cannot be divided in this way, because people have been living, working, and dying on it for centuries. What are you going to do with the Palestinians of that land? The implicit answer—displace and kill. This approach, obviously, sowed the seeds for perpetual conflict. The British government of that time was okay with that.

The Zionists who came to Palestine to form the state of Israel were traumatized people. They had been dealing with centuries of oppression where their basic humanity was erased and their dignity trampled. They were either invisible (tucked away in shtetels) or used as receptacles for the dominant group's hateful and dehumanizing projections. Trauma repeats. Unfortunately, they viewed Palestinians living in Palestine through the lens of antisemitism in reverse. The Palestinians were now occupying the position of the erased, dehumanized, dispensable, and wretched. How else could Golda Meir state that the Jews were a people without a land that came to a land without a people. The land is full of people, but she did not see them as human. Again, this is about trauma and repetition. How can we see this differently?

WA DO KI KAI or, "to learn from all things." Indeed, we must draw on all the world's wisdom to empty our minds enough to see what needs to be seen, to learn what needs to be learned, to do what needs to be done. Taoist Chinese Philosophy tells this story. In Heaven and Hell, chopsticks are six feet long. In Hell, people are starving because they cannot get the food into their mouths despite sitting at banquets full of sumptuous food. They see it but cannot eat it. In Heaven, the people have figured out how to use the six-foot-long chopsticks to feed each other. Sitting across a six-foot-wide table, the chopsticks are ideal for feeding the people across the divide (table). In Heaven, everyone is fed, healthy, and happy. In Hell, everyone is starving, ill, and miserable.

Are we going to live in Heaven or Hell? The people of historic Palestine, all of them, must sit at one table and learn to feed each other, look out for each other, and protect each other. Otherwise, we will all starve in one way or another. This is what I mean when I say all the people in Historic Palestine (Israel-Palestine) and their descendants will be free from the River to the Sea. Obviously, this *includes Jews* and does not exclude them.

In my next letter I will take up the thorny issue of racism between us and how to think and feel about the people in our collectives who murder the other side. IDF soldiers who are killing Palestinians and Palestinians who are killing Israelis.

Until Then,
KD

[1] Burrow, T. (1924). "Social Images Versus Reality." *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology and Social Psychology, 19*(3), 230–35. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0064512

Karim, *azizi*,

Every day, it is becoming more evident that our worst fears were justified. We are seeing a second Nakba in motion. A twenty-first-century rendering of the primitive foundations of our civilization. Perhaps our Greco-Roman-Judeo-Christian civilization, as you argue. Clearly Freud's civilization of imperialism and colonization as it morphs to continue exploiting our part of the world with American and German weapons, with Wall Street and petrodollars, and with those intense paranoid-schizoid projections directed at us. On the local level, a co-production of Israel and Hamas, it is important to say, willing to sacrifice the people of Gaza, and the youth, sent to battle. The hostages have been abandoned as well.

There is a Hebrew word with no good English translation that keeps reverberating in my head: hefkerut (תורקפה)-a state of lawlessness and abandon. We are trapped in a vortex propelling us from Babi Yar to Khan Yunis. Giorgio Agamben's notion of bare life comes to mind, as well as the sacrificial logic described by René Girard. It is no wonder that we all feel we are destined for elimination, Palestinians and Jews alike.

There has always been Palestinian resistance to bearing the cost of the grief and the vengeance the Jews brought with them to Palestine, to the hope as well-although it is difficult to join a hope that erases you. There has been some resistance to the foundational militarism of the Zionist settlement of Palestine within the Jewish Israeli collectivity as well. But it has always been marginal. There is a deep sense of collective danger that makes any resistance seem like betrayal, much of it the result of decades of collective self-deception, but some of it real. This sense of betrayal and the power it exerts on us is our biggest challenge.

I have been living for a while with the words of Jean Améry: "Where barbarism begins, even existential commitments must end." Améry, who was an Austrian turned Belgian Jew, and an Auschwitz survivor, wrote these words in 1978, after it became known that Palestinians resistance fighters were being tortured in Israeli prisons. He was a devout Zionist until then, believing that after the Holocaust, the Jews needed a homeland, but this knowledge made him begin to turn away from his existential commitment to guaranteeing Israel's survival. A year later he killed himself.

If this was enough for Améry to be so revolted that he felt he had to reject his chosen community and, in the end, life itself, how should any of us feel today? I live with a shattering sense of revulsion, betrayal, loss, constantly.

But then there is also Mahmoud Darwish, who said: "Identity is what we bequeath, not what we inherit, what we renew, not what we recall. Identity is a faulty mirror that we must break each time we are enthralled with the image we see in it." A different kind of existential commitment, one that demands of both self and collective to constantly change.

I hold to this sentiment. It is hopeful. It allows for a horizon where the parameters of one's collective identity and identification can be negotiated rather than given as a take-it-or-leave-it pact. I am thinking of the many mirrors presented to me these days, claiming me, vying to own my reflection. *Faulty* does not begin to describe how corrupt most of these mirrors are. But I do have a choice in the matter of my Jewishness and Israeliness.

My challenge, as I write to you, is to find a place to speak from that does not turn away from what's being done by, or in the name of "my people" and does not turn away from the collectivity that binds my people together. And, if I hold to my association, to also not turn away from this paralyzing guilt and shame. I see this as my task in general: to find a space *between* un-belonging with its alienation and denouncement of responsibility, and belonging with its ethical-existential devastation, but also some kind of commitment—a space where I could find something useful so say.

I am with you in trying to articulate the parameters of a social unconscious. What seems to me most useful these days is to think on the social through the prism of belonging-belonging as the link between the psychological and the political, between the personal and the communal, between the subjective and the collective.

Belonging is how we feel our collective attachments, associations, identifications, the love-need-fear relations we have with the people we think of as "our people." There is nothing more powerful than the bonds of belonging. It is stronger than love. It is easier to divorce a spouse, even a child, than to renounce one's ideology or religion or nation. I see it in my practice these days, and I hear about families broken up by battles over collective-ideological identifications vis-à-vis what's going on in Israel-Palestine.

Because the coin of belonging has three sides, not two. There is belonging itself: being with, being a part of, being identified, having a place in the world, a community, having identity-belonging as a fundamental part of who we are.

There is, on the other side of belonging, the alienation of un-belonging, the feeling of having no family, no community, no psychic home. Not belonging, whether forced by rejection or chosen in self-realization, feels like being alone, being cast out.

And then there is the even more complicated third side of the coin: to forsake one's belonging feels like betrayal-a sense that in moving away from one's given community, in dis-identifying, one is betraying, and being betrayed by all others. This is because, beyond the loss of one's home, the reverse of belonging is a sense of guilty and shameful abandonment-an abandonment of and by those whom you consider "your people." So much harder to do when those people, "your people," and the forces that bind them together pull you in at the root of your soul, saying "We need you!" But this is precisely what happens at times of crisis. To pull away, to dis-associate, to divest from one's collective attachments means betraying your people. (It is often portrayed as treason.) And not only your people but also your own, often carefully made and lovingly given identity. It means betraying your own sense of self.

This is why, in times like these, dissent is so rare.

