

National Membership Committee on Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, Inc.

Associated with The Clinical Social Work Federation

Spring Summer 2002

President's Message

The past six months have been an exceptional experience for me as I have been, simultaneously, both President of this organization and Conference Director for the national meetings held in Chicago in March 2002. At first glance, this may seem like too much for anyone to have taken on, in addition to a regular practice. Perhaps no one was more surprised than myself to discover an extraordinary benefit that "came with the territory." The convergence of these two roles powerfully impressed me with the meaning and importance of the word "National." The experience was one of a kind of warmth that can be felt when one feels profoundly connected to others.

The name of our group is the National Membership Committee on Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work. According to the dictionary, it means, "Of, or relating to 'an organized whole, [like] a people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language.'" As President of this organization, however, I am acutely aware of the regional differences. The needs, potentials, and dynamic distinctions of the areas represented in our group. We have large groups concentrated in urban centers. We have smaller groups in smaller cities, and groups in areas where the geography makes communication within the area an obstacle. Some areas have sound financial status and ongoing programs they fund. Some haven't the funds or the access to facilities for programming. So many differences, such disparities in need. I wonder in what way we actually do fit the definition of national.



NMCOP PRESIDENT

Barbara Berger, PhD

And then, there we were, together, at the conference in March. We were a national group of psychoanalytically informed social workers from all over the country (and Canada) looking for more knowledge, in a warm and inspiring environment. We could debate the theories, as well as present the newest and the classic thinking and techniques. There was a great sense of pride and dignity in our professional selves, our organization, and our discipline as a whole. Like-minded people expressed their pleasure at the quality of the learning experience. Each participant came, alone or with colleagues, for the purpose of learning and teaching in areas of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Each of us a practicing clinical social worker, from collegial and regional groups,

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FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

Judy Ann Kaplan

Especially after September 11th, I feel strongly that we need to develop better ways to communicate with one another in a timely fashion.

Although we in the NMCOP are beginning to use the Internet as a vehicle for communication (e.g., a therapist's request for helpful responses about her patient who could not travel after September 11th; a colleague who sent trauma information), I feel we need to develop a quick proactive way to deliver information and articles, to plan and publicize our internal and external events, and to get feedback from colleagues. We can share useful and relevant information at the national and chapter levels via newsletters, questions, and news related to social work psychoanalysis, both to and from readers.

I urge us to stay in touch via e-mail and the NMCOP list serve. I hope those members who do not have e-mail will consider arranging with a colleague who does to pass on announcements and information he/she receives. Many of us are not yet familiar with or comfortable using e-mail and list serves, so we will need to be patient with each other. Let's begin to utilize the new tools to keep in touch.

I hope the NMCOP will develop into a community of social work analysts linked to our Newsletter, linked to our area chairs, linked to the Board and linked to each other — the membership. Our objective is to deepen our understanding of social work psychoanalysts' needs in different regions — to sustain a number of dialogues.

We hope to improve our understanding of your needs and cultural contexts; to share knowledge that will help us facilitate publication by more authors from more regions of the country in our newsletter and Journal; to seek new talent to participate as readers/reviewers of books as well as to write about areas of interest; to encourage our members, old and new, to write on issues you consider important; to acquire news of scientific developments and debates from all regions of the country that could appear on our list serve; and to engage with social work psychoanalysts for the development of projects such as conferences and workshops.

At this point, we ask you for suggestions and advice on how to make our list serve most productive and communicative so we can be responsive to your needs, to represent social work psychoanalysts as fully as possible. Our wish is to reflect with accuracy social work psychoanalytic activity wherever it is taking place.

We need to stress the increasing relevance of psycho-

analytic thought to the wide range of problems faced in clinical social work practice. We need to break new ground in the field of psychoanalytic social work. We want to encourage active, critical thinking. We also want to encourage writing and publishing by psychoanalytic social workers. Now is the time when we, as clinical practitioners, must communicate our views to the field-at-large. This is imperative for the advancement of psychoanalysis as well as for the visibility of the clinical social work psychoanalyst in the new millennium.

We hope to encourage writing. Let us know your news, your publications in journals, social work journals, and books you have written or edited. Let us know if you are leading or attending writing workshops.

We want to encourage research. Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy face challenges from many quarters, particularly from the external communities. The challenge from these fronts is: "Is psychoanalytic treatment effective?" There is a divergence of opinion as to whether empirical research provides the answer. Let us know of your research endeavors.

We want to meet the challenge of psychoanalytic pluralism. Common ground or inclusiveness gives us cohesiveness; pluralism gives us dynamic force. If you are involved in any of these contemporary psychology perspectives, attachment theory, etc., plus neurobiology or developmental theory, let us know. Comparative psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, its assumptive base and its implications for technique, form a continuing theme that we would like to hear about.

Let us hear from clinicians practicing in a wide range of settings, and with a diversity of populations: children, adolescents, young adults, senior adults—across all life stages, as well as about work on gender, age, and sexual preference.

Let us hear about trauma and populations who have been severely traumatized; those who present severe pathologies, such as those resulting from childhood sexual abuse, family violence, substance abuse, positive HIV, depression, and eating disorders.

The increasing relevance of psychoanalytic thought is demonstrated by many program elements relating to the social and political universe. We want to meet the challenge of cultural diversity. We look forward to your active participation in our rich and stimulating psychoanalytic social work community, newsletter and list serve.

See President-Elect on page 14...

from the Editor...



Donna Tarver,
Editor

Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the highly successful Chicago Conference — Barbara Berger, Conference Director, Judith Newnan, Program Chair and the many other contributors. We have included some highlights and pictures from the conference and will be using others in future newsletters.

