

EDITORIAL

Carine Minne and Annie Pesskin

Our regular readers will know that our journal is dedicated to supporting the main aim of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy (IAFP)—to rehumanise the dehumanised—across the broadest possible range of social settings. In our previous issue, published just before the COP26 Climate Change conference, we emphasised how the climate crisis disproportionately affects people living in conflict zones and in poverty. We referred to how displacement from war increases the existential threat for everyone. Today, there are estimated to be around eighty-five million people forcibly displaced worldwide, of which thirty-five million are children. Since then, a further catastrophe has erupted with the Russian regime aggressively invading Ukraine.

On the morning of the 23rd February, the people of Ukraine woke up as usual, went to work and school, returned home for their evening meals. They checked in on their elderly relatives. They played with their pets. They laughed, argued, and watched some television. They were aware of the tension building up over weeks, months. They nevertheless went to sleep. That night, their lives changed forever when a dreaded nightmare materialised. People have been killed in their homes, their cities flattened. Families are separated and literally millions of Ukrainians are on the move. Atrocities have been carried out that will impact on those affected for generations.

In Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Yemen, to name but a few, where military and civil unrest make a regular daily life impossible, such violence by people to people has been going on for years. Their suffering should not evaporate from the daily headlines, but it does. Many questions have been raised about why this war in Ukraine has received so much more media coverage in Western countries than conflicts elsewhere. Is it that white Europeans identify more easily with the plight of the Ukrainians, not only because the threat is geographically closer, but because they look more similar?

At the time of writing, the UK Prime Minister and Home Secretary have just agreed a financial “partnership” with Rwanda to “outsource” refugees arriving in the UK, who mainly come from Africa or the Middle East, and are mainly brown and black people. This means the brave, enterprising people who have made treacherous journeys to escape violence, hunger, and other hardships to seek refuge in the UK, will instead be detained and then deported 4,000 miles away to a small country in Africa, that arguably has not yet recovered from the genocide which happened there in 1994. Indeed, just a few months ago, Rwanda was reported for breaching human rights with torture and deaths in custody.

Quoting from our last editorial: “As forensic psychotherapists, we recognise that when individuals feel humiliated, insignificant, and neglected, violence may become the only possible means of articulating fear and rage.” Can we

also keep in mind the epigenetic dimensions of transgenerational trauma, which might help us to understand slave trauma and Holocaust trauma, for example? If so, how many generations of peace will Rwanda need before the epigenetic impact of the genocide of 1994 can be considered negligible? Under Stalin's regime, it is estimated that over twenty million people were killed. How might this epigenetic inheritance be playing out by Russians on the battlefields of Ukraine? In a 2014 interview of Hilary Clinton, she was asked to describe her meeting with Putin when she sat next to him and mentioned how moved she had been by her visit to the memorial to victims of the siege of Leningrad. Putin went on to tell her a story no one had ever heard before. Putin's father had come across piles of bodies at that terrible time and recognised his wife and claimed she was still alive. He was told they were all dead. He nevertheless claimed her body and carried her to their flat where he apparently nursed her back to health. A few years later, and two older brothers already dead, Putin was born. The Russians had suffered through Stalinism, WWII, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was clear to Hilary Clinton that Putin was determined to restore Russian greatness, the "Motherland", perhaps just as his father had restored his wife, Putin's mother, back to life.

Could this help to explain how the cruellest of leaders reached the top and surrounded himself with placatory (and frightened?) individuals, whilst the minions carry out the most inhumane and evil deeds on their behalf? What kind of "average" young Russian man destroys a maternity hospital? How are these men different from the mentally disordered offenders we lock up to treat after carrying out serious violence against others? How do group dynamics come into play?