I see this as our psychoanalytic task-to instill dissent in our collective spaces, to challenge hegemonic narratives, to make the social unconscious conscious, to effect change. It might sound farfetched, but it is actually our creed: every interpretation we make to a patient is an effort to loosen up the hold of a personal hegemony that has been in control of the self's narrative, to unsettle a repression, a dissociation, a defensive complex, to allow a mental space of greater contemplation and freedom. We need to do it on the level of the collective as well. We need to understand how belonging works, how it is (psychologically) felt and (socially) exploited, how it is sought and received, driven and anchored. And we need to work toward envisioning more conscious, more resistant, more creative kinds of belonging than those we have in our repertoire currently-new ways for being "me" in relation to new kinds of "we."

I am glad you are bringing Trigant Burrow back to the psychoanalytic fold after decades of erasure. In the same vein, I would like to add to our circle of guiding spirits the Spanish-Salvadorian psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró. Martín-Baró was the father of liberation psychology, a psychological perspective he founded in the spirit of the liberation theology that emerged in South and Central America in the 1970s. He was murdered by the Salvadorian army in 1989.

Martín-Baró advocated for a locally informed psychology, drawing from and answerable to partic-

ular populations in their specific circumstances. There was, for him, a need for such particular, local psychology, to counter the imported, universalizing psychology that dominated the Salvadorian academic mainstream-a psychology that forced on Salvadorian reality foreign concepts, replicating rather than addressing the traumatizing oppression and injustice endemic to Salvadorian society-a psychology serving the exploitative interests of the elites, a psychology of and in the service of the descendants of the Euro-colonizers.

The liberation psychology Martín-Baró formulated aims to understand people in their own social-political context. But beyond understanding, it seeks to help people liberate themselves from the hold of deceptive-oppressive political systems. Anything else would be a dishonest, self-serving effort to heal the injuries of the victim while collaborating with the aggressor-oppressor as he continues to injure.

Liberation psychology aims to work vis-á-vis the psycho-social relation-in dialogue between the learning and the learned. It is not a unilateral quest to understand people from a detached, superior perspective, rather an effort to enter a dialogue where everyone learns, and everyone is impacted. Its drive is to give individuals and collectives the ability to struggle against their traumatizing, dehumanizing conditions, not to adapt to them. An antithesis to the psychology we were all raised on, where the best we can hope for is creative-depressive adaptation to the world as it is.

The way to assist such a struggle is what Martín-Baró calls (following Paulo Freire) *concientizatíon*. One aspect of concientizatíon is what we would call making the social unconscious conscious: helping people see the historical, political, and ideological factors that act to make their social conditions seem inevitably as they are, as if they were elements of a natural order-while being in fact the product of social constructions that work in the service of some people and at the expense of others. But concientizatíon is not only about awareness; it is also about generating collective action towards social empowerment and social change.

Martín-Baró converses with Fanon and draws deeply on his understanding of the self-alienation of colonized people. But he does not envision decolonization the same way. He does not follow Fanon to the conclusion that the liberation of the colonized requires a complete retreat of the colonizer. Instead, he advocates for what he calls de-ideologizing-freeing both the colonized and the colonizer from the ideological contraptions that lock them, both socially and psychologically, into a perpetual cycle of domination and subjugation.

It might be that the difference in how Fanon and Martín-Baró envision liberation reflects the particular contexts from within which they worked-the colonization of Africa and its aftermath are different from those of Central and South America. In the Americas, the descendants of the European colonizers remain dramatically more powerful than the indigenous people, but the two groups are bound together in shared, emergent collective identities that did not develop in Africa. And there is in America more mestizaje-a mixing of colonizers and colonized. Moreover, unlike in Africa and much of Asia, where the European colonizers were successfully repelled, there is no feasible scenario in the Americas where the descendants of the colonizers could be driven back across the Atlantic. They no longer identify as European.

I am bringing Martín-Baró into our correspondence because I think his thinking could serve us better than Fanon's as we try to address the impossible situation in Israel-Palestine. Because although we could say that the present catastrophe harkens back to a colonization of Palestine by waves of European and later Arab Jews, these colonizers have now become indigenous, and they have nowhere else to go. The same way a Euro-descendant citizen of Mexico or Colombia cannot simply return to Spain, a Jew living in Israel-Palestine cannot simply return to Iraq or Poland. Nothing is left

of whatever residency rights my grandparents had in the Austro-Hungarian empire or White Russia or Lithuania. Whatever property they had is long gone, as are the ownership records. There is nothing to go back to.

And so I think that although Fanon can serve us as a formidable model for what a critical thinker and a critical psychoanalyst can achieve, Martín-Baró is a better guide for us as we try to envision what liberation could look like in Israel-Palestine. We have two peoples locked in a genocidal, oppressor-oppressed dynamic. We have two peoples who need to be liberated from a horrifically violent and unjust ideological bind.

You and I are holding each other for dear life. We want to be free of this vile situation, and in some ways we are. But if we actually want to make a difference, we need to understand where we too, both of us, are still unconscious of what drives the broken, agitated, and desperate collectives we find ourselves representing in this conversation. I have the bad luck of talking with you as a Jewish Israeli, an identity, a belonging that has been a moral and emotional torment for me since I became politically conscious, sometime during my adolescence, but also an irreplaceable psycho-social anchor. It is crazy, but although I have not lived there for more than three decades, and although I am disgusted by so much of it, and injured, seriously injured by it, this is where a fundamental part of my self is placed. I want to make it drastically different, to change it at the core, to repair as much as can be repaired, to insist that it guarantees equality and justice and the right of return for those who were chased away. I want it to cease considering itself Jewish, to detach itself from the demanding, exploitative projections of much of the Jewish diaspora. But I don't want to give it up completely as Améry has done. I am desperate to keep breaking the faulty mirrors of identity Darwish speaks of, to do what I can to shatter the malevolent ideological reflections that deceive all of us. And I want you and me to free ourselves from the theoretical colonialism that has taken hold of the discourse about us, to engage our particular psycho-social environments, to explore our unique, intertwined, binational unconscious, to understand who we really are and what we could become.

Dear Eyal,

I do think bringing liberation psychology into the mix is brilliant and useful. I also think that your turning away from Franz Fanon is meaningful. We are getting close to where we need to be—an impasse of sorts where we need to figure out how to dig ourselves out. I understand your love for Israel, your belonging there, your deep protective impulse. I too love Palestine, belong there (same place, as I come from Jaffa), and the impulse to protect courses through my veins. I have the deeds to our property in Jaffa and the key to our home. Will I ever see the place of my birthright? This is one of the things that need to get worked out, the emotional meaning of loving a place that was taken by force. The place you love is soiled with blood and the rivers you drink from are sourced from tears. And now the total destruction of Gaza and the erasure of 2.2 million people. The rock, my dear, is heavy and the mountain is steep. This is where liberation psychology provides the antidote we need; everyone is included and everyone must be protected. But millennia of suffering have to get worked out and new systems have to be envisioned. There is a way to work it out, because I accept that you have become indigenous to Palestine; you returned to your ancestral home. But Israel has to accept that I too am indigenous to Palestine and I too need to return to my ancestral home. It has to accept that it has committed sins in the Holy Land and to atone for them. How do we do that without killing or displacing anyone? There is a way. I can see its contours. But nothing good will come until Israel stops genociding us in Gaza. It must stop now. I say these words as it gets ready to invade Rafah, where 1 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering. The horror that keeps spawning more horror.