In a moment of feeling proud of the conference and its success, I was reminded of an insight given me by David Phillips at a moment when I was complaining of not receiving as much material as I wanted for the Newsletter. David reminded me that the NMCOP — a young organization with a relatively small National Membership and solely volunteer conference organization — puts on a conference every two years that is the equal of national conferences of organizations decades older, many times larger with substantial conference budgets. This is possible because our organization is made up of a group of multi-talented, extremely dedicated individuals who are willing to join together for two years of planning,

mustering resources, coordination, and execution of mostly thankless tasks, hours and hours of time freely given, whose sole reward is participation in four days of a successful conference and appreciating their own job well done. This is a gift to us all and we must remember not to take it for granted.

The Newsletter welcomes reader's letters, articles and opinions on topics of the day, clinical issues, book reviews, notices or reports of conferences, and news of interest to our membership. The Newsletter encourages social workers that have an interest in writing to use the Newsletter as a vehicle for converting their interest into the writing process.

Thanks to all contributors to this issue: Karen Baker, Barbara Berger, Anne Marie Dooley, Margaret Frank, Judy Kaplan, Lynn Lawrence, Tarpley Mann Long, Marilyn Schiff, and Diana Siskind. ■

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Ambassadors Program

Ambassadors Program

If your area wishes to have a speaker, or if you wish to be a speaker (if you will be in an area where we have members and you are interested in presenting during your stay), please contact:

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Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work Conference Held in Chicago March 8, 9, 10

By Karen Baker, MSW

In March, the National Membership Committee on Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work (NMCOP) met in the windy city of Chicago for its 8th national conference. Not only was this conference well represented by psychoanalytic social workers and social work psychoanalysts but other mental health disciplines were also represented which added to the depth and richness of the conference experience. It was an exciting and stimulating four days of papers, panels and discourse amongst new and old friends and colleagues from all over the United States.

The conference began in its historic fashion with an all day pre-conference workshop that focused on supervision. This workshop was planned and organized by the National Study Group on Social Work and Psychoanalysis of the NMCOP and was chaired by Jerrold Brandell, PhD. This pre-conference is absolutely wonderful and is one of my favorite parts of these meetings because of its original and unique set up. The morning commenced with a theoretical presentation accompanied by a clinical presentation and discussion. The afternoon consisted of three clinical supervisors who conducted a live supervision in which a brave clinical social worker presents three process recordings to the supervisors who then offered their responses to the clinical material. This exchange was done in a respectful and sensitive manner that invited interesting dialogue and an exchange of ideas.

This year the pre-conference focus was "Violence in our lives: Issues in Supervision" and featured two well-respected analysts from Ann Arbor, Jack and Kerry Kelly Novick. In their presentation they stimulated our thinking and brought forward a psychoanalytic understanding of violence through their work on the development and treatment of sadomasochism as it relates to two kinds of conflict resolution and self-regulation. One kind is the open system, which is based on pleasure, competence, creativity and mastery, while the second, the closed system, is characterized by blame, omnipotent beliefs and sadomasochism. Their theoretical presentation came alive as it was applied to the clinical case material presented.

It was a long, fascinating and rich day that set the tone for the remainder of the conference. During the days that followed participants were offered many thought provoking and interesting papers, panels and workshops on a myriad of topics that included clinical writing, clinical social work education, the future of child

psychoanalysis, the impact of gender on the analytic endeavor, interracial adoption and so much more. Jessica Benjamin, PhD, and Arnold Goldberg, MD, were two of the plenary speakers. Dr. Benjamin discussed the development of intersubjectivity within the clinical encounter. Through clinical material she discussed the transference and countertransference dilemmas that occur in the course of treatment that may result in the "two ness" of power struggles and the effort that is required to re-establish "third ness." The "third ness" is the psychic space that is created between the subjects allowing for mutual recognition and authentic change.

As a five-time winner of the Benjamin Rush Award for Excellence in teaching at Rush Medical College, Dr. Goldberg did not disappoint his audience as he illustrated through clinical material how the form of a patient's presentation can override the content, in essence the form of the patient's chaotic presentation becomes the content to be witnessed by the therapist/analyst which then allows for reflection and interpretation. The chaos is a state of self-medication, which serves to cover rage, depression or other painful affects.

In addition, the NMCOP hosted some special events. On Thursday evening Joyce Edwards, MSSW and Joseph Paolmbo, MA were given awards for Lifetime Achievement and contributions to the interface between psychoanalysis and social work. An honor presentation for student papers and the reading of selected essays were new events at the conference.

Let it be noted that in addition to having our minds stimulated, our hearts were filled with the friendship of our colleagues and there was much to enjoy in the city of Chicago, from jazz to museums, theater to shopping on Michigan Avenue and scrumptious places to dine. All in all it was a packed four days leaving all of us satiated, inspired and re-fueled for the important work we do every day. ■

Karen E. Baker, Michigan Area Chair, may be contacted at 734.996.8185 or email - kembaker1@comcast.net.

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*See pages 12 & 13 for
photos from the Conference...*

Area Representative's

Corner

Report of the New York Area Representative

Our joint plans with the New York State Society are progressing quite well. The tentative schedule for 2002-2003, roughly structured around the publication dates of "The Clinician," begins with a Spring article by Jane Hall. Next will be a Fall workshop in Manhattan and a correlative article, both by Diana Siskind. Beyond that, we will have articles and workshops in the Winter and Spring, with a full series in 2003-2004 as well. We will be locating future workshops in other parts of the Greater New York Metropolitan area: Long Island, Queens, Brooklyn, and nearer parts of Upstate New York. If you would like to participate in this program as author, workshop leader, or host of a workshop (30-35 attendees), please leave me a message at 212.255.9358.

New York is hoping to disperse 250 copies of the Sanville, Edward book. Plans include: new professionals, leaders of workshops on the basics of case work, teachers

at institutes and schools of Social Work, and a tie-in with mentorship activities. Again, let me know of your ideas.

Future meetings of interest in the New York area are:

May 11, 2002 "Cooperative Dialogue: The Clinical Process." Annual Conference of the New York State Society of Clinical Social Work.

