Trauma and the Social-Psychic Retreats. Facing and Transforming in Group Analytic Groups – Clinical and Applied

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Abstract

The universality of trauma as a fact of life activates extensive fields for their explorations, scientific and otherwise. In this lecture we will focus on an important and complex cluster of trauma responses, of trauma defense mechanisms – the *psychic retreats* (PR) and *the social-psychic retreats* (SPR). Although, like trauma itself, these phenomena are also universal, they are neither easy for revealing nor for explaining and understanding. Therefore, most often they stay hidden under the surface of human interactions, causing various damaging effects onto persons, families, communities, and societies. We plan to talk about how we can recognize them, as

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well as, how to cope with. Group analytic groups, small, median and large, are of special value as spaces with available techniques for encountering them with less fear than in many other circumstances. Therefore, in our groups it is possible to make joint efforts in containing, revealing and transforming them within the warmth of human understanding. Examples will be shared from clinical groups, as well as from applied group analytic work as are Reflective Citizens workshops. We hope to have time for sharing new phenomena from this area: in current Covid19 pandemics and globalized psycho-social trauma new dynamics related to the "shattering of SPRs" occur, like various bizarre destructive particles from previous more stable forms of SPRs detaching from their previous usual bearing places are floating in our matrices making scary forms. Recognizing and more awareness might be useful for preventing damages.

Keywords: Trauma, Group analysis, Social-psychic retreats, Group-psychic retreats, Reflective citizens.

Riassunto. *Trauma e rifugi psicosociali. Affrontarli e trasformarli nei gruppi gruppoanalitici*

L'universalità del trauma come evento della vita attiva l'esplorazione di molti ambiti, sia scientifici che di altra natura. In questa presentazione ci focalizzeremo su un insieme di importanti e complesse risposte al trauma, di meccanismi di difesa dal trauma – *i rifugi mentali (psychic retreats: PR) e i rifugi sociomentali (the social-psychic retreats: SPR)*. Sebbene, come il trauma, anche questi fenomeni siano universali, non si manifestano facilmente e non sono di facile spiegazione e comprensione. Di conseguenza tendono a rimanere nascosti sotto la superficie delle interazioni umane, danneggiando in modo diverso le persone, le famiglie, le comunità e le società. Parleremo di come si possano riconoscere e come farvi fronte. I piccoli, mediani e grandi gruppi gruppoanalitici rivestono un valore speciale come spazi con tecniche che permettono di incontrare tali difese con minor paura rispetto ad altre situazioni. È quindi possibile, nei nostri gruppi, impegnarsi insieme per contenere, svelare e trasformare queste difese nell'ambito del calore della comprensione umana. Saranno forniti esempi dalla clinica dei gruppi, così come dalla gruppoanalisi applicate alla comunità, come nei workshops di Cittadinanza riflessiva. Spero di avere il tempo per condividere fenomeni nuovi in quest'ambito: nell'attuale pandemia Covid19 e nel trauma psicosociale globalizzato emergono nuove dinamiche collegate al "frantumarsi dei rifugi psico-mentali", come varie particelle distruttive bizzarre derivanti da forme precedenti e più stabili di SPRs, che si distaccano dai luoghi in cui erano contenute e fluttuano nelle nostre matrici assumendo forme spaventose. Riconoscerle e acquisire maggiore consapevolezza può aiutare a prevenire dei danni.

Parole chiave: Trauma, Gruppoanalisi, Rifugi psicosociali, Rifugi gruppo-psichici, Cittadinanza riflessiva.

Preface

Dear friends, colleagues and all, I wished to be with you in Torino. Trauma of pandemics surprised us. Shock is at core of any trauma – then search for survival. I feel grateful to COIRAG colleagues for all devotion, so serious and sensitive, and deeply touched for making me feel part of this joint endeavor and learning.

Having you dear Giovanna here, knowing your enthusiastic work in EATGA and international arena, where we first met, and having Alice, Paola, Silvia, and many others – felt a bit like at home, in spite of all trauma disruptions, we co-created a warm reflection space and wish to welcome you all to join us.