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The Price of Belonging

FOR ME, GROWING UP IN A FUNDAMENTALIST, religious dictatorship like Pakistan, I was taught to live in fear of and hate our Indian neighbors who might attack us at any time. I was taught to believe in the supremacy of one religion above all others. I was taught that this religion needed our state to defend it and we, as Pakistanis, were the ultimate expression of the arc of history that inevitably bent toward humanity, united under one God.

That spell of ideological indoctrination and belonging ruptured like a million balloons when I was authentically exposed to the writings of the great minds of the Western intellectual tradition. I felt that my intuitive conception of a higher power had more in common with Spinoza than anything I was taught to believe and was indoctrinated with in Islamic studies. When it came to religion, I agreed more with Freud than Mohammad! I had more Jewish heroes at one point in my development than Muslim heroes. From Kafka and Sarte to Noam Chomsky. After many years following the rigid path of the New Atheists like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, I found myself coming full circle with the love, compassion, and flexibility of Muslim Sufis like Maulana Rumi and Baba Bulleh Shah, with whom Spinoza actually had more in common than Western philosophers like Plato or Descartes. I learned about fighting injustice, facing oppression with integrity, and deception with honesty from the civil rights activist W.E.B. Dubois.

At the same time, I learned from Franz Fanon about the idea that colonialism encourages the colonized population to aspire to the experience and position of the oppressor through its emphasis on language. I had gone to an English private school in what was a former British colony. I learned to speak and write perfect English, cementing my place among the elitist "brown sahibs" whose destiny was seemingly to rule over the unwashed, uneducated masses who spoke only Urdu. In school, we had focused more on Shakespeare than Mirza Ghalib. The end result of which was, in retrospect, as Fanon describes, a type of alienation from my own real heritage, culture, and way of life. That remained the case until I was able to find my way back to it after integrating and learning the good things I could from the West. I am still exploring and learning about my heritage today, but I never felt that I need to "decolonize" my mind of everything Western.

I also realized at a young age that all of the hypernationalism and constant drumbeats of war with India were just a way for the military establishment of Pakistan to stay relevant and remain in power. The required textbooks fed us a bastardized version of our own history that erased large parts of our unbelievably rich Hindu past, and glorified only the Muslim histories while villainizing Hindu India. This sought to keep us identified with an artificially constructed, confessional nation-state born in bloody mayhem and murder, and manufacture consent for an insane military budget meant to fight aggressive neighbors who were always baying for its blood. There is only one other state in the world like that. So, I speak about Israel even though I am not Israeli, because I know instinctually, in my bones, what it feels like to be raised in Israel. I speak because the silenced cannot speak for themselves.

While all of this this shattered the belief system of my childhood indoctrination, it gave me the building blocks to consciously construct a new ideology as an active agent and architect of my own belief system. I see myself today as a humanist citizen "belonging" to the world, not primarily as a Pakistani or an American. However, I still love Pakistani people and Pakistani culture, and I love my adopted homeland. I have a skepticism toward the dogma, superstition, and irrational beliefs I grew up with, while recognizing the limitations of the scientific method as "the most reliable way of acquiring knowledge" and finding in hermeneutics and phenomenology some indispensable tools for understanding the world. I believe that one of the most important endeavors in which human beings can engage is seeking to rise above our belief systems and group ideologies to overcome injustice. And for that to happen, I believe it takes all people "standing in solidarity" with those who are "terrorized," regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or tribe.

All this to say it is difficult and it takes work to escape the insidious impacts of our early indoctrination and feeling of belonging on our ability to discern "truths" about the world. ■

PHOTO: STEVE JOHNSON

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Nightmare

1.

First he appears gauzy. Then so like
himself; then the painful, wounding

surprise of his rage. In the dust (like
marks left by a bird, by scrape and

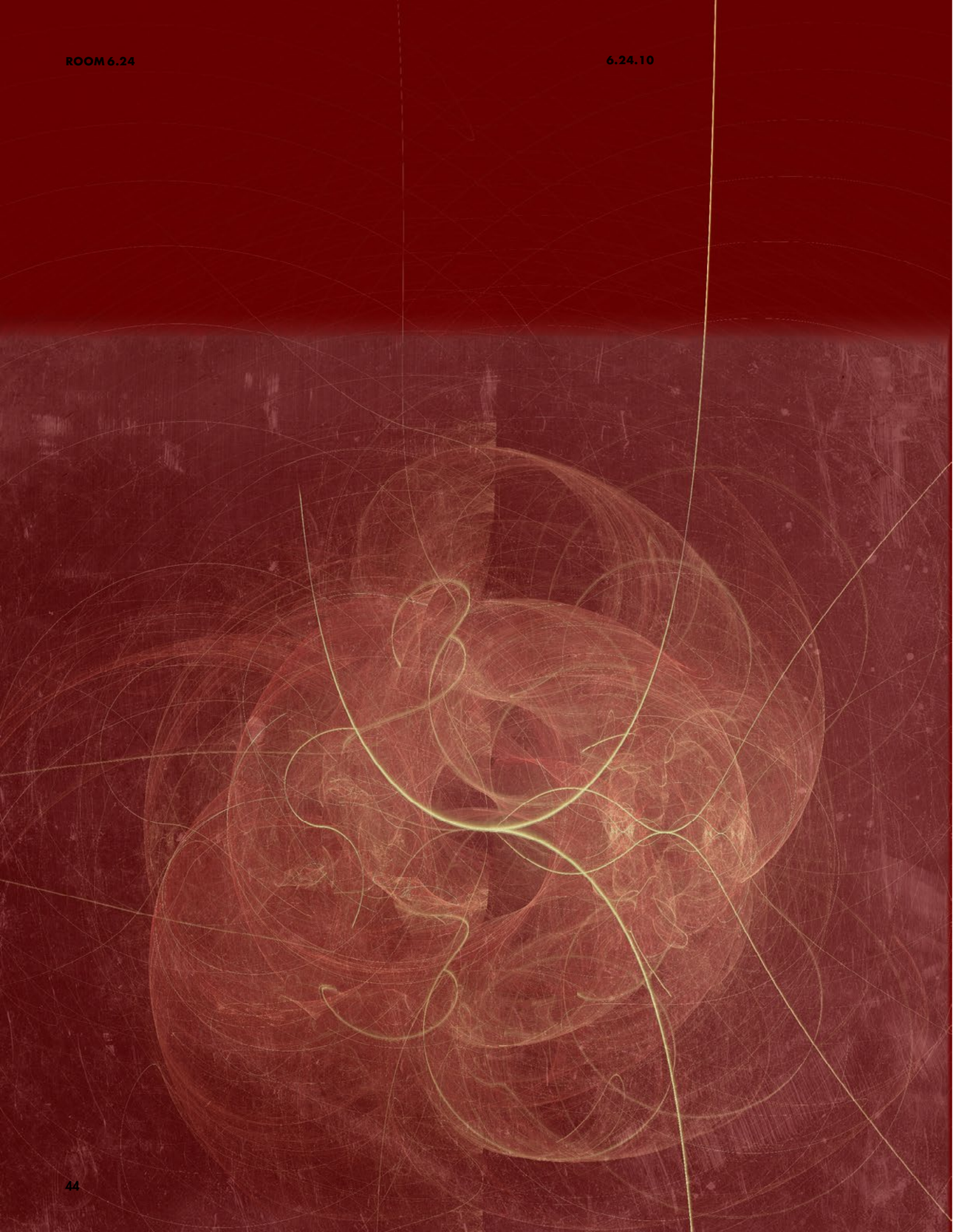
feather): shape and line, his angular script.
Ink, an impenetrable trace of him

(I think *reading*, but can't understand
a damn thing). Daylight; a sparrow

strikes glass. A nightmare is an idea –
is it not? – dawning, needle-bright.