September 21, 2002 "Our World One Year Later: Implications for Clinical Social Work Practice." Co-sponsored by the PhD Program in Clinical Social Work of the New York University, Shirley M. Ehren-Krantz School of Social Work and the New York State Society of Clinical Social Work.

At our sophisticated Chinese takeout dinner meeting during the Chicago Conference, Barbara Berger not only sated our appetites but also our eyes, with her apartment's high level view of the sparking Chicago lakefront. Led by Dale Dingledine's informal presentation of the NMCOP 3/6/02 Board meeting minutes, we discussed the Sanville, Edward book distribution and the Board's resolution of the impress fund issue, by which per member rebates to chapters will be distributed as in the past, but Area Chairs will submit a report accounting for their spending in the fourth quarter of the following year.

Judy Kaplan presented an impassioned plea for augmented communication, particularly using the list serve.

Anne Gearity personally delivered packets to each chair, including material which should prove very useful in our separate membership efforts.

Speaking for myself, I found the presence of Anne, Dale, Bill Meyer and Donna Tarver (in her newsletter persona) confirmed the esteem in which the Board holds the Area Chairs. ■

Marilyn Schiff, New York Area Representative, may be contacted at 212.255.9358.

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Crying at the Movies (A Film Memoir)

by Madelon Sprengnether

Graywolf Press, Saint Paul, MN
2002, 244 pages, \$15.00

(Reviewed by Lynn Lawrence, CSW)

At a recent production I attended of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, the audience sat rapt before a stage where smoke and flames were devouring the minarets and basilicas of Moscow's skyline. Met titles translated the Russian troops' chorus: "Our nation may be disfigured but our spirit is unharmed." The audience was sobbing. I don't know whether it was fate that intervened to have me review Madelon Sprengnether's "Crying at the Movies," but the timing could not have been better.

The author was nine years old when her father drowned in a boating accident. Although present she "missed" the event, unable to recall what happened. What she did know was that her life was fractured into "before" and "after," the latter characterized by an absence of feeling, the psychic numbing we know as being inflicted by an event of unspeakable magnitude.

In Cathy Caruth's interview with Robert J. Lifton, the latter states that in trauma of this scope, a second self is created. "In extreme trauma one's sense of self is radically altered — it shatters whatever one had that was prospective in the past" (Caruth, p.137) — hence the cleavage into "before and after." It's not a totally new self that is created, it's the self that emerges from the trauma, a form of "doubling" (Caruth p.137). Sprengnether herself speaks about not paying attention to her body's distress calls, as if she had two selves like a "double exposure" (Sprengnether, p.20).



In extreme trauma, what one is left with are the images. As all of us know, in the aftermath of 9/11, what we and our patients keep seeing are the planes hitting and towers falling, over and over. Sprengnether states, "In the place of narrative, I had only an image" (Sprengnether, p.5). As therapists, Lifton continues, we listen, and witness the patient's story, and then help construct a narrative which involves their pain, the cause of their conflicts and also the source of their knowledge." Healing occurs when the traumatized self is reintegrated (Caruth, p.143).

Sprengnether's book is a chronicle of how watching movies helped her to heal her fractured self and ultimately to mourn her father's death. The films she selected resonate with various aspects of her trauma and post-traumatic history. This is an excruciatingly personal biography in the hands of a very skilled writer (she has a PhD in English literature) who unwittingly sought both solace and identification in the company of books about orphans and catharsis in movies about love, loss and accidents.

It was seventeen years after her father's death that Sprengnether had her first convulsive sobbing episode while watching *Panther Panchali* (Satyajit Ray). Re-traumatization comes as it does, unbidden and unprepared for, it assaults. Now twenty-six, married and pregnant, her unconscious fears about being a parent and losing one come together in witnessing this searing film of

unmitigated loss, helplessness and despair. The author did not know what hit her, but was swept away in a tidal wave of grief. Twenty-five years of movie-going began. Psychoanalytically informed, with a moving acknowledgement to someone we can assume was her therapist, this memoir covers all the relationships in her life i.e. marriages, affairs, that are reenactments of the loss of her father and its consequences. Split screens not only work for the movies, they work for the author whose style weaves associatively from the screen to what it evokes from the past or provokes in the present.

The book is divided into four segments each a kind of "seismograph" of where the author is on this journey of self-knowledge. This instrument, which senses the minutest movements of the earth has special meaning for Sprengnether as her father manufactured and installed them around the world. Part 1, "Breaking Down, Breaking Open" 1969-77) with films *Panther Panchali* (Ray), *House of Cards* (Lessac), *Solaris* (Tarkovsky) have to do with re-traumatization. "Will" (1993-1994) with films *The Piano* (Campion), *Fearless* (Weir) and *Cement Garden* (Birkin) are about the working through process. "From the Center" (1994-1997) with films *Shadowlands* (Attenborough) and *Blue* (Krzysztof) center on resolution and ability to grieve. All ready her for the last chapter, *Shadowlove* 1998, where she is able to have the luxury of experiencing the death of her mother in a "normal" way.

Her analysis of "why the movies," is lovely. Her beloved father made home movies. He adored his family and loved to record all their good times together, from behind the camera. By cathecting movies, she could pretend he was still behind the

See *Crying* on page 10...

Despair and the Return of Hope: Echoes of Mourning in Psychotherapy

by Peter Shabad

Jason Aronson Inc., 2001

(Reviewed by Anne Marie Dooley)

The terrorist attacks of September 11th and their aftermath left our country reeling. In New York City, no one was immune from feelings of loss, fear, and a stunning awareness of their mortality. A sense of safety was disrupted; illusions of invulnerability were shattered. Briefly, palpably, the arrogance and harsh impatience characteristic of the city gave way to a quiet, gentle, generous, and extremely vulnerable community sharing a collective grief. Life seemed at once more fragile and more finite; certainly not something to be taken for granted.

