

## EDITORIAL

### ***Carine Minne and Annie Pesskin***

In the previous issue of this journal, we focused on the theme “From pain to violence” drawing on our stimulating IAFP Conference in Turin, where we referred to the shocking eruption of violence in the Middle East, as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine, noting how many other conflicts are raging across the world, on the background of climate crisis. Alas, these conflicts continue with a vengeance, alongside a rise in political polarisation in many countries (as we write this, Donald Trump’s ear wound following an assassination attempt is barely scabbed over).

A glimmer of hope for the future has emerged with less polarised political governments being voted in recently, for example, in the UK and France. There is no doubt that a confluence of ingredients, including many toxic ones, have come together as the world becomes increasingly divided between a few extremely wealthy individuals and masses of people living in poverty and destitution: conditions befitting to outbreaks of violence which always dehumanise people. The impact on the mental health of humans cannot be overstated. So again, we ask ourselves, how can talking therapies contribute to ameliorating so many such dire situations? It is essential for us to persevere in not taking sides and in contributing to interrupting the cycles of violence—those within us all and those that are external to us.

In this July 2024 issue, we offer our readers a rich mix of articles, beginning with Professor Kahr who makes a link between the historical concept of castration anxiety and acts of murder. Each killing of a human by another human has its own unique complex “fingerprint” and Kahr illustrates this with two particular cases where copious notes happen to have been taken, enabling a degree of psychoanalytic understanding as to why these killings happened. Both perpetrators were severely traumatised in childhood, but as we all know, so many babies and children are traumatised and yet relatively few killings are carried out by them in later life. So, we found that Kahr’s elaboration on Freud’s “death wish”, combined with castration anxiety, in the context of trauma, as being a common denominator in those traumatised individuals that do end up killing another, seems illuminating in this regard.

Dr Simpson’s sensitive article reminds us of the importance of unconscious guilt and punishment-seeking in situations of crime and delinquency, where the guilt arising from navigating the Oedipus complex and the psychical sadistic attacks on the parents, is later substituted via anti-social acts and hence, punishment-seeking. Simpson illustrates this using a film called *Scrapper* (2023) in which a twelve-year-old girl employs powerful omnipotent, manic defences to manage loss, exploring how her criminality protects her against the potent guilt of not having been able to save her mother.

While their article offers a ray of hope for future directions, Celia Taylor and Jack Blake's article brings a starker reality into focus. They describe the therapeutic community (TC) model, its theoretical basis, and how complex organisational dynamics within and without the National Health Service led to the end of a particular TC unit called Millfields in the UK, which treated forensic psychiatry patients. As anxieties became increasingly mobilised by both Covid lockdowns and the Black Lives Matter movement, the Trust in charge of the TC (but not involved in running it day-to-day) became more bureaucratic and authoritarian, leading to its eventual demise.

On the related theme of how to keep people safe, under what circumstances should we see a forensic patient in private practice? Stuart Stevenson's article, "Navigating a broken mind: Psychodynamic psychotherapy in private practice with a male who has committed a sexual offence", tackles this critical issue in a sensitive and containing way providing a helpful guide for clinicians like some of our readers who might be considering this move.

We stay in the realm of private practice with Marcus Evans' article, where defences are again at the fore, in his examination of how a gender-dysphoric teenage boy employed eroticisation as a defence against separation. Evans' skilful use of the countertransference was key in his ability to help the boy with his suffering.

Our next article in this issue stays with the theme of countertransference. Written by the late psychoanalyst Sira Dermen (BPAS, 1942–2023), her article, "Psychoanalytic perspectives on traumatised children: The Armenian experience" has two pervasive themes: first, the discovery of the applicability of psychoanalysis in seemingly unpropitious circumstances, and second, the unsurprising fact that psychoanalysis requires a social milieu which does not contradict its essential values.

It seems fitting that two criminologists, Deborah Jump and Paul Gray, put a psychoanalytic perspective into practice in their article, "Partners in crime: Integrating forensic psychotherapy into criminological discourse", which uses the detailed clinical vignette of a violent youth to illustrate how a forensic psychotherapy lens can deepen understanding and offer more holistic approaches to rehabilitation and prevention strategies to combat serious youth violence.

As to our regular features, we have the host of our next IAFP 2025 Conference, Dr Daniel Riordan, based in Sydney, Australia, to thank for our "A day in the life of ..." in which he explores the challenges of bringing psychotherapeutic attitudes into forensic psychiatry settings. Our book reviews are by Leslie Lothstein (*Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us*) and Sandra Grant (*Cambridge Guide to Psychodynamic Psychotherapy*), while Annie Pesskin has written our arts review (a podcast series entitled *The Witch Trials of J.K. Rowling*).

We honour the late Coline Covington and Sira Dermen in our obituaries section.

We would like to draw your attention to our new feature, the “Letters to the editor” page, where we hope you might write to us to further discuss any article which has piqued your interest in this, or any previous, issues.

As always, on behalf of all our contributors, we would like to thank the patients and prisoners who continue to inspire us and help us towards better understanding of their plights. We also thank our teachers and colleagues and the support from each other in these alarming times. We especially hold on to the hope that the atrocious suffering of all the people caught up in apparently intractable conflicts will be eased through the art of listening and being heard. We believe this is the only way of “rehumanising the dehumanised”. We are grateful to those brave enough to be working behind the scenes to enable dialogues to happen.