2.

The mind mistakes itself
for an empty room.



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No More Passing

This is the essay my therapist doesn't want me to write.

I wish that I could say that I don't understand her concerns, but I do. She fears that it would place in the foreground something that most people who come to know me see only as a small part of me. It's never been what defines me, so why run the risk of letting that happen now? I imagine she wants to protect me from being typecast as disabled and likely the recipient of all the associated projections that I've worked for years to dodge.

I've countered that writing about my disability would be empowering, that it'd give me a way to openly claim a part of myself that I've tended to keep at arm's length. I imagine it as a coming-out of sorts, a response to those who have confessed, "I always *knew* there was something different about you, but was afraid to ask."

Because my impairment is not stereotypically visible—there's no wheelchair or other mobility aids—the markers of my disability are more subtle and perhaps even perplexing. I have what is considered a mild case of cerebral palsy, the result of brain damage at birth. Cerebral palsy is not a disorder per se but an umbrella term for a group of neuromuscular conditions. There is a spectrum of possible presentations, ranging from severe impairment to minor challenges with balance and coordination. Mine is on the latter end. I am one of the lucky ones, I have been repeatedly told—and I have readily agreed.

As camouflaged as my CP is, I have always been aware that others sense some sort of difference in me. Try as I might to filter it out, I've been painfully attuned to their unspoken curiosity and, at times, their pity. I suppose that I've always *known* that people don't quite know what box to put me in. So my coming out is probably less of a revelation and more a naming of the proverbial elephant in the room.

My friends and loved ones often insist that I overestimate the visibility of my CP. I've been told that it's "barely noticeable" and stops being "an issue" once people get to know me. As far back as I can remember, I've clung to these reassurances like a life preserver. They eased my worries that the strained quality of my speech was a distraction; I could keep any shame about my irregular gait and tremor largely at bay.

Keeping my disability as unnoticed as possible has always been an implicit goal. I wasn't considered a child with "special needs" and, it being the pre-ADA 1970s, I rarely received accommodations. Grateful as I was for not being singled out, I *did* have special needs: completing a handwriting assignment, carrying my lunch tray across the cafeteria, writing on the chalkboard, surviving any part of gym class—all were struggles that I chose not to name. Asking for help felt like inviting shame and ridicule or, in the heyday of the Jerry Lewis Telethon, being cast in the role of poster child. So I became creative in developing my own workarounds and ways to compensate. This exhausting self-sufficiency seemed like a small price to pay for acceptance and belonging.

While I have been impacted by my physical limitations, the bigger burden has always been my self-consciousness. No matter how much success I achieved, I could never shake the feeling that I was defective and that my defect eclipsed all else. At the same time, though, the steady stream of reassurances I've received to the contrary made these fears feel a bit like paranoia. There was something relieving in thinking that it was all in my head: if it was simply a matter of low self-esteem, there was a fix for that. As a teenager, I became an avid consumer of self-help books and later of therapy. I learned the concept of "projection," which bolstered the argument that my otherness wasn't being tracked as much as I believed.

But inevitably the self-protective bubble would burst, usually after a comment from someone whose curiosity or discomfort could not be contained. The client who complained to my supervisor that they did not want to work with me because I "talked funny." The acquaintance who, after I'd mentioned my husband, exclaimed in disbelief, "*You're* married??" And the colleague who, before sending me a referral, asked, "Should I warn them about you?" This was before the term *microaggression* had entered the lexicon. Even if I had had this language at the time, I'm not sure if I would have seen it as applicable. They weren't being aggressive; they were being honest. I was always devastated. It was proof that my disability was, in fact, "an issue" and my otherness was indisputable.

I never felt I had a choice other than to pick myself up, dust myself off, and go back to hoping that I could "pass" more often than not. And there were, in fact, long stretches of time in which my CP remained outside of my daily awareness and seemed to garner little attention from people around me. These times felt like triumphs; noticeable or not, I had managed to transcend my physical differences, at least for the time being.

But my body had other plans. As I entered my forties, muscle and joint pain that started as an expectable nuisance quickly became chronic. I also developed esophageal spasms, which made eating solid food almost impossible for the better part of a year. Because CP had never posed health problems for me, I rarely even mentioned my disability to my doctors. I was wholly unprepared for the lack of knowledge, and in some cases sensitivity, I encountered when trying to find medical care. Even living in a major urban center, I was unable to find a specialist who saw patients with CP over the age of eighteen.

I turned to the internet to fill in the gaps. My research quickly revealed that adults with cerebral palsy frequently experience what is referred to as "premature aging," the result of living with excess stress and strain on the body. I also learned that I was not alone with my frustration with the medical profession's treatment of CP as solely a pediatric condition. Entire online groups were dedicated to information exchange and advocacy, many under the umbrella of the disability justice movement. Until then, the disability community had been an abstraction for me, made up of *really* disabled people, whom I pictured to be low-functioning and pitiable. What I discovered, however, couldn't have been more disconfirming: a diverse array of activists and academics, as well as many like me, everyday people trying to unsnarl themselves from lifetimes of internalized ableism.

I was stunned when my new connections alerted me to the Center for Adults with Cerebral Palsy at NYU. After years of failed attempts at finding a specialist with the expertise I needed, I had assumed that further searching was futile. That this center even existed lifted burdens that gave me hope that maybe my "special needs" could be met after all.

I was unsure what to expect when I went to the clinic. As the appointment approached, I encountered a part of myself that had previously been muted. It was the part that wanted my difference seen, to be able to relax my vigilance and frantic efforts to pass, to fully inhabit my body in all its nonconformity. Suddenly, my fears turned upside down. I worried that my CP would be seen as too mild, that my needs would seem illegitimate compared to more-challenged patients. Would there be a space for my pain, physical and emotional, or would I again be labeled a "lucky one" and left to my own devices?

The answer turned out to be yes. I found a recognition that required no explanation or justification. I was not an object of pity or inspiration. I wasn't an object at all. And yet, walking past fellow patients, often in wheelchairs, and sometimes with caregivers, I did not see myself reflected. There still wasn't a box that I fit into neatly and I didn't come away with a miracle cure for my pain. But somehow, there was a little added space in me: space for the part of me that wants my difference recognized to coexist alongside the part that longs for an anonymous normalcy. Perhaps there's room for more. ■

PHOTO: SABIAN SYMBOLS

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Mis/Fitting

I.