Despair and the Return of Hope was published in this climate, in the memorable month of September 2001. The timing was perfect. This is a book about recovering from trauma. Not only the catastrophic kind, but the more insidious, cumulative trauma children suffer at the hands of their parents. While typically unrecognized and unacknowledged, the disillusionment resulting from these early experiences, and the defenses erected against them have a crippling effect.

This is also a book about the complexity of the human psyche and the healing nature of psychotherapy. At this time of heightened vulnerability for us all, Peter Shabad offers his unique vision of an ethic of mutuality, an inter-personal bridge constructed ideally during early development, and belatedly in the therapeutic relationship. His concepts are all-encompassing. Integrating psychoanalytic and existential perspectives, he addresses life's "big questions":

mortality, morality, meaning, love, envy, generosity, spite etc. as they relate to the process of recovery. Yet like a true master, he offers his readers the distillation of his considerable intelligence in a lucid, accessible, and highly engaging manner that invariably has clinical relevance.

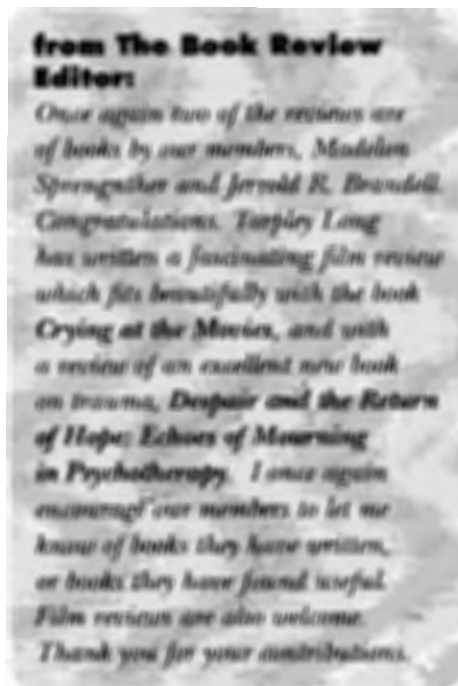
One chapter, for example, describes the "passivity, resentment, bitterness, and sense of entitlement that can accrue when a person's hurts and burdens are neglected for too long. Due to self-protective defenses that inhibit an openness toward others, disowned wishes can become transformed into entitled needs. Such needs, with their implicit demands, do coercive violence to the give-and-take of human relationships." Immediately, one is both

reminded of those patients whose tyranny of entitlement challenge the therapeutic relationship, and renewed by the fresh perspective offered.

Indeed, throughout the book, (and validating the choice of title), clinical stalemates that leave us frustrated and even despairing at times, are addressed in a way that restores hope. Peter Shabad demonstrates how to embrace the complexity of our patients' subjective experiences by providing new meaning to dynamics long familiar. For example, expanding on Freud's view that the repetition compulsion is an active attempt to master trauma, the author adds that it is also an effort to communicate and "memorialize prior experiences of suffering by showing (repeating in action) rather than telling them," thereby holding onto a reality long denied. Understanding resistance in this light is equally helpful. "Alongside a patient's initial hope to change, there is also an underlying dignity of the intact self that resists the unspoken coerciveness of therapeutic change, and that clutches the unwanted suffering child of the symptom tightly to its breast." Such humane, respectful, and compassionate explanations offer clinical direction and healing.

Just how such healing occurs, and how we as therapists can help our patients live more fulfilled lives, comprises the final section of this book. The route toward self-acceptance is laid out, but the journey is a difficult one. The author competently guides his readers through the process of letting go and mourning unmet early wishes. Particular attention is paid to the nature of the therapeutic relationship. Ideas developed earlier in the book about superego development that integrate psychoanalytic thought (a synthesis

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Diana Siskind

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR



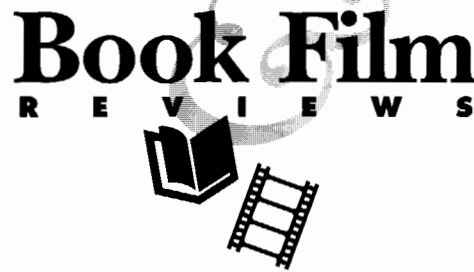
Of Mice and Metaphors: Therapeutic Storytelling with Children

by Jerrold R. Brandell

Basic Books NYC, 2000

(Reviewed by Margaret G. Frank,
LICSW, BCD)

I have read this book as a clinician of adults and children, a teacher and supervisor, a life long student of evolving theory and it's capacity to inform practice and last but not least as a friend of Jerry Brandell's. When I saw the title of the book I smiled and recalled reading Freud's case study The Rat Man during my training years. It was a case which aroused considerable anxiety in my student group. The thought which prompted the smile was that Dr. Brandell was not going to clobber the readers with the unconscious. Surely, mice are less "frightening" than rats. While not his intention in naming his book Dr. Brandell writes with clarity and order which can address the anxiety most learners experience as they approach the complicated realm of psychotherapy with children. Most of us who have taught know how many people in mental health settings proceed "by the seat of my pants" in working with children even while they are quite well informed about adult psychology. My suspicion about this state of pseudo-ignorance is that to open the doors to the drive, conflict, impulse life of child patients involves admitting that we too, as children, were not pristine and innocent. We all savor a romantic myth about childhood, protecting ourselves from what we knew, understood and felt. Dr. Brandell demonstrates by his very being how child therapy can and must be conducted by a knowing therapist who is comfortable with the stories he seeks to hear. Comfort



c o n t i n u e d

involves familiarity and ease within the being of the therapist. Ease prompts the ability to use the space in the spielraum, or play space. We devote this space to learning the child's story, to becoming a trustworthy coinvestigator or storyteller and to lending ourselves to providing corrective object experiences.

Dr. Brandell outlines an approach useful for most troubled children. He prompts his young patients to (talk about themselves) by telling a story. This approach can provide a safety and distance for self revelation without awareness. As a member of the story telling team he uses the metaphors provided by the child patient to correct and possibly add to their perceptions of themselves and others and their outlook on life. This book is rich with clinical examples which demonstrate the frame of this clinical approach as well as the range of ages and emotional states in children who have benefited from it.