As clinicians, many of us tend to try to understand these issues by imagining the psychopathology of the cruel leader, based on their early history. Some of us will endeavour to juxtapose the hypothesised psychopathology within a group setting, where it is known that individuals can act out violently as part of a group in a way they never would have as individuals. A synergism of violence arises, as we also observe operating in street gangs. Could the inhumane regimes who order the killings of civilian men, women, and children function like a souped-up version of a street gang where the most violent one becomes the leader, surrounded by those he can order to carry out atrocities, and where corruption is rife? Perhaps another factor this brutal regime and common street gangs might have in common is their epigenetic history of trauma?

By the time you are reading this, the IAFP will have held its 30th anniversary conference with the prescient theme, "Violence as a public global health emergency: preventing, treating and humanising the dangerous mind". Many of the questions raised here in this editorial will have been explored in depth at the conference and we look forward to sharing with you the keynote contributions from it. Issue two of this volume will include the main papers presented at this international conference on violence.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this riveting selection of articles in this issue:

The effects on the body and mind of complex trauma is explored by Leslie Lothstein in his moving essay about a fascinating book just published by the Holocaust survivor, general practitioner, and psychotherapist, Andrew Garwood.

We stay in the past with a glimpse into the earliest stirrings of the Portman Clinic in London, over ninety years ago now, in an article by Moya Sarner, who looks through the eyes of archivist Amy Proctor, as well as clinicians working there. This special clinic, dedicated to the psychoanalytic treatments of those suffering from violence or particularly troubling sexual behaviours since 1933, remains in the UK's public health service, the NHS.

Konstantin Nemirovsky's thoughtful commentary on Carine Minne's paper "Fuses igniting in the consulting room" (published in our last issue) includes patients seen at this clinic, whilst IAFP member Raffaella Hilty's article about a paedophile who erotised his own gaze is a masterclass in sensitive therapeutic work. Jochem Willemsen offers an excellent research article, exploring the types of defence mechanisms most often relied on by psychopathic violent offenders.

Our new managing editor, Annie Pesskin, offers up an interview with a pioneering Glaswegian lawyer, Iain Smith, who has been shaking up the Scottish judicial system with his demands that the effects of adverse childhood experiences be taken seriously by judges in their sentencing efforts. He is asking for "smart justice" that takes into consideration the connection between earlier traumas and subsequent offending.

Our regular column, "A day in the life of ...", is a particularly special contribution to this issue, as it is a moving autobiography of an expert by experience. This man exemplifies what has been referred to in many of the articles in this rich issue of the journal. He was exposed to severe traumas as a child, which led to him becoming a violent offender, then serving a long sentence in prison. By good fortune he was transferred to HMP Grendon Underwood, a prison run along therapeutic community principles, where he was finally able to receive treatment for his victim and perpetrator parts. He is now in the community and determined to ensure that others, youngsters especially, have access to earlier interventions, before catastrophes happen.

As for our regular book reviews, we have Stuart Stevenson's review of Eugene Ellis' book, *The Race Conversation: An Essential Guide to Creating Life-changing Dialogue*, where he describes how Ellis generously invites the reader to join in an exchange. Stevenson wholeheartedly recommends this book due to its appeal to a wide readership and to people at different levels of the spectrum in terms of experience and engagement with the issue of race and how to talk, think, and feel about it in an embodied, as well as an intellectual, way.

Professor Brett Kahr, in our second book review, examines George Makari's scholarly book, *Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia*. In his book, Makari assesses the phenomenon of xenophobia across the centuries, in careful chronological order, from ancient Greece to the present day and

Kahr finds some interesting parallels with Freud's ideas in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

As always, we thank our patients and prisoners who continue to inspire us, our teachers and colleagues who support and encourage us. This time, we would also like to add how important it was for us to be able to meet in person in London at the 30th anniversary IAFP conference and we hope those who attended on Zoom will be able to join in person in Turin, May 2023, for the 31st conference.

It was wonderful to have so many new people attending from different countries and various disciplines. For those of you who couldn't make it, we look forward to presenting many of the papers given in London 2022 in our forthcoming December issue.

We also want to express our solidarity with all those suffering from violence in the different parts of the world and hope that together, with ongoing passion and perseverance, a contribution and difference can be made, no matter how modest.