I WALKED INTO the office and sat in the chair. I had been referred to him by several trusted mentors, including my supervisor, as a possible training analyst. Although I was still working with my now-long-distance therapist, I was beginning to feel antsy to get started in my analysis. He is one of those rare analysts whom everyone seems to respect, across disciplinary and theoretical dividing lines. As I sat, anxious to begin our consult, he was diagonal from me, the couch beside him and across from me. I sat trying to look at him but found my gaze drawn to the couch. Of course, the couch: the mythical analytic object. It was exquisite, and I felt terror rolling around in my center. Spindly beautiful wooden legs, seemingly thin enough to be the heel of a stiletto. There was a lovely plush cushion on top, flat and modern. I could not imagine even sitting on it, much less lying on it. My thought: Could it hold me? Would it collapse under my weight? Would I be able to breathe lying flat on my back without a headrest? Would he shudder when I sat my weight onto it? What would he think when I had trouble rolling off of the low seat, trying to get my feet under me enough to stand back up at the end of a session?

II.

I DON'T KNOW how old I was the first time. Elementary school? Probably middle school. In fact, the years of meetings off and on blur together. There was the time I sat resentfully in a corner insisting I was just there to support my mom. This wasn't for me. Another I proudly told everyone (excitedly! giddily!) that I had found a low-point chocolate mousse—you just mixed sugar-free chocolate Jell-O powder with a tub of light whipped cream. I didn't tell them about the migraines the artificial sweeteners gave me, because why ruin such a triumph! As the meeting leaders loaded us up onto the scale so nonchalantly, a line of women and girls with the occasional man, moving forward one at a time, it felt nearly like leading the cattle to slaughter. The repetition of intense feelings of superiority and self-righteousness when the scale went down (I had a burger this week and still lost three pounds! Ha!) and the hopelessness and frustration when, inevitably, the numbers ticked back up or stood still despite my religious and systematic starvation of myself, was the only constant, my emotional world cycling alongside my body size.

III.

THE PATIENT WAS a woman who had been in treatment for quite a few years and who had made major changes in her life and her self-experience, except with regard to the thing that had brought her into treatment in the first place, her obesity. She felt her weight as a burden that she would carry unto death, with no hope of relief. At the point I entered the case, it was her analyst who was feeling no hope of relief, and that was a major reason for the consultation. The situation was quite an extraordinary one and impressed me once again with the fact that when it comes to certain kinds of enactments, it's really a lot more pleasurable to be the consultant than the analyst. As a consultant, I'm spared the experience of being personally dismantled by the patient, a fact I feel is critical to comprehend in working as a therapist from this frame of reference… In the case of the patient I mentioned, whose treatment I had been following, the dismantling took place around the analyst's "failure" to mention the patient's weight when she herself wasn't mentioning it. "*You* ought to know," the patient insisted, "that when I'm talking about anything else as long as I'm still fat, it's only my good self that's talking and that I'm doing something self-destructive that you're not even caring about." In fact, the analyst cared a great deal about it, as you might well imagine. It was the one painfully overt sign that something still needed to be "cured" and that talking hadn't helped. So, the analyst had decided (on his own) to stop addressing it because he was tired of getting nowhere (kind of "fed up," you might say) and hoped that the patient would then bring it up herself.[1]

I encountered this example in my first year of training. When I tried to address the fatphobia of the case, I was met with silence from my class and from the instructors. The silence was eventually broken by another student asking a theoretical question about the article, which was taken up immediately by the faculty. Once again, I left before the class ended, despite speaking, unseen and too big. If this is the discourse around fat bodies within my training and within the literature, how do I have space and room to fit? Although our training is online—and thus from the comfort of my own fat-friendly furniture—I dread in-person meetups where I am unsure if there will be adequate seating, both in how much or what kind of seating might be provided. I dread even more the unspoken judgment, the silence around my body like the silence of Bromberg's supervisee.

1 Bromberg, P.M. (1994). Speak! That I may hear you: Some reflections on disassociation, reality, and psychoanalytic listening. Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 4, 523–525.

IV.

I HAD RECENTLY become more interested in genealogy. I knew my great-grandmother had immigrated with family from central Italy, but had little other understanding of my family's origins. I asked my grandmother if she had any family documents I might borrow for this endeavor. She told me that she actually had a document another cousin had compiled and sent around many years ago. As I flipped through the pages, amazed that I had never heard about this set of documents, I turned a page and sat stunned. As I saw a photo of three smiling fat women, I teared up. These were my ancestors! These fat women sitting together, family, community, with bodies like mine: the same body that was taken to Weight Watchers meetings as a child. I felt simultaneously tearful joy and deep sadness. How could this body, so similar to these ancestors', be so shameful in my own family? How can my body as an echo of my family still not fit even in the place from which it came?

V.

I COULD NOT stop dwelling on that first question: Can it hold me? Will I fit? My Goldilocks search for an analytic training program, and more specifically for a training analyst, has been a long one, spanning three institutes and nearly a decade. This question of fit and containment has been at the crux of that search. I became a therapist in the first place because of my life-changing encounter with psychoanalytic theory while I was on another path. Yet my experiences with training and with the analytic community have consistently been of myself as a person at odds with the field. I have been asked why I am even involved with training if I am so hostile toward psychoanalysis. Understanding in that moment how deeply misunderstood I had been for nearly two years, I responded: I love psychoanalysis so much that I want it to be better. To be better requires acknowledging the harm it's done and been complicit in. I wondered if I, like Goldilocks, was somewhere I didn't belong. I left, the question circling: Can psychoanalysis make space for me? Can I fit?

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KENNEDY'S DEATH AND AMERICAN FASCISM

Until I listened to Rob Reiner's podcast, *Who Killed JFK?*, I believed that Lee Harvey Oswald shot Kennedy acting alone, that he was a twisted and violent man who happened to find himself, by pure chance, working in a building overlooking the president's motorcade route, and that he couldn't help taking advantage of the circumstances to make his mark on the world. Since no one had come forward, and conspirators will always include at least one person who cannot keep the secret, I thought that Oswald was confirmed as the lone gunman.

I am now convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald did not shoot Kennedy, but that he was just what he said he was, "a patsy," someone carefully and meticulously set up by the perpetrators to take the blame for a crime. The podcast provided compelling evidence of the multifaceted pressure that was applied to the authors of the assassination forensic report so that it would support the single-gunman-from-the-rear theory. It also carefully demonstrates the thoroughgoing tunnel vision of the Warren Commission in carefully excluding any evidence that might have undermined the Oswald-as-lone-shooter theory. Reiner's podcast changed my mind about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and it provoked certain thoughts about those dark days in 1963 and how they are related to the dark days we are passing through now.

Two sets of facts establish the falsity of the official story.

