

## **Editorial**

In his 2001 lecture *Freud and the Non-European*, Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said highlights Freud's deconstruction of Moses' Jewish origin as a pathway into a new politics of identities, in which 'identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed' (Said 2003: 54). Said's interpretation underscores the significance of *Moses and Monotheism* as 'no less than the political parable of our time' (ibid.: 65), as defined by Jacqueline Rose, compelling us to contemplate issues related to identity and difference, race and racism beyond the organised, exclusive forms of identity based on principles of national, religious, or ethnicity, but rather through revealing a troubling dimension in relation to otherness at its core.

*Sitegeist* issue 16 set out to endorse an antiracial discourse in which, similarly to Said's venture to deconstruct the European 'hierarchy of races', opening a door to the less privileged is not enough, and must be accompanied by an effort to identify areas of white privilege; to unsettle the very heart of the structures we are embedded in, including that of psychoanalysis itself. The issue follows a conference on 'White Privilege, Racism and Psychoanalysis' hosted by the Site for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Goldsmiths University in October 2021. Continuing the work and conversations engendered by the conference, we are delighted in this issue to bring original articles that challenge familiar psychoanalytic landscapes – from the clinic to theory-making, from psychoanalytic language to questions of accessibility, from the structure of the frame to the structures of our institutions and trainings.

In a paper that was given at the conference, 'Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis: A Clinical Exploration', Peter Nevins shares his own traumatised reaction as a black man to demonstrate

the way phenomenology can serve as a psychoanalytic tool to explore questions of race. This experience-based approach, unlike most psychoanalytic methods, can become an inclusive theoretical political and clinical apparatus, in which, experiences such as intergenerational trauma, cultural difference, social power dynamics and the invisible effects of racism can be acknowledged. Anchoring the therapeutic work beyond the familiar Oedipal interpretation opens psychoanalysis to the new landscape of the social and cultural.

Challenging the very core of our psychoanalytic assumptions is also, as Nevins points out, ‘a resistance to the pathologies of paranoia and delusion’ that often accompanies traditional interpretations of black people’s narratives. Not only does it free the patient from the grip of blame and ‘unhook themselves from the messages of being wrong’, it also enables, if I may continue this line of thinking, to recognise the impact of the ‘negative hallucinations’ of psychoanalysis itself – the oppressive effect of denying the existence of an object, an other, or erasing their narrative.

Acknowledging areas in which psychoanalysis is collaborating with white oppressive structures, we might begin to listen to these marginalised experiences and to incorporate them into psychoanalytic thinking. Abi Canepa-Anson’s paper, ‘The Gap between the Scream and the Silence: Exploring the Problems of Racism and of Colour Blindness in Psychotherapy Training’, shines a light precisely at the point of this unseen oppression, inviting us to listen to that ‘very loud silence’ within our profession. In particular, she elaborates on the micro-aggression, colour blindness and systemic racism that perpetuates in training organisations. Unveiling the white screen and writing from her own experience – as a past trainee, as a teacher in trainings, as a black woman, and as a researcher, she uncovers the schizophrenic splits at the core of racism, reminding therapists and readers that delving into feelings of

shame and anger, and the ‘realisation of complicity’, are vital in order to ‘step beyond the colonial practices of which psychoanalysis is also a part’.

Stepping back to capture the wider post-human perspective, Eric Harper and Matt J. Lee are listening to another silent scream. Their paper, ‘Psychoanalysis in the Time of the Last Breath’, analyses the repeated words ‘I can’t breathe’ – the final words of Eric Garner in 2015, repeated five years later in the killing of George Floyd – as ‘moments of suffocation’ that depict the scream of our time. Moving between theories including those of Fanon, Deleuze, Freud, Lacan, and Bion, the authors link racism to the ecological crisis and Covid plague, through the question of breath – or loss of breath in the era we live in. ‘The convergence of capitalist, colonial and patriarchal oppression’, they write, has produced ‘a plague, a plague of language and value’, generating the ‘chokehold on the earth’ and the brutalisation of ‘the wretched of the Earth’. The image of the last breath is explored in a Deulezian rhizomatic movement between theories, searching new perspectives in psychoanalysis that might challenge the existing architecture of closed circles, and allow us to think beyond borders and diagnostic categories – and to be affected by the scream of our time.

If the journey in the direction of listening involves letting go of familiar boundaries, what can be said about the most basic structure of our psychoanalytic work – the frame? Do these ‘ground rules’ always constitute the necessary setting ‘that help to keep both the therapist and the client safe’ and ‘to contain the difficult feelings’, or might a rigid frame become in some instances a retraumatising experience? Can it become the analyst’s defence, guarding against listening to the pain of that scream? Wendy Dugba is inviting the readers to explore this question through her experience of working in ‘trauma-saturated’ settings. Her paper, ‘A

Black Female Therapist Working in Forensic Settings: Adapting the Frame’, is delving into the complexity of the therapeutic work with children and young people who offend. For these ‘traumatised children and young people, locked up, away from family, friends, and the community’, the frame is part of a forensic setting that is imbued with ‘racism’ and ‘classist attitudes’. Challenging traditional psychoanalytic concepts within the frame, such as the use of language, the setting of the therapy room and therapist’s neutrality, Dugba is demonstrating the way in which the relational approach is key for the building of trust in working with racial trauma. ‘Culturally responsive’ therapy is reflected not only in different ways of taking off the mask of the blank-screen therapist, but also in agreeing to acknowledge the ‘isms’ that have been traumatising these young people and that are part of the therapeutic system as well. Dugba’s question – how can the therapist ‘remain neutral’ in the face of children’s trauma – echoes throughout all the contributions to this issue, in challenging psychoanalytic dogmatism in response to injustice and highlighting psychoanalytic blind spots.