As a teacher I found myself wanting to have an exchange with the author about a number of questions: do children benefit from understanding that is not made explicit in the form of interpretation? I might wish to discuss the differences therapists might have in "understanding" the child's material. I would express my worry that he presents a picture of having the correct understanding, I can see my own students anxiety titer rise.

My greatest worry would involve the child therapists who are always seeking recipes for their work to quiet their discomfort about not yet knowing. In this book they are presented with refined knowledge of depth and range in the being of a wise therapist, yet I worry that students might use it like a recipe and not seek out their own creativity, as the author has.

I viewed Dr. Brandell's material through lenses formed by my own studies of psychoanalytic developmental object relations theory. Derived from ego psychology we view all behavior as story telling — a depiction of the formation of self and other (object) scenarios. I recall in the early days of my own child practice a seven year old boy rushed into my office, breathless, all of five minutes late. He told me that he had to empty the waste paper basket before he left school and that he fell down the garbage shoot. He managed to catch himself on the ledge to the second floor — got the door open and ran to my office. I recall wondering should I address the "lies" in his story. It then dawned on me that I was hearing the truth and so I replied that it sounded like a very scary trip and it was wonderful that could rescue himself and get here. I have thought about all the unaddressed themes in that anecdote and upon reading Brandell's book I have wondered what the exchange would have looked like had we had a storytelling alliance. But with or without such a structure I would like to underscore the new object experiences present; An adult who listens and discerns feelings and life themes not clear spoken; an adult who listens so carefully that he can use the child's metaphors and does not (most of the time) have to impose his own agenda; an adult who can weather exposure to anger and

sadness and help the child patient bring such affect to a manageable size. These are rare and precious experiences not easily offered by the troubled and beleaguered people who “nurtured” the children we treat. ■

Margaret G. Frank, MSSW, LICSW, BCD, Member, 1962; Secretary, 1986-89; Co-Chairwoman: Child and Adolescent Subcommittee, 1983-85 and 1991-1993. Member: Children and Adolescents Subcommittee, 1979 to present; Liaison Committee, 1969-70. Institute Instructor, 1976, 1987; Institute Program Committee, 1994-95. Conference participant, 1964 -94. Private Practice, Boston Massachusetts. Lecturer and seminar leader, Guild for Continuing Education-Boston, MA. Program Coordinator - Advanced Program in Child and Adolescent Therapy, Boston University. Board, Faculty and Education Committee, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis. Certificate in Psychoanalysis. MIP, 1990. Adjunct Professor, Program for Advanced Clinical Training, Hunter College, 1980-84. Professor and Director of Treatment Methods, Smith College School of Social Work, 1979-1982. Publications. Recipient Distinguished Practitioner Award, National Academy of Practice, 1983. Past President, American Orthopsychiatric Association. Member: NASW, ACSW, AAPSC, NAP, NMCOP. Past President of National Membership Committee in Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, Inc.

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The Newsletter welcomes reviews of books and films relevant to membership concerns, and members who author books and/or chapters are encouraged to contact Diana Siskind, Book Review Editor, upon publication.
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“The Sweet Hereafter”: Where Everything is Strange and New

(Reviewed by Tarpley Mann Long, MSW)

Two films having a theme of parents coping with the sudden loss of a child were released in 2001. “In the Bedroom” and “The Son’s Room” were acclaimed by both critics and audiences alike, yet neither film moved me like the 1997 film “The Sweet Hereafter.” Based upon a novel by Russell Banks, “The Sweet Hereafter” is a collaboration between Canadian film director/screenwriter, Atom Egoyen, and Banks, who got the idea for the novel after he read an article in a newspaper about a school bus accident in a small town in South Texas in which many of the town’s children were killed. In the wake of the tragedy, some families pursued lawsuits that eventually tore the community apart.

The first scene of the movie shows three richly textured boards, bonded together. They seem plucked from an infinite timeline, for we see no beginning or end to them. Wood, whose holding energy is lignin, cellulose and bark, is a product that is constantly in flux, never stable. It grows fungus, changes by swelling and cracking and lightens and darkens. By nature you can’t control it and its durability is uncertain. It won’t last forever and, like human beings, eventually turns to dust. Independent milled boards are purposeless on their own, but bonded they give strength to form structures, like floors and walls. Next, the viewer sees Mitchell Stevens, Esq., his wife, Klara, and their daughter, Zoe, lying in bed together. Like the tongue and groove of the wood floor, they fit together to form another kind of structure: family.

The citizens of Sam Dent, New

Hampshire, are wrecked by grief over the loss of so many of their children in a school bus accident when into their midst comes a stranger, a “pied piper,” who interrupts their mourning. Mitch feels powerless over his own daughter’s drug addiction, but diverts himself from this fact by trying to mobilize the parents of the accident victims into ferreting out who is to blame for the tragedy and suing them — the company that made the guard rails that broke when the bus slid off the highway, the bus manufacturer, the government agency that did not drain the quarry where the bus sank and the children drowned — any entity the community can point a finger toward and say, “if it weren’t for the negligence of X, our children would still be alive.”

As psychoanalysts and psychotherapists we witness how parents nurture and/or inflict damage upon their children. “The Sweet Hereafter” is witness to the nurturing role children play in the lives of their parents and other significant adults (the school bus driver in the film, for example) and the damage children can inflict upon their parents, causing the parents to re-experience what psychoanalyst Charles Brenner calls the “three calamities of childhood”: loss of the object, loss of the object’s love and body damage.

Losing a child to death is different from losing parents or friends to death. Speaking through the voice of Billy Ansel, a widower whose two children die in the accident, Banks writes: “The loss of a child is wickedly unnatural, profoundly against the order of things, flies in the face of biology, contradicts history, even violates basic physics. It is the final contrary.” As thinking adults, we believe that we separate from our children and we speak bravely of

See Sweet Hereafter on page 11...

of classical, object relations and attachment theories) with a philosophical/spiritual need to “live for someone beyond oneself” are brought into the treatment. New emphasis is placed developmentally on generosity, emotionality, and a mutuality that invites patients’ to authentically feel that they matter to the therapist and that their presence in his/her life enriches it.

Dr. Shabad begins the book with a poignant story about his mother’s response to his childhood nightmare. In this way, he introduces the more complicated issues developed throughout the book, including the notion that bearing witness to suffering at the moment it occurs offers a reality, a consolation, and a compassion “that inoculates that experience against traumatization” (p.115). He ends with the statement that “psychotherapy has provided humankind with the tools to fulfill Kierkegaard’s (1843) ethical injunction of self-acceptance, ‘to choose oneself.’”

With this book Peter Shabad makes a valuable addition to these tools. He is a gifted writer, and quite obviously, an avid reader. His language is rich, evocative and as pleasing to read as a finely crafted literary work. His ideas are powerful ones that resonate deeply in our lives and in our clinical practice. This book is a tribute to lives lived fully, creatively, ethically, with passion and a generosity of spirit. Bravo! ■

Anne Marie Dooley, CSW, supervises and maintains a private practice in New York City and Nyack, NY. She was a clinical Editor for a professional publisher, has a particular interest in working with parents, individually and in groups, and since 9/11, she has worked with the NYPD and the New York Disaster Counseling Coalition.

screen. Her analytic work goes on for almost half a century to achieve other revelations. It is a herculean and brave piece of work. In the end, Sprengnether accomplishes her task. She is able to construct the narrative to the trauma healing the part of her that split off.

I have one major reservation about the book — the degree of self-disclosure was jolting. One expects personal material in a book that is a memoir, but the extent of self-disclosure seemed excessive to me.

This was however, a very good book to read post Sept 11th. In the aftermath, people ventured albeit tentatively, to the theatre, to the opera, and to the movies and were surprised by how much they “felt.” Newspapers reported that audiences experienced a tremendous sense of relief, how people cried at the opera, or lost themselves in the hysteria of *Noises Off*, for example. The aftermath of 9/11 will be with us for the

rest of our lives. We have all been and continue to be traumatized by that event and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. The public event has uncorked private traumas that may have been dormant for years. Alternatively, many have sealed over, claiming they are “back to normal” until the sound of a fire engine, or a cloud of smoke leaves them running for cover. Crying in the movies can be a wonderful thing. ■

References

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Lynn Lawrence, CSW, is the author of articles and other book and movie reviews. She maintains a private practice in Queens and Manhattan. She is a graduate of the New York School of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and of the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia.

Aims & Purposes of the NMCOP

- To further the understanding of psychoanalytic theory and practice within the profession of social work and to the public.
- To promote a unique and special identity for all social work professionals engaged in psychoanalytically informed practice.
- To work for equal recognition and professional parity for qualified psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists in social work with other mental health disciplines through education, legislation, and collaboration with other disciplines.
- To effect a liaison with other disciplines identifying themselves with the theory and practice of psychoanalysis.
- To advocate for the highest ethical standards of practice and for quality mental health care for all.

this process, but unconsciously, our children remain psychic body parts. If something happens to our child, it happens to us. There can be no more painful evidence of this than looking into the eyes of the parents in this film. A part of each heart died with the child. Their grief over sudden loss of immediate family is compounded by the sudden loss of so many others in the community so they feel distanced from ordinary life experience. "They are now citizens of a wholly different world, a world of solitaries living in a sweet hereafter where everything is strange and new."

How people defend against a sense of helplessness in the wake of disaster is the strongest theme in the film. Mitch turns passive into active, springing into action to right a wrong. Risa Walker's way is to say that she had a premonition the accident was going to happen. Claiming after something awful happens that you saw it coming all along, as if you had already made the necessary adjustments beforehand, helps a person regain a sense of being in control. Nichole, the 14-year-old incest victim who is para-

lyzed in the accident, tells how the accident happened, but she lies; intuitively, she understands that some explanation is better than no explanation at all. Delores, the anguished 30-year veteran school bus driver, who Nichole accuses of speeding, seems delivered from pain when Nichole falsely accuses her. Better to think she caused the accident than to have no answer. Nichole's lie serves to drive away the Pied Piper, so that the community avoids being splintered by lawsuits.

Only Billy Ansel and the film viewer see the accident happen. Billy, driving right behind the school bus, waving to his son and daughter as he has been doing for five years, watches the bus skid, crash through the guardrail, slide down a hill and across the frozen quarry, break through the ice and sink, in seconds. Did Delores have a moment of inattention? Did she see something in her line of vision, tense her hands on the wheel slightly to avoid hitting it, strike a patch of ice and lose control of the vehicle? Was this a human or mechanical error? There was no evidence of mechanical error. Billy watches his children die right

before his eyes, yet he can't say that he saw Delores do anything wrong. He cannot cast blame, or talk himself into believing he knew the accident was coming, or explain how the accident happened. He accepts that horrible events happen sometimes and just wants life to go on, but he remains angry and bitter. In the novel, Billy becomes an alcoholic in the aftermath of the accident, takes up with a woman he meets at a bar and isolates himself from the New Dent community. Even if one "accepts" that bad things happen, no one walks away from calamity unscathed.

And what about the Pied Piper motif? Nichole begins reading the story of the Pied Piper (a seducer of children) before the school bus accident and the last frame you see in the film is Nichole, still intact, closing the book and walking down a hallway. In addition to Mitch, who promises the regressed, vulnerable community good things will come to them if they launch lawsuits, Nichole's father is another Pied Piper, promising his daughter beautiful things will come to her if she follows him to sexual bliss. The Pied Piper is a fairy tale and fairy tales are make-believe. A busload of school children dead and sexual abuse is real, and some things that are real we can't stand to know; it's just too painful. Consciously or unconsciously, Egoyen may have known that he had to frame "The Sweet Hereafter" within a fairy tale structure; otherwise, we could not bear to watch his film. ■

Tarpley Mann Long, MSW, a clinical social worker and psychoanalyst, is in private practice in Washington, DC. She studies screenwriting at The Writer's Center in Bethesda, MD, and acting at The Theatre Studio Acting Conservatory in Washington, DC.

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We welcome your contributions. You may send them to me at judy.kaplan3@verizon.net or to 14 Horatio St., Suite 18E, New York, NY 10014, or to Donna Tarver at DTarver@msn.com.

A Very Special Conference

Three years ago, in my message as Program Chair, with Rosemarie Gaeta as Conference Director, of the 7th National Conference "Inclusions and Innovations: Visions for Psychoanalysis in the New Millennium" in New York, we stressed, "the increasing relevance of psychoanalytic thought to the wide range of problems faced in clinical social work practice... We have the opportunity to explore basic issues including the historical roots of our discipline, as well as innovations at the cutting edge of practice and scholarship... a blend of our collective memory and contemporary fresh perspectives... we as clinical practitioners must communicate our views to the field at large... Our Conference program provides a forum where understanding joins creativity and conjures new shapes and patterns." This message is just as timely today.

Barbara Berger, our 2002 Conference Director, and Judith Newman, Program Chair, with her hard working committee, continued the blossoming. Such a success with 325 conference participants requires great work, sacrifice and devotion and we all are grateful for their gift of excellence, competence and pride. We were treated to a wealth of in-depth, cutting edge information and thought-provoking ideas. The theme, "Representations and Re-presentations: Psychoanalytic Reflections" stated our concern with a broad range of topics and therapeutic challenges.

In addition to the outstanding Plenary speakers, Jessica Benjamin ("The Third's The Thing: Creating Space in the Psychoanalytic Dialogue"), Arnold Goldberg ("Form versus Content"), Eda Goldstein, Kenneth Newman and Marion Topin ("All Roads Lead to Rome"), the Saturday Luncheon speaker Alex Kotlowitz touched and stirred his audience with his poignant, insightful address on "Breaking the Silence: Growing up in Today's Inner City." How wonderful to attend a psychoanalytic conference in which there is so much focus on the poor, elderly, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, woman's issues, etc.!

A major panel was "The Perfect Fit: Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis as Culturally Sensitive Practice." Panelists Jean Sanville, Judy Kaplan, Robin Young, Gail Sisson-Steger, and Caroline Rosenthal re-

mind ed us of the way the larger environment influences the intrapsychic and showed this from a clinical, philosophical, and supervisory perspective.

Another panel, "Female Analyst-Male Patient: The Impact of Gender on the Analytic Endeavor," described evolving theory about the influence of gender on the analytic process. A third panel, "The President's Roundtable: Progress in Interdisciplinary Work on Standards and Accreditation," had representatives from the Consortium describe the development of standards for training institutes and the beginning of an accrediting board.

A full day Seminar on "Violence in our Lives: Issues in Supervision" with Jack and Kerry Kelly Novick, presented by the NMCOP's National Study Group, included attachment theory, developmental theory slides and the application of theory to poignant case materials. It received a high degree of critical acclaim.

Other events of special note included:

- Joyce Edward's paper on "Siblings: Their Place in our Minds, Lives, and Psychotherapy" and Joseph Palombo's paper, "Learning Disabilities and the Development of the Sense of Self" were both excellent

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and demonstrated why these two received lifetime achievement awards for their contributions to the interface between psychoanalysis and clinical social work.

- The National Academy of Practice invited esteemed social work members to discuss strategies to forward our growth within social work as well as in interdisciplinary endeavors.
- Joyce Edward and Roberta Ann Shechter led a discussion: "Psychoanalysis and Clinical Social Work Education: A Troubled Relationship," on the need for clinical and psychoanalytic theory in social work schools.
- The Special Event Panel brought us Etty Cohen, "Creation of Trauma and Dissociation in Cross Class/Cultural Dyads," Dennis Shelby, "The Lingering Legacy," and Roberta Ann Shechter, "The Struggle with Self Disclosure."

We cannot underestimate how important it is for newer members to our field, like those who were selected and honored to present their student papers, to be seen and heard from. Come and contribute and also hear and see

the luminaries of our profession, for it is out of such contacts that professional identifications take root. We are generative and want to mentor our future generations. To remain vital we need your energy and enthusiasm.

The NMCOP Conference provides unique opportunities for professional and personal growth and contacts. This 2002 Conference continued the tradition of excellent psychoanalytic social work education offered at an intensive and in-depth level.

I am proud to have been a part of this Conference. I am proud to be a part of this NMCOP Board. I am proud to be a social work psychoanalyst. I was fortunate and proud to attend the conference.

More on the World Trade Center Tragedy

*"Although the world is full of suffering,
it is full also of overcoming it."*

~ Helen Keller

September 11th transformed our nation. We witnessed the worst of humanity, but we saw the very best of mankind. While the tragedies of that day will forever remain with us, it is heartwarming to see millions of people reaching out to those victims, families, and communities in need. And there are numerous heroes, including social work psychoanalysts and psychotherapists, who have shown tremendous strength and compassion through it all.

On September 11th, like many of us, I found out from a patient.

I was sitting in my peaceful office, surrounded by flowers and plants, within my home on the top floor of an 18-story brick building below 14th Street in Manhattan. I had fed my tropical fish and was watching them quietly after cleaning and restocking my aquarium. I was waiting for an 8:30 patient who was late, as usual. He finally came in calmly and said in a monotone voice, "I'm sorry I'm late. I was in my car, had just come through the Holland Tunnel and a plane crashed into the World Trade Center. They think it was an accident but I also just heard another plane has crashed into the tower." I couldn't grasp what he said as he just went on talking in his obsessive way. After that he left, with his usual nonchalance.

My next patient, whose body language in the waiting room already confirmed something terrible had happened, came in, sat down and said, "I've been trying to call my daughter. My cell phone doesn't work. Her cell phone doesn't work." She looked at me and my phone imploringly. I seemed to have the only working phone

See President-Elect on page 16...

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in the area. I, without thought, handed her my phone and she left a message for her daughter who she said "was probably safe." My attention quickly shifted to my niece, Eden, who might not be safe. She worked close to the WTC. I saw her image through the hour and I felt guilty. Although I felt I had the inner strength to address the obvious, the human, the humane fears of safety, my patient's panic that she did not know how I was going to be able to help her reached me. I felt guilty because I had begun to worry about my two nieces.

My sister from Connecticut called to tell me my other niece, Lara, was hysterical and had come to my apartment into the room next to my office. Eden was missing. I was on the phone with my 10:30 patient who was partly in traumatic stress with her TV on and loud noise in the background. We had our session, or containment of her trauma, on the telephone. She was asking me to turn on my television to confirm her reality. She stammered and did not have the words for towers, saying grotesquely in a kind of functional aphasia, "Terrorists in planes, attacked the, the, what are they!!! The tall buildings!"

I felt guilty that I was thinking of my nieces, ages 23 and 24, who live one block away. When the session ended, I opened the door and found no Lara. I tried to call her on her cell phone to no avail. I ran the block to the apartment she and Eden share, trying to find them, my mind racing, flooding me with thoughts, feelings, fears, and fantasies, "I hope Eden is alive." There on the corner, I saw the two sisters, my nieces, standing by the telephone booth, making calls on the pay phone to try to find their friends. They were traumatized, especially Eden who had fled for her life, and survived.

I was torn in the conflict between my nieces and my patients and went back to my office taking the two women with me. I reasoned that I should be there for any patient who could not reach me and somehow managed to come. Since I was below 14th Street in the frozen zone, I received several calls, "Thank God you are alright." "Are you okay?" And I spent that day with my nieces. We three felt lucky.

.....

In his technique papers, Freud laid out the ground rules for analysts providing psychoanalytic treatment: the "leased hour," stability of the fee, analytic neutrality and abstinence. All would contribute to the creation

of a psychoanalytic space which fosters regression and promotes the unfolding of the transference neurosis. Resolution of the transference neurosis was an important therapeutic goal. Major developments in psychoanalytic theory building — including increased acknowledgment of the analyst's contribution to the analytic process, the inevitability of transference-countertransference enactment and the uniqueness of each analytic pair — pose challenges for our current understanding and technical handling of the analytic frame. So too do the realities of modern life. Long work days, frequent travel and the extensive use of telephone communication make consistent policies regarding the "leased hour" difficult to maintain.

As we enter the new millennium we ask whether our ideas about the frame have kept pace with our ideas about theory, and whether our theory sufficiently incorporates the realities of practice in 21st century American culture. I will give some examples of my experience of the ways in which the events of September 11th have impacted practice. I hope you will send yours to our newsletter or the list serve.

During the following week, even while there was reality about transportation difficulties, some patients were too

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terrified to come downtown or even out of their houses. A patient from the Upper West Side said she was moving to Australia and would never come downtown. She focused on the smell and the air. Therefore, we talked on the telephone. I reminded her that last week we had talked about her excessive reaction when her husband left the door open to the refrigerator; she had been terrified and enraged, worried all the food would be contaminated. Then, it had seemed that he had committed the ultimate sin.

She said she had talked to her sister who lives in another part of the country, who had said, "I think your reaction is excessive." Eventually, through the use of the telephone, she was able to "come downtown" and it was at her own suggestion, at her own pace. She felt proud, as she had always thought she was a scared and shy woman.

Another patient also made use of the telephone. She lived nearby but could not leave her home because of the smell (her sensitivity to "bad" smells had been a constant theme in the treatment). The crematorium smell with its vivid images caused constant vomiting. One of our telephone contacts took place as she was throwing up uncontrollably in the bathroom with me soothing her, talking to her, trying to help her regulate herself. I was using my voice and relationship to try to help her in her fear and vomit. I felt like a mother putting a cold washcloth on her head, holding her to try to calm and soothe her fears.

Another patient, who was a witness to the horror from nearby and had also been in the last bomb attack on the WTC, lost three high school and five college friends, as well as almost all his business friends and colleagues, and his business. He felt guilty that "he was a survivor." He had unplugged his coffee pot, run downstairs, and immediately started walking home. He felt guilty that he didn't stop to help. He was, indeed, a survivor. He had begun treatment with great anxiety, always alert to dangers. He considered leaving New York. He has a family and children. He said, "I have two strikes, now the bombing..." and he lost his words for this unspeakable horror. But he finally concluded, "I am a New Yorker." Every patient reacted in accordance with his or her personal history. ■






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It is this level of national connection that underscores the significance of the biannual conference. We owe our gratitude to Rosemarie Gaeta and to Laura Groshong for their work as conference directors in the past. There is, though, a need for more of us to be committed to working at the national level. While the distances and

disparities may seem to make the importance of this work less immediately apparent, it is that which provides the dynamic underpinning for our profession.

It is difficult to express the incredible power and poignancy of the moment when these factors collided in my thoughts. What an excellent thing it is to be involved with members from all over the nation, to bring an event like this to fruition. Perhaps it is best expressed in the words of the poet William Watson:

"The grace of friendship — mind and heart
Linked with their fellow heart and mind;
The gains of science, gifts of art;
The sense of oneness with our kind;
The thirst to know and understand —
A large and liberal discontent:
These are the good's in life's rich hand,
The things which are more excellent." ■

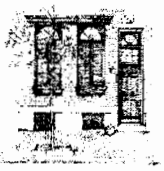
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