First set of facts: Oswald's whereabouts. On November 22, 1963, Oswald was seen drinking a Coke in a booth in the cafeteria on the second floor of the Texas School Book Depository at 12:25 p.m.; Kennedy was shot shortly after 12:30 p.m.; Oswald was seen again in the same cafeteria location drinking a Coke at 12:32 p.m. The unlikely possibility that he had sprung up, run to the sixth floor, shot Kennedy, cleaned and hid his rifle, and then had run back down to the booth to resume drinking his Coke, all in ninety seconds, is eliminated by the testimony of a coworker who heard the shots and ran down the stairs with two other coworkers at the same time without seeing or hearing anyone in the stairwell (the only one in the building).

Second set of facts: his job. Oswald worked at a job in the Texas School Book Depository that was found for him on September 26, 1963, the day after the upcoming visit by President Kennedy and the motorcade route were announced in the Dallas newspapers. The job was found for him by one Ruth Paine, who had already helped him in other ways and had befriended his wife, and who had extensive relationships with the CIA. His job in that building was vital to the carefully constructed story that he was the lone gunman and responsible for the president's death. "Pure chance" had nothing to do with it.

Reiner shows that assassination experts in the CIA organized four assassins who were arrayed around Dealey Plaza on that day. He describes the individuals, groups, and entities that hated JFK, and points to his growing isolation within the government as a result of his efforts to forge peaceful relations with both Castro's Cuba and the Soviet Union. The organizers of the assassination viewed those efforts as treasonous.

There were two secret government programs at that time—one to assassinate foreign leaders, and the other to cause a catastrophic "false flag" event in the US meant to provoke a war with Cuba—which are seen as forming the ideological and logistical bases for the plan to kill Kennedy. Reiner gives a narrative of the plan to assassinate Kennedy that includes the names of the likely planners and the names of the four assassins situated around Dealey Plaza.

Indirectly, we are given to see how the plan, which in view of its criminal nature may be called a conspiracy, worked. It shows how the CIA over many years as part of its regular activities cultivated individuals likely to be of use to it (both Oswald and Ruth Paine were such individuals, as was the man who later killed Oswald, Jack Ruby). Many people involved in the plan knew only their part of it and possibly did not know its ultimate purpose. Furthermore, in the years since, eighteen individuals were killed or died mysteriously shortly before they were scheduled to testify on what they knew about the assassination. Clearly, insiders who knew anything about the plan had to have been aware of the penalty for revealing it. These deaths show the CIA to be operating here as a criminal, mob-like organization.

The mass of facts regarding motives, means, and logistical experience, as well as the sheer presence of so many people with a connection to the CIA in Dallas on that day and its longstanding, intimate connections with so many of the principals, convinced me that this narrative, or one very much like it, must be true.

After my shock and rage subsided a bit, my first thought was that this act, the murder of an American president by members of the US government, has elements of a fascist coup about it. The men who planned the murder obviously had contempt for the Constitution and the electoral process by which Kennedy had become president. We know from public statements of the CIA planners that they were right-wing "hardliners," who regarded the danger posed to the United States by the Soviet Union as apocalyptic and existential. Finally, the act itself shows that they thought that the proper response to their political disagreement with Kennedy over how to treat the nation's adversaries was to murder him. Contempt for democratic rule, seeing dangers to the nation as existential, and solving political problems with violence—these are some of the essential elements of fascism.

The planners themselves stayed in the shadows. They did not proclaim a new constitution. They did not publicly exalt their violence as evidence of their greatness. But they achieved what was evidently a major political objective: Kennedy's peace initiatives were abandoned. We have often heard the question posed in our times: Could the US become a fascist country? The CIA is seen here to already have been acting like a fascist mini-state within the US government.

The darkness of November 22, 1963, speaks to the darkness of our moment. Specifically, two similarities leap to mind concerning the connection of the CIA planners to Donald Trump and his party. They share a contempt for the Constitution: the CIA planners voided the result of the 1960 election; Trump and his supporters tried their very best to void the result of the 2020 election. They share an apocalyptic view of their importance in meeting an implacable evil so dangerous that all means are justified to combat it: the CIA planners thought that the USSR posed an existential threat to the US such that any relaxation of tensions amounted to treasonous surrender; the Republican party has arrived at the position that if he is not elected in November, the forces of evil present in the Democratic Party will overwhelm and destroy the United States.

We will never know what American history would have been like if Kennedy had lived. He was evolving from cold warrior to peacemaker. In June, 1963, he gave his "Peace Speech" in which he proclaimed the need to find a way to use diplomacy to live with the Soviet Union and with Castro's Cuba, even if we disagreed with their systems. He didn't see a role for American troops in Vietnam. He wanted the US to live in peace with adversary nations and not in an eternal, righteous enmity.

In November, 1963, Kennedy was popular and seemed headed for a large reelection mandate in 1964.

His murder and the intense cover-up that began the moment of the assassination and that continues to this day (the CIA still refuses to release more than five thousand related documents) introduced a disconnect between many Americans and their government that must be seen as one of the foundations of Trump's political success.

Think of the blows to Americans' trust in their government that were unleashed by the assassination. The Warren Commission report asserted a series of lies, in part by citing a fictitious forensic report. The Vietnam War, which Kennedy was intending to end, generated so many lies that Daniel Ellsberg released the Pentagon Papers in response to them. The necessity of parts of the government to involve large other parts of the government in the lies required to maintain the cover-up set American politics on the path of doubt and cynicism regarding American democratic institutions, which must be seen as reaching its apotheosis with the political career of Donald Trump.

The CIA planners, we can now see, did hideous damage to the United States. They killed the lawfully elected president, they tainted legitimate governmental authority with the necessity to promulgate lie after lie, and they made a long, pointless war inevitable.

No one knows whom the American people will elect as president on November 5, 2024. If Donald Trump is elected, in view of his open promotion of autocracy, his election will be able to be seen as the final rending of the fabric of the people's trust in democratic government that arguably began with the assassination and the cover-up. If Trump is defeated by such a margin as to represent a wholesale repudiation, then perhaps documents like the Rob Reiner podcast and those of other voices might help to generate a national outcry for an honest, thorough governmental inquiry into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Such an inquiry could go some distance toward restoring trust in the ability of the US government to speak, and of the American people to bear, the truth. ■

Ray Smith
raysmithstudio.com

Smith produces exuberant paintings and sculptures characterized by an inimitable style and subject matter that reflect his bicultural American and Mexican heritage. Contorted and morphed figures recur throughout his work, in a hybrid that draws from his early studies of fresco painting with traditional practitioners in Mexico, and an indebtedness to Picasso, the Surrealists, and the politically daring Mexican muralists. Through these varied beings, Smith reflects upon the complexities and absurdities of society, family, politics, culture, war, and the human condition itself, framed by birth and death.

Siren
2010
Plywood
96in. x 72in.x 24in.

Minotaur
2010
Plywood
96 in. x 48 in. x 45 in.

Cadavre Exquis: Echo
2010
Bronze
23 in. x 8in. x 8 in.

Cadavre Exquis: Nymphs and Satyr
2010
Bronze
23 in. x 8in. x 12 in.

We Say "Never Forget"

Tom Hennes
tomh@thincdesign.com

WE SAY "NEVER FORGET."

