

EDITORIAL

Hessel Willemsen, Wayne Bodkin, and Massimo De Mari

After nearly seven years—since the journal’s beginnings in July 2019—*The International Journal of Forensic Psychotherapy* finds itself in the familiar position of having to change in order to continue. Journals, like institutions, have their own unconscious life: they are sustained not only by scholarship but by the persistence, imagination, and often unacknowledged labour of those who hold them together.

Carine Minne, as founding editor-in-chief, Jessica Collier, as joint founding editor-in-chief until 2021, and Annie Pesskin, as managing editor from 2022 onwards, have done precisely this. Under the auspices of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy—founded by Estela V. Welldon in 1991—they have worked to give the journal its shape, its seriousness, and its place in the academic and forensic world. The Board has now accepted their wish to step down, and has appointed us as co-editors. We do so with gratitude, and with the reassurance that Carine and Annie will remain close, especially through this transitional moment.

One of the journal’s aims is “to provide an anchor for scholarly articles and reflections” on forms of social, extreme, sexual, terrorist violence, and genocide. The word *anchor* matters. We live in a time in which violence feels less like an exception and more like a climate. The pandemic, the resurgence of wars, and the erosion of collective hope have left younger generations facing a world that seems increasingly precarious and brutal.

We are witnessing violent behaviour emerging earlier, alongside the expansion of psychological distress and substance abuse. The question is no longer simply “Why does violence occur?” but “What is happening to the societies in which violence becomes thinkable, even ordinary?” Forensic psychotherapy, with its attention to unconscious compulsive repetition, trauma, and the limits of containment, has something urgent to contribute—not only to treatment, but to prevention, and perhaps to understanding what we are becoming.

We will follow the editorial line established by our predecessors, while also bringing our own contribution from the first issue of 2026, when we will outline our programme and ideas for the journal’s future.

This final issue of 2025 gathers papers presented at the thirty-third IAFP Conference in Sydney, Australia: “Locating the Disturbance in Violent Offending: Self, System, Society”, in 2025. The title itself suggests that violence is never located in only one place; it is always distributed—between individuals, institutions, and cultures.

Timothy Keogh offers first a historical overview of psychoanalytic research in forensic work, tracing the field’s long effort to understand violence

beyond surface description. He then proposes a model of personality structure as a continuum—from autistic to psychopathic—which may provide a more nuanced framework for both comprehension and treatment. Keogh also reviews Pamela Nathan's book *Pain Bleeds Crime*, which brings forensic psychotherapy to life through narrative accounts from prison and beyond.

Gwen Adshead writes about countertransference, that unavoidable emotional weather in therapeutic work, made particularly fierce when patients are unstable or personality-disordered. Her article brings into view the ways staff in psychiatric settings are drawn into powerful relational dynamics, where the professional task is not only to treat but to survive the encounter with the patient without losing one's capacity to think.

Andrew Carroll and Wayne Bodkin begin with the fable of *The Scorpion and the Frog*, asking what we assume we already know about individuals with personality disorder. How much is taken for granted—by clinicians, by judges—about inevitability, about character, about fate? Paying attention to Australian legal cases, they argue for a more complex understanding of personality disorder, one that reshapes both therapeutic possibility and notions of responsibility.

Anne Aiyegbusi, recently elected President of the IAFP, extends this exploration inward, towards the perpetrator's internal world. Violence, she reminds us, is often a repetition: those who harm others may be re-enacting what was once done to them. The danger is that therapeutic staff themselves can be pulled into these unconscious dramas, taking up positions of victim, persecutor, or helpless bystander, as though violence demands an audience as much as an act.

Pamela Nathan describes the work of Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment (CASSE), an Australian organisation grounded in psychoanalytic principles. Her starting point is transgenerational trauma—pain that has not been processed, and therefore returns. Through clinical cases she considers the absence of paternal function, and the way violence may operate as a defence against unbearable psychic pain.

Sarah Stevenson revisits personality disorder from cultural and gender perspectives, linking diagnostic categories to violence, stigma, and treatment. She reminds us of the need for professionals to reflect on their work through supervision and reflective practice, so that the clinician does not become another silent participant in the cycle of misunderstanding and projection.

Jessica Collier's article, "*Misogynart*: Challenging perceptions of women, violence, and identity through forensic art psychotherapy", offers a striking and original contribution to contemporary forensic psychotherapy by examining how cultural imagery shapes the way violent women are seen—and how they come to see themselves. Introducing the concept of "misogynart", Collier illuminates the often punitive, moralistic, and reductive visual narratives imposed upon women, particularly mothers, who commit acts of violence. Through detailed clinical material, this article demonstrates how forensic art psychotherapy can open a space in which unmentalized experience, denial, guilt, and grief may be symbolised and transformed. In doing so,

the work challenges both societal and institutional assumptions about female violence, identity, and responsibility, while underscoring the unique capacity of images to contain and mediate otherwise unspeakable psychic realities.

Finally, James Rymer O'Malley introduces the next IAFP Conference, to be held in Gozo, Malta, from 28–30 May, 2026. Plenary speakers include Anna Motz on scapegoating and Andy West, who draws on personal family experience of prison and his work teaching philosophy in prisons to explore incarceration, moral complexity, and personal transformation, themes also reflected in his memoir *The Life Inside*, adapted for BBC One as *Waiting for the Out* (broadcast January 2026).

Although violence can be transformed, contained, even prevented, when its underlying forces are understood and addressed, it does not, in the world as we find it, simply disappear. A journal such as this exists because violence persists—and so does the need to think about it: carefully, painfully, and together.