In trauma roles can get up-side-dawn, often parents are with children, therapists with patients, citizens with governments…! We have to make fast decisions! Or, the opposite, to slow dawn… Along the event, we might change speed from time to time, having to learn all together.

When I received the invitation, I was very pleased and honored. Working on these themes for long, I expected that it will not be difficult. But it astonished me, as again I encountered difficult emotions and complex processes.

Work on trauma is never easy. Unpredictable and unspeakable aspects always lurk: we speak and share as much as we can, but know that there will always stay walled-off some uncanny shapes *haunting us from the darkness*. We learn to accept their existence as much as possible – staying humble with the weaknesses of our human nature.

Introduction

The universality of trauma is a fact of life – for all people and ever since. We are all given more to experience than we can consciously bear. Trauma is both: threatening event with the overwhelming forces and peoples' difficult experience with helplessness to assimilate. Here, we are exploring the psychological and the psychosocial trauma or the *human relational trauma.* When significant relational figures betray us, fail in our existential expectations and dependency needs, a *caesura in our life paradigm* occurs with ruptures of protective shields and we get exposed to horrifying annihilation "abysses".

We are focusing on complex trauma defense mechanisms – *social-psychic retreats* (SPR), which are linked to intrapersonal *psychic retreats* (PR), also universal phenomena, but not well known. They are neither easy for revealing nor for explaining and understanding. Mostly they stay hidden, causing under the surface damaging effects onto persons, and societies.

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Better known related phenomena are *dissociation*, and linked to both trauma and SPR, but also staying *under the veil – for decades dissociated from the mainstream* of psychoanalysis. How can we recognize and transform them into more mature coping mechanism? May we perhaps even wish to arrive from the impoverished lives of people, who massively use them, to the enrichment gained through the journey-of-discovery of the new perspectives and meaning through enduring the complex struggles? So, we want to move from disastrous and desperate aspects of trauma towards potentials for improvement of humanness of ourselves, and fellow people.

Although with trauma we first think on bad, destructive things, often at the same time, there are "*offers of light to come in*". Poet Leonard Cohen (1992) has a wonderful refrain in his *Anthem*.

> *There is a crack, a crack in everything.*
> *That's where the light comes in.*

This poem accompanied me along writings journeys, like a soothing friend, helping me retell painful stories. Since ages poetry and music were able to reach many unreachable zones as *helpers in the "trauma speleology"*.

Sometimes it really feels as if walking along the edges of abysses, which can be like event horizons of black holes in astrophysical terms, avoiding "the collapse into nothingness". Dealing with catastrophic fears or uncanny phenomena, as are dreadful ghostly bizarre creatures, is part of the work – by bizarre creatures I mean those un-symbolized, restless aspects from the past, harboring the feeling that injustice had been done, which keep haunting us for reparation. As they tend to crowd around the edges of the cracks/black holes of matrices, special attention needs to be put on *balancing*. The endeavors of taming those creatures – eventually *transforming into helpers*, have to be done with patients, virtues of listening and containment. Those areas of communication are most delicate – crossroads: either the traumatized self will begin a healing process in trustful human environment, get true "relational immunization", or be re-traumatized – fall forever into abyss of hopelessness.

Ancient/early trauma cracks are like scars in the social fabrics – shapes of structural dissociations and social-psychic retreats, sculpturing our ways of thinking about social world. Through social unconscious they perpetuate trans-generational trauma circles. Fractured areas are often pregnant with potentials for enlightening – pearls of wisdom waiting once to be discovered – imprisoned voiceless selves difficult to reach. Exposed once to unbearable fears, orphaned from ordinary families/communities, they retreated into alternative worlds/"second spaces", which may feel safer. But once

discovered, such spaces may become a habit to escape from the daily world with troubles and boundaries, but in loneliness in the impersonal infinite. Significant to have in mind is, that the second spaces, although usually being false safe, even *as-if eternal*, but the eventual possibility of real eternal contact needs also be taken into account. «Have we really lost faith in that other space? Have they vanished forever, both Heaven and Hell?» (Czeslaw Milosz, 2004). Re-discovering lost hope, faith and meaning, in spite of destruction, as the resource for recovery, is often linked to being in touch with painful realities with all their imperfectness.

This is as much for persons, as is for groups, communities, and whole civilizations. The group analytic theory is helpful for conceptualization. Sequels of trauma are properties of the *tripartite matrix-as-a-whole – foundation, dynamic and personal* matrices in their circular causality.

Here at the event entrance, nobody knows how we will travel through all the challenges. Will we stay on some superficial or intellectual level, due to defensive mode, or, the opposite, get too much of the unbearable contents, overwhelmed. Who knows!? Especially so, as we are all exhausted from pandemics trauma…will we be able to keep the right balance?

Plan for the presentation: small journey through PA history of the *hiding aspects* of trauma, and related phenomena of dissociation, and SPR… I'll share my complex and disruptive feelings towards Italy, which surprised me, while working. I tried to understand, and used as a personal example on the subject. As I felt free to engage with this uneasy theme, only then, brighter layers related to deep friendships, could accompany the journey. Illustrations from group analytic groups follow.

Trauma, Dissociation (DIS), and Social-Psychic Retreats (SPR). Dissociated from the Mainstream Psychoanalysis (PA) and Group Analysis (GA). Why were these Areas Hiding for Long?

On one hand, in art and ordinary life, we find many descriptions and people's actual understanding of both, DIS & SPR, as they are regular phenomena in human groupings, in dealing with trauma. On the other hand, in the professional journey of discovery, we find patches here and there emerging into from the big picture perspective an interesting *patchwork*. Psychosocial work with ordinary citizens brought us new understanding.

Psychoanalysis is over 100 years old, group analysis 80. In last twenty years, occurred tectonic shifts in psychoanalytic theorization, related to changes, in the western philosophy-of-mind. The so called "relational turn", made a profound change in the concept of identity, in which multiplicity and

dissociative processes are implicit. Atrocities in the WWs, Vietnam and further wars, then the uncovering of massive atrocities from more ordinary realities become collectively more thinkable.

Although psychoanalysis originated in treatment of trauma and dissociation, *the pre-analytic Freud*, it was fast abandoned! Ferenczi and Fairbairn emphasizing the dissociative mind and its link to trauma, were relatively ignored. Janet's work, developing treatment for post-traumatic stress with dissociation, was well known. Like Sleeping Beauty in the fairy tale, his work was forgotten for almost a century. Only in last years some connections could be seen, now coming closer together. Constructs of the hidden powerful forces, *sub-personalities* in us, and in the dynamic sub-systems, are being continually reformulated. I will share *my own path of discoveries*.

I began my psychotherapy work with psychotic patients in the Eighties. I searched to understand destructive aspects in my patients. When Rosenfeld (1971, 1987) published on the "destructive narcissism", and the "internal mafia", it was illuminating for my work:

«The destructive narcissism of these patients appears (to be) highly organized, as if we are dealing with a powerful *gang* dominated by a leader, who controls all the members of the gang (...)» (Rosenfeld, 1971, p. 175).

I realized that similar phenomena were described since early psychoanalytic writings, under various names: "internal saboteurs" (Fairbairn, 1952), "fantasizing" (Winnicott, 1971), I followed later on "claustrum" (Meltzer, 1992), "encapsulations" (Tustin, 1987; Klein, 1980; Hopper, 1991). Steiner made further step in 1993 describing as *psychic retreats*:

«*Psychic retreat* provides the patient with an area of relative peace and protection from strain when meaningful contact with the analyst is experienced as threatening (…) serious technical problems arise in patients who turn to a psychic retreat, habitually, and excessively» (Steiner, 1993, p. 1).

This concept *PR* is further developed as internal pathological organizations involving highly structured and closely-knit systems of defenses and object relations. Formed initially out of desperation, these sabotaging, self-protecting and self-organizing internal sub-systems are actually *sub-personalities*, which provide alternative shelters from human relationships and reality in general. In their essence lies a paradox: they both protect and