What we mean, I believe, is "never forget what they did to us." That to forget is to betray—to betray the dead, to betray the living who remember the dead, to betray those in the future who, remembering the dead, will be asked to sacrifice themselves for the promise that we'll never forget them. That to forget is to betray the obligation to remember, to become an alien within our own family and community. But never forgetting also means forever clinging to the inhumanity and guilt of the perpetrators, even as we cling to the humanity and innocence of the victims, and holding them close to each other, like the poles of two magnets trying to fly apart in opposite direction, with all the energy we can muster.

I am remembering the eight years I lived with the 9/11 Memorial, which is meant to never forget the names of those innocents killed on that day, and designing the museum beneath it, where the narrative—the chosen narrative of the event—is enshrined underground. I remember the debates, the wars raged openly in conference rooms and secretly in offices and quiet, fleeting asides, about the nature of the narrative to which we would design. I remember the claustrophobic feeling of its narrowing over time, from a living back-and-forth among different perspectives to an obligatory, flattened recitation of perpetrators, victims, and heroes that would merge the truths of the day with myths forged in the burning, hot anger that followed, molded by the circularity of a mourning process kept perpetually in motion by the "obligation to remember"—as well as the obligation to forget the retaliation that created an equal but opposite narrative in other cultures and other hearts far away from us.

Remembering in this flattened way is an easy path to righteousness and toward the cleansing of our own unclean histories and our own unclean imaginings and deeds. Even though holding so tightly onto what Vamik Volkan calls our "chosen traumas"—cultural memories of past atrocities—causes the muscles holding them to cramp painfully, it seems to me this cramping pain is easily borne when compared with what is required for a true reckoning with difference and the vindictive side of our humanity when turned against those we call inhuman. To never forget is to selectively remember only the thing that is our chosen trauma and to forget the other's traumas, the other's losses, the other's pain.

I met a woman recently at a community meeting about new jails that are being planned in New York, a project I'm involved with. She works with traumatized children, six years and younger, playing with them and helping them to learn to play with other children and to feel joy in their young lives because she believes the only way to keep them out of jail and out of trouble when they're sixteen years old is to be with them now. Standing still amid a slowly circulating crowd, she told me her son had been murdered a year before—shot in the head by another young man at a party. When I asked her how she felt approaching the upcoming trial of the young man who murdered her son, she told me she just wanted to hear the young man out, to understand who he was and why he'd done the thing he'd done. "Sending him to prison for the rest of his life," she said, "would just destroy two families instead of one, and what good comes of that?"

I don't believe she will ever forget her son or the yawning emptiness that his death so clearly leaves within her. But what struck me deeply about what she said was that she did not seem to hold her own pain above the pain and intergenerational trauma she is quite sure the boy who shot her son must have experienced and be experiencing still. She chooses to remember both her own pain and his.

Speaking with her reminded me of an article I had read nearly twenty years before, when I was working in South Africa on the Freedom Park, a national memorial and museum in Pretoria. I was new to the idea of restorative justice, the underlying premise of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose mantle the Freedom Park had officially taken up. A woman whose son was among a group killed by the death squad run by Eugene de Kock, who had been known by the nickname "Prime Evil," was quoted as saying that after attending De Kock's testimony at the TRC, she had chosen to forgive him. If forgiving him could restore his humanity, she said, and in the process help her to restore her own humanity, well then, she was willing to do it.

I do not believe that this woman, either, will ever forget the son she lost or the pain of losing him. Yet she is not telling us, in this public act of forgiveness, "Never Forget." She understands that loss alters us and stays with us forever. Instead, she is telling us to remember that her humanity, like ours, depends on doing what we can to hold and restore the humanity of others.

The problem with traumatic loss is that it cannot be forgotten. Cannot even easily be placed in time so that it will cease to be an ever-present simulacrum of reality. I am coming to the idea that Never Forget is directed in a constraining way toward those inside these events. It is a command: Never Forget *what happened* to us. Of equal significance, it's directed outward toward everyone else with a different purpose: Never Forget what happened *to us.*

In this light, Never Forget is neither a wish to hold onto our own memories nor an entreaty for us to be witnessed. It demands unending attention and deference. It is simultaneously a tool for future claims of ethical righteousness, a preemptive strike meant to render future challenges to our retaliatory actions fatally toxic to those making them, and a shield meant to prevent those of us behind it from building empathetic links to those on the other side, who hold other views. Never Forget maintains a split between identifications with the trauma and all other possible identifications. It is a wedge that divides *us* from *them.*

From this perspective, forgiveness, as a form of forgetting, carries both the real peril that we become vulnerable once again to the perpetrator, and the psychic peril of losing the separation between their evil and our goodness. To never forget is thus to deny, in perpetuity, the humanity of those who have committed wrongs against us; to never forgive lest we be confronted with a glimpse of their humanity, or worse, of our own inhumanity reflected in their upturned eyes. In denying their humanity it seems to me we run the risk that we abandon our own in order to harden our grief into brittle walls of grievance that separate the cherished pain inside from the disavowed evil outside. I wonder if we aren't instead imprisoning ourselves within these walls even as we seek to use them for safety, keeping the never-forgotten part of ourselves, that we tell ourselves is sacred and pure, safe from all the other parts that we fear are tainted, sullied, rotted.

If this is true, then how much does our never forgetting create for ourselves a narrowing of who we are or believe ourselves to be? To what degree is this narrowing an act of energic efficiency that preserves our self—the self we choose never to forget—in a living union with the unchanging dead that forecloses a return to the riskier but more vibrant company of the living?

I don't believe others have the right to diminish the traumas we have experienced, or we those of others. At the same time, we have to ask ourselves, it seems to me, whether any of us do humanity a service by rallying around the cry of Never Forget when that cry means we should never forget precisely those things that prevent us from knowing the traumas that others have experienced, perhaps even at our own hands—the ways that our good may have been their bad, or could become so, even without our knowledge or consent.

If you read psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's account of her years interviewing de Kock during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, you will expose yourself to the intense, conflicting feelings she experienced as she came to know him as a human who had done inhuman things, believing in the necessity of his acts to preserve his people. Through her vivid writing, you will feel tangibly her recoil after having once spontaneously reached out to him, in the interview room at the prison where he was held, to touch his hand, and the intense self-searching that this single, momentary act engendered for years thereafter. She did not forget his acts but over time she chose to recognize, as well, the possibility that he could grow beyond that part of himself that had been fused to those acts and the beliefs that made them possible—that he could see that on the other side of the brittle walls that separated the righteousness of his cause from the imagined darkness of those he was fighting was the darkness within himself that he had cast outside and had murdered again and again and again while he was torturing and killing people.

The choice never to forget has a defensive function in the aftermath of horror that is easy to comprehend and all too easy to accept as natural and inevitable. But the final question I wish to ask is whether it is adaptive: will it accomplish the task of protecting the victim, or does it simply create the illusion of protection? As an imperative, "Never Forget" carries immense moral and ethical suasion, yet its absolutism—its utter insistence on primacy—is a profound and potentially blinding obstacle to repair. When it becomes a justification for violence that gives the other new reason to never forget what has been done to them, does is it not also become an instrument for the perpetuation of trauma, generation after generation, in an unending spiral of death? How can we imagine bringing an end to this except through a retreat to delusional imaginings of omnipotence? And in our deepest human hearts, do we really want to be the omnipotent destroyers of other human beings?