Katia Houghton’s paper, ‘Mixed (up) Other: Filling in the Blanks of my Mixed Ethnic Heritage’, is a reminder that in order for suffering to be heard, a different kind of listening should grow, in which human communication comes before the layers of theoretical knowledge, and that this venture is first and foremost a personal one. Turning the probing nozzle and psychoanalytic gaze inwards, Houghton moves through spaces of blurred boundaries beyond black and white, exploring both her white privilege and her ‘mixed(up)ness’ as a mixed-race person who can pass as white. This ‘archaeological self-excavation’ journeys through moments in time, memories from her life as well as the lives of her family, searching not only for what has been but also for what has been missing. Recognising this intergenerational lacuna – a missing language, repeated immigrations, ‘a

sense of not belonging’, the paper reveals a ‘transgenerational *Nachträglichkeit*, a transgenerational working through’.

Alongside these wonderful theoretical and clinical articles, *Sitegeist* issue 16 contains more: an artistic piece by Penelope Allsobrook creating a ‘Triptych on Time’ as a movement between languages and cultures through art and time; a triadic discussion by Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel, Rabbi Tali Artman and myself following Kara’s book *Birth in Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis* (2022); and three book reviews: Ana Minozzo reads Joanna Ryan’s *Class and Psychoanalysis: Landscapes of Inequality* (2017); Penelope Allsobrook shares her thoughts on Patricia Gherovici and Christopher Christian’s *Psychoanalysis in the Barrios: Race, Class, and the Unconscious* (2019), and Duncan Harris reflects on *Diary of a Fallen Psychoanalyst: The Work Books of Masud Khan 1967–1972* (2022).

Another paper that was accepted for publication and that we would like to acknowledge is ‘Doing Anthropology in the Consulting Room’ – a paper based on the joint presentation by Christina Moutsou and Salma Siddique at the conference. Christina Moutsou became unwell and died in December 2023, and although they were unable to complete the writing process of the paper, we would like to share some of their words which felt significant in the editing process of the issue: ‘Death has been at the forefront of our mind much more concretely than before as well as the possibility of imminent breakdown and loss. In more than one way, the realisation that we are all vulnerable as we are all human has hit home.’ Salma shares some memories of Christina in a tribute below.

Bringing all these papers together into *Sitegeist* issue 16 was also a deconstructive and reflective exercise for our editorial team. Questions of race and racism touched on personal

chords and promoted lively discussion in our editorial meetings, challenging the zeitgeist of *Sitegeist* – questioning the whiteness of our editorial board, the rigidity of our academic language, and trying to bring a diversity of voices into this issue, as well as future ones. The articles gathered in this issue point out different ways in which psychoanalysis is undoubtedly saturated with whiteness and racism, as well as other forms of marginalisation. Yet they all use psychoanalytic tools in their explorations, calling forth Audrey Lorde’s famous quote questioning whether the master’s tools can dismantle the master’s house: ‘The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’, she writes, ‘they may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change’ (2018: 19). That is to say, there is always more work to be done.

*Yael Pilowsky Bankirer, with Duncan Harris and Katia Houghton*

## **References**

Said, E.W. (2003) *Freud and the Non-European*. London: Verso.

Lorde, A. (2018) *The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House*. Penguin Classics.

## **(Re)membering Christina**

In the quiet aftermath of loss, where words often falter and memories dance with the ephemeral, I try to shape a few words to capture the relationship with Christina – a guiding light, a fellow seeker of truth, and a cherished co-writer. Her unexpected departure from the physical tapestry of life leaves a void, profound in its silence, yet her voice continues to resonate within the legacy she leaves behind. We came together, both looking for a way of feeling less alone in the act of writing. Christina and I, at the cusp of a world on pause during the pandemic, our meetings in the ether – bi-weekly rituals of Skype calls – becoming anchor

points in a sea of changing world around us. Our dialogue, a bridge between anthropology and psychoanalysis, rendered us cartographers of the human psyche, mapping the contours of understanding and emotion. Christina, with her gifted insight, had a unique propensity to entwine the threads of mythology with the fabric of psychoanalytic thought – an intellectual alchemy transforming the ancient and the modern into a tapestry rich with newfound meaning. This rare talent was a catalyst for our collaboration, a kinship of minds that yielded pathways into the depths of the soul, culminating in prolific pieces of writing that now echo as a testament to her brilliance. As her co-author, I marvelled at her ability to harness narrative potency, intertwining compassionate fictional elements with clinical realities, thus expanding the margins of psychoanalytic discourse. In the intimacy of encountering the couch – our shared sanctuary of thought – Christina embraced the relational model, creating a realm where reciprocal revelation flourished. In the wake of her absence, we are drawn to reflection, to the essence of mourning. The emotional investment we have placed in the lost, Christina teaches us, must be rerouted, seeking new connections while cherishing the old. Her intellectual vibrancy and experiential wisdom beckon us to find renewal in what she so passionately explored – the eternal dance between myth and mind.

*Salma Siddique*