

SUSSEX COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY NEWS

SUMMER 2021 Issue no.141
www.sussex-counselling.co.uk

AGM NEWS
WHERE NEXT
FOR SCAP?

INTENSIVE CARE
DREAMS
EXISTENTIAL
INSIGHTS

PANDEMIC JOURNEYS
SUSSEX THERAPISTS REFLECT



PLUS: ATTACHMENT STYLES IN DOC MARTIN, THE PSYCHEDELIC DRUG TRIAL, TALKING ABOUT RACE, DEPRESSION, PSYCHOANALYSIS ON COVID

Psychoanalysis and Covidian Life

ed. Howard B. Levine and Ana de Staal
(Phoenix Books)

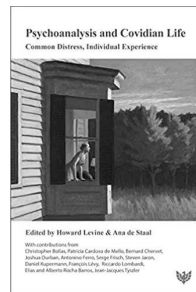
Its editor cautions it is too soon to draw firm conclusions on the impact of the pandemic on the practice of therapy. Yet this collection of 15 essays – from contributors based in Europe, Brazil, Israel, the UK, and the USA – succeeds in its aim of providing some useful observations, ideas, and experiences.

Most chapters are focussed on the impact of Covid upon the traditional therapeutic setting. Some bemoan the difficulty of achieving by video link anything describable as psychoanalysis, whereas others describe unexpected efficacies and breakthroughs that the medium seemed to afford, even in an analysis via smartphone of a three-year-old autistic girl.

‘Scared, thought starts theorising even before experiencing pain’, suggests one of the authors. Some of them, perhaps, are quicker to apply this to patients than to themselves. The pandemic has been traumatic

for therapists also. Burnout is currently endemic within the profession. Maybe it is easier to focus on the setting and on clients than on potentially disempowering questions concerning how the traumatised can be helped by those simultaneously traumatised.

One contributor mentions ‘the anaesthetising effect that many of our patients seek by binge-watching hours and hours of series and films’, as if no therapist could contemplate doing likewise, and another concludes their feelings of helplessness in sessions must be projective identification. But Covid has hurt us all. Where this is confronted, other helpful currents of thought emerge. ‘Simple compassion has never been declared as a valid psychoanalytic tool’, another contributor remarks, before expressing hopes that this must now have changed.
Duncan Barford, Psychodynamic Counsellor



A Deeper Cut: Further Explorations of the Unconscious in Social and Political Life

ed. David Morgan (Phoenix)

Politics, it seems, is no longer “the economy, stupid”. The domination of the culture wars requires us to think more psychologically about political motivations. In this second volume, David Morgan edits a collection of 15 essays that offer a psychoanalytic perspective.

Some apply psychoanalytic ideas to specific political arenas such as NHS psychiatry and trade unions. Others, to broader themes of whistleblowing, radicalisation and populism.

Stephen Frosh’s important chapter on post-colonialism explains how dominant

groups unconsciously split-off and evacuate unwanted aspects of themselves into other groups. Racism is the result; exacerbated further by the unbearableness of facing suffering and the need to displace guilt. It critically considers how psychoanalysis, at certain times, has reinforced colonialism, alongside its radical potential to challenge that (lack of) thinking.

The importance of thinking about unwanted parts of ourselves is a recurring theme, with many authors drawing on Wilfred Bion’s ideas, and three engaging essays using literature (specifically *The Merchant of Venice*, 1984 and *Lord of the Flies*) to show these dynamics. As with the first volume, this book offers us a valuable way to approach politics and delivers – as the title says – a deeper cut.
Rachael McKeown, Psychodynamic Counsellor