We are mostly powerless to stem the tide of violence, of revenge, of inhumanity when all these things have been called into action, particularly when some on both sides see advantage in calling up the chosen traumas that will foment conflict. Those attempting to bridge are cast as naive, weak, or traitorous. Terrible sufferings, grossly lopsided or perhaps mutual, become an unavoidable consequence. Even while this is happening, shame at our own acts—and our own powerlessness—mingles with the raw exuberance of hatred of the other in a catalytic hardening of opposing positions.

And yet.

And yet I have seen, in the past months of working in the contested ground of one of the largest jail systems in the United States, how groups thought to be at war with each other harbor not simply an expected, sometimes searing antagonism toward each other but also a wish for reconciliation as well, each hoping furtively to be humanized by the other. An officer says of those in custody, "They'll make a weapon out of anything; you have to treat them like children." Moments later, he reflects: "If I made just one bad decision, I could be there myself." A man awaiting trial, who has been incarcerated many times, expresses the difficulties the jail staff face with a story about an officer who unexpectedly needed to stay on duty, with nobody to pick her daughter up from day care. "She just sat there and cried." In these momentary flashes, hardened positions are capable of softening, particularly when those who are present feel they have been seen and heard, their anxieties held and acknowledged. These fleeting identifications, revealing a degree of empathy that I find breathtaking, tell me that openings already exist among people thought to be incapable of seeing each other as human, that seeds of mutual recognition are already present, longing to be nurtured.

Perhaps the thing we should never forget is that only the rarest of us are wholly inhuman or wholly humane. That while the risks of opening ourselves to the possibility that the other possesses humanity are real and often perilous, the risks of not doing so are even greater. Perhaps the thing we should remember is that humanity is already present in each of us, in all its myriad forms, with the possibility of being awakened or quashed, nurtured or snuffed out. The choice before us, it seems, is which among those possibilities we seek to make real. ■

Sue Kolod
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The Depolarization Project

The Depolarization Project is a group of four psychoanalysts and four people who are not in the mental health field yet are interested in the spread of toxic polarization within our society. Our group is quite diverse in terms of age, religion, and political leanings. We meet monthly to discuss readings, some of which focus on the process of toxic polarization itself, and others that have been polarizing within the field of psychoanalysis.

Two of the group members regularly conduct dialogues with Trump supporters. In several meetings, we have then reviewed the videotaped dialogues and discussed them. In one case, we taped our "meta-dialogue" and showed it to the contributing Trump supporter, who then came to a meeting of the group and gave his feedback on our reactions. At each meeting we revisit the question of whether psychoanalysis has anything to offer to help alleviate toxic polarization.

Importantly, we also pay attention to how toxic polarization might be occurring within ourselves and within the group. This occurred most poignantly when we read the controversial book by Lara Sheehi and Stephen Sheehi, *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*.

The idea for the group came from a panel presented by Sue Kolod and Chris Heath at the 2021 IPA Congress, which had been planned as an in-person event in Vancouver but ended up meeting virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel was titled Masked Rage: Vaccine Refusal and Conspiracy Theories. During the Q&A, several of the audience members remarked that psychoanalysts had much to offer to alleviate toxic polarization, but when prodded to elaborate, their responses were vague and full of Bionion jargon.

After the Congress, Chris and Sue decided to form a group to study the question of whether/what psychoanalysis had to offer. We are trained to be good listeners, to be able to hold different and sometimes opposing thoughts in our minds at the same time, to listen to ourselves as we listen to others, to pay attention to our reactions, both conscious and unconscious and to forgo judgment. Although our training would suggest that we are uniquely prepared to address polarization and to lessen its impact, that is not what we have seen.

The rupture that occurred at the meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in March of 2023, which resulted in the resignation of its then-president, Kerry Sulkowicz, is one of the most extreme examples. Accusations of racism on one side and antisemitism on the other inflamed the discussion. When the conference's LISTSERV, an application that creates a form of social media, was introduced, polarization spread like wildfire.

October 7th brought toxic polarization within psychoanalysis to a completely different level. It has affected many psychoanalytic societies to the point where it has been suggested that the topic is too hot to handle.

Here group members will talk about the impact of the Depolarization Project on themselves and why they continue to be involved.

i To read more, visit *ROOM*'s online community projects alcove.
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ROUND TABLE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2024 ■ 12 PM EDT

LIVE VIA ZOOM

In the last Roundtable before the November 5 election in the US, join us for a discussion with three authors who have written about the experience of confronting and sitting with one's history as one seeks a way to move forward.

Tom Hennes: *We Say "Never Forget"*
Sue Kolod: *The Depolarization Project*
Richard Grose: *Kennedy's Death and American Fascism*

To RSVP, click here or scan the QR code.

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What if I can't make it to Gala 2024? Can I watch it later?
If you purchased tickets for the gala but cannot join us on July 18, don't worry.
We will make the event recording available to everyone who purchases a ticket.

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- to raise awareness, inform, and clarify to a wider public within both communities about the issues at the crux of the conflict and how they impact the lives of both peoples, from the perspective of each side;
- to foster, in a climate of constructive criticism and mutual respect, active dialogue and exchanges within and between the two civil societies.

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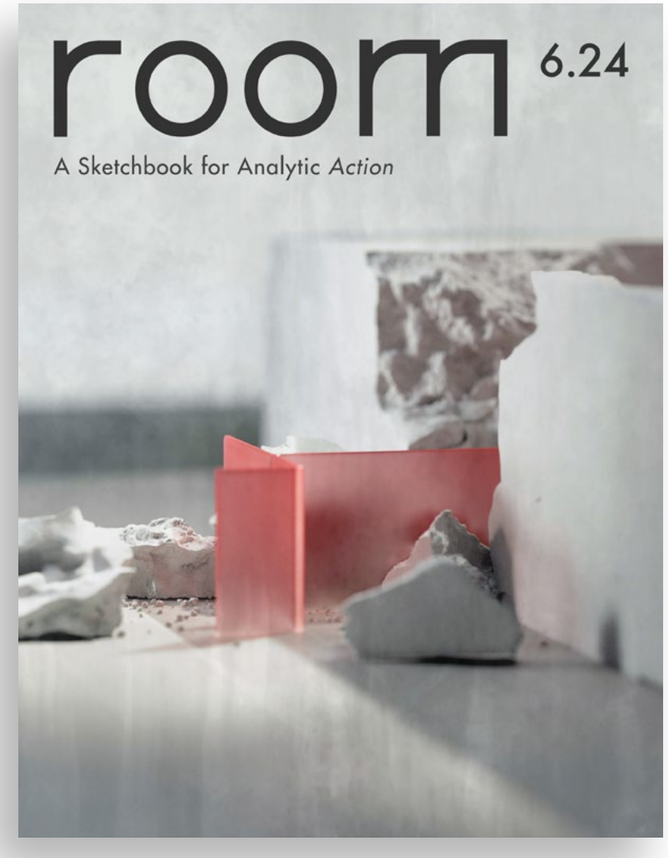

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