

# Letters

*Lots of letters this issue — do keep them coming, but remember that we reserve the right to cut long letters, so keep them to the point please.*

Dear S&S,

The following happened to me over a three-year period. They called themselves 'process workers'. It wasn't until last year, I found out that their mystifying violation of me — or process — was False Memory Syndrome.

It started in Edinburgh in June 1990. I used to go to the therapist's flat. On my second appointment he told me my father had sexually abused me as a child and 'once you remember healing is possible'. So over the next two years he managed to get me to remember. However, instead of being 'healed' I was seriously in danger of a psychotic breakdown. The therapist said to me he was 'like a detective, a sniffer dog' and he started sniffing. This disturbed me. On another occasion he thumped the wall with his hand to imitate the sound of the headboard on our neighbours' bed hitting our wall when they had sex. He said 'did it sound like this?'. Another time he literally pinned me to the wall as he looked and touched the buttons on my coat — by my breasts — saying he 'used to have a jacket like that'. Another time he asked me to take a look at his and his wife's bedroom to illustrate that 'there is nothing to be afraid of'. He had me talking to a pillow on my lap — which he then wished to 'hug' — it was meant to be me as a child. He tried to convince me that eating meat was a good form of 'roughage' and 'up north they shoot animals in the head whilst they are having their breakfast'. I am a vegetarian.

On another occasion he met me at the door and feigning a worried expression said 'Jane isn't here' — that was his wife. That's the day he left his bedroom door open and wished me to take a look around. Also, it was the same occasion he was encouraging me to eat meat. He said 'the sweet meat of an animal is full of goodness'. If that wasn't enough I commented on the attractiveness of a plant on the doorstep — I thought it was a four-leaf clover to bring patients good-luck. He said 'it's called *Erotica*' and he gave me that look again.

He never once encouraged me to further my own perceptions of the process or whatever — but dissuaded me by saying 'people who speak their minds are rude; *you* know what I mean', and he would give me that look again. He said 'let's keep what we do here a secret, just between us' always saying 'you know what I mean'.

I do a large amount of painting and drawing. I brought some in but stopped doing this because he twisted everything to suit himself. He said to me 'I've planted seeds in your mind'. Anything real and immediate was a taboo area with him. He would fidget uncontrollably in his chair and looked both embarrassed and nervous.

My mind over the two years became paralysed. I started having nightmares and insomnia. I started drinking and smoking heavily.

What was actually causing me all the suffering was him and his 'therapy'. I

couldn't see through this mystifying and violent process. I was confused. I lived in the past. He stole from me my world and the immediate. When I complained he construed it as my reluctance to face the abuse. That I was skirting the issue.

After two years we left Scotland and come to Wales. He put me in touch with another process worker — a trainee. No doubt she needed experience working with a 'schizophrenic'. This he used to call my 'weak link, we all have one'. However, the next therapist did better than incest. She initially continued to talk to me about a friend of hers who was satanically abused; somehow or other it turned out that I was too. I said to her 'you mean I was satanically abused?'. Sadly, she nodded in agreement. The anxiety started up that night — and the panic attacks.

Every time I slept I had awful nightmares. My husband too. I used to write it all down. Following the revelations of a specific nightmare I got out of bed to check-up on the contents of a manuscript I called 'Trauma — The Forbidden Landscape Vol I'. I had loaned this to the therapist in Edinburgh to read. To my horror half of it was missing. The only person who could possibly have any motive or opportunity to remove half my work was him or his wife. They liked to validate all these awful terrors they were inflicting upon me but never once would they validate anything real and immediate. The writing remains mainly related to him.

I told the therapist from Bristol about the theft. Suddenly I 'don't need therapy any more', and I haven't heard from her again. I complained to the Director of the Company of Therapists in Edinburgh but

to no avail. She is siding with him. I am left without any means of redress. There is literally no one I can take this to.

Since last summer I have been taking anti-depressants to help me with the acute panic attacks and anxiety. I had these for five months. They are abating now.

I have put on a stone in weight. I smoke a lot more and think more. The stress and suffering these 'therapists' have caused me is inexcusable. I am left with all *their* shit to clear up. I have had to sort it all out with my family as the police got involved, and on top of that my father died last November of a heart attack.

I feel as though I should be compensated for having others' shit put on me in this way.

*Name and address withheld  
at the writer's request*

Dear S&S,

In Caroline Beech's article 'Eigenwelt A History' she says 'In 1990 Jenny Biancardi left Eigenwelt and set up a separate organisation offering psychodrama training. This move initiated a period of considerable uncertainty and change.' Two paragraphs on she mentions that a second crisis came for Eigenwelt in 1992 when a complaint was made to the BAC about events that occurred in 1989. I assume from that she is indicating that my leaving was the first crisis for Eigenwelt.

I wish to make it clear that my leaving Eigenwelt was precipitated by the crisis occurring in Eigenwelt in part produced by events in 1989. My marriage to David Brazier (the other co-founder) was coming to an end and we had unreconcilable differences, some of which were about ethics and professional boundaries. This was a

period of distress and hurt for many people, including David and myself; and for me, leaving an organisation I had built from scratch with David was extremely difficult. I did indeed set up a new organisation by myself which offers counselling, counselling training and psychodrama. However, that was a consequence of my leaving, not my motivation for leaving. I would agree that the BAC procedure was distressing but, I feel I would have to say in all fairness, not because in my experience they were insensitive or unduly harsh. Obviously Eigenwelt withdrawing before the complaint procedure was completed left everyone with no conclusion, Eigenwelt, the public and the complainant. I would not minimise how traumatic it felt to be part of that investigation, but feel the BAC had no option but to take the complaint seriously.

*Jenny Biancardi*

Dear S&S,

Having read the article relating to BAC and Eigenwelt, I am concerned that it implies a correspondence between the two organisations. Eigenwelt withdrew from such a correspondence in January 1994. The issues around Eigenwelt's ethics have not been processed by BAC and its wide membership. The avenues to resolve the continuing concerns are still open to Eigenwelt. Some members have found the complaints process difficult and demanding. Some have found it helpful, healing and informative by the time it is completed. Some people withdraw because they believe they have something to hide from. Some people withdraw because they have something to hide.

*Judith Baron, General Manager, BAC*

We are sorry if we gave the impression that we were publishing a correspondence conducted directly between BAC and Eigenwelt; in fact the AHP Magazine Sub-Committee mediated the correspondence. Both parties did, however, see the other's responses before replying themselves, so we feel that what was published in *S&S* gave a fair representation of the developing views of both BAC and Eigenwelt.

*The Editor*

Dear S&S,

I was delighted to see *Self & Society* publishing an edited piece of research from another journal. As a practitioner I find it impossible to afford and read every journal in our field. I am aware that this means I miss items that might inform me, guide me or, as with the particular piece published, reassure me.

So, let's have more of this please, but with one caveat: please avoid those graduate studies that use self-report assessments of participants' psychological states to achieve their results.

*Christopher J Coulson*

Dear S&S,

John Rowan liked Niebuhr's 'quip' on democracy (*S&S*, September 1994). Is this Rienhold or his less famous younger brother Richard? (One instantly thinks of Ring Cycles). Either way, how has theology and the good/evil divide crept into humanistic therapy, which surely holds that democracy is natural and that such divisiveness corrupts? In *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (1958) Richard quotes Lovejoy on the 'strangest and most monumental paradox' of Christendom defining the aims of man (*sic*) as an imitation

of both Aristotle and Jesus. The former (also the teacher of Alexander the Great Warmonger), as we know, believed that it was the evil in women which made rationality (elitist intellectualism) necessary for men. Jesus was all for revolution, as Paul's urgings to the Ephesians — 'we wrestle against (evil) principalities' — confirm (5:12).

Could we perhaps have a Buff's Corner where the more erudite of our members play 'spot the quote' or perhaps educate us lesser folk in their theological, sorry, theoretical sources? For instance it would be handy to know before reading any future Rowan whether his 'god' is Aristotle or perhaps Plato, he of 'no pain, no gain' fame?

We cannot have misogynist writings in a humanistic magazine, especially from those who applaud the premise that good and evil are separate, different, and gendered qualities. Everyone must know by now that there wasn't a flicker of original thought in any field of Western human endeavour since Plato (except perhaps Plutarch) until Mary Wollestonecraft in 1792 (yes! 1792), and outlaw any therapeutic or developmental ideas before 1988 — when therapy began to 'professionalise'.

And no, Roger Horrocks (or rather Jeff Hearn, on page 25) men aren't 'formed and broken by their own power', only by their faith in an external power — God, Aristotle, therapy, and for all I know Rowan. As for feminism's 'simplistic syllogism' (all syllogisms are simplistic) how about 'men have oppressed women and children . . . by virtue of being men'? Wrong again! It is because they believe in men being the sole possessors of virtue,

(and intellectual abilities) — that is, they believe that they are 'god' (and good) and women are 'dangerous and potent' (evil, page 28). Ask any Catholic priest — and quite a few Anglicans.

Can we now begin to creep towards the next millennium? It's obviously asking too much that we should leap.

*Val Young*

Dear S&S,

I am writing to say how much I liked Fran Mosley's editorial in your November issue. It confirms my suspicion that people who have only a little cash to spend on therapy go to trainees who give it for reduced rates or for free. Once the trainee has qualified and has no further need of guinea pigs he or she then sets off on the road which ends, for the few who succeed in private practice, in an income of between eight and twelve thousand pounds a year. This is OK for those with a pension, a private income or an earning partner. Whether it is a good financial return on the ten to fifteen thousand pounds that a UKCP accredited psychotherapist has to pay in training costs is another matter.

*Michael Saunders*

Dear S&S,

Do therapists cure? Do clients cure themselves? (Vol 22 No 5) Who is responsible? Is it one, the other or both? For me it is none of these.

It has always struck me as a little self-important and grandiose to speak in terms of our being solely responsible for our own realities — 'I create my world'. I have most certainly created a lot in my life and for every desired achievement and 'success' there has come an attendant array

of shadow issues, spin-offs and ripples — unplanned and undesired problems and new issues to face. Each solution has been a base for a new generation of problems as surely as each problem was at one time a solution to an earlier issue — ad infinitum. I don't know enough about myself, let alone anyone else, to pronounce in more than a fairly provisional and subjective way on what a success or a cure is.

If there is a cure or a desired outcome to be had, then surely it is the 'gods' (forces beyond our control) who decide it. 'Psychotherapy' is a descriptive Greek word which refers to 'attentive devotion to', 'waiting on' or 'waiting for' the 'psyche', 'soul' or 'breath of life'. Can we really heal ourselves with one of Professor Dryden's 'tool kits'? Is this not a little like a surgeon who attempts to make us whole by removing a problematic body part and maybe putting in an artificial replacement? At best we achieve a facsimile of health and fulfil our notion of what health ought to look like. What about the needs of the soul — our depth need that perhaps created the disharmony in the first place? Who are we that we have created a need to get into therapy at all? How many crucial and formative life experiences would we have avoided had we had our tool kits to hand at the time, or had we been 'cured' before we had experienced deeply?

Psychotherapy is a good word. It is not too scientific. It is enigmatic and mysterious. Psyche is a mystery and we need to let it work through us. We are in the psyche. The psyche is not in us. Jung once remarked that some fish may think they have swallowed the ocean.

*Guy Dargert*

Dear S&S,

I was interested to read the editorial by Fran Mosley in the last issue of *Self & Society*. I wondered how many therapists she checked this out with, or how much is a projection from her teaching days. For myself, I strongly refute her allegations of cosy middle-classness in my attitudes or client group. Perhaps we could have a head count from other therapists/counsellors? I feel this is an expression of the AHP/AHPP dynamic that needs looking at. I would be willing to set up a day of processing these issues, perhaps facilitated by two members from each organisation, though let us not forget that all AHPP members are AHP members as well. Fran, the ball is in your court.

*Whiz Collis*

Dear S&S,

I have some social worker friends with whom it is most inadvisable to ask after their health. They are always just about to suffer burn-out, or have a breakdown. If we meet as fellow professionals it's easy to get into the 'who is suffering most here?' game. In her editorial in the last issue Fran Mosley says of the AHP/AHPP conference 'I was the only person I know of there who was a counsellor'. On the list of participants there were 24 people who described themselves as counsellors, though Fran herself didn't identify herself as one. She says she was the only person who 'works entirely with non-fee-paying clients' (clients is her word here). I don't know how she managed to interview everyone to discover this. Almost all the counsellors I know worked for voluntary agencies during training, so were non-fee-

receiving as well as working with non-fee-paying people. Very many psychotherapists work with agencies during and after training, where no fee is payable. Almost all the counsellors and many of the psychotherapists locally who are also in private practice offer to see at least one person free of charge, and operate a sliding scale for people of limited means. As for the 'realness' or cosiness of these 'middle class' people, the ones I work with suffer from unemployment, redundancy, sexual abuse, violence, discrimination and prejudice, harrassment, stress, breakdown, illness, family and relationship problems, depression, despair, loss of home, poverty, confusion, all of which don't feel very cosy to me. I think that people are entitled to seek counselling or psychotherapy whoever they are, and that ethical counsellors and therapists are entitled to be paid for their services. If Fran is fortunate enough to have private means so that she can counsel people without charging a fee, this is admirable and generous of her. But her value judgment about 'middle classes go to therapy and the rest go to counselling' suggests that counselling is in some way an inferior service. I had some transferenceal feelings about psychotherapists myself until several joined our counsellors group and I saw that they were just people with a longer training than mine who had paid a great deal more for it in commitment as well as in monetary terms. I feel that psychotherapists tend to be limited by the strictures of their narrower training, but that this focussed approach can be very valuable in long-term reparative work. As for cosiness, I admit that I have experienced more than one really cosy session

with a financially disadvantaged person, and that we both enjoyed and benefitted from it. Could Fran be suffering from the cosiness of street credibility?

*Brenda Rogers*

*Fran Mosley replies:*

Brenda Rogers makes some important points in her letter, but I would like to clarify one of them. I think misleading punctuation in my editorial led Brenda to think I was making rash and unfounded claims when in fact what I said was that I was the only person *I knew of* at the conference whose counselling clients were all non-fee-paying — a statement I stand by.

Dear S&S,

I am writing in response to the article 'The River: A Moral Tale' in *Self & Society*, November 1994.

I am a second year student on a two year part-time person-centred Diploma in Counselling course. Although I am learning a great deal about myself, I am completely mystified by the very questions raised in the last paragraph of this article and in full agreement with Sheena and Richard — it certainly 'doesn't do trainee counsellors and therapists or their future clients any favours to be deprived of this (working on 'raw' material brought to the group by trainees) deep and challenging work'.

It may be viewed as being 'safer' but I am convinced that we are all, trainers, students and clients, the poorer for it. I am left with feelings of loss and deprivation and am aware of a deep sadness that this should be the case.

*Anna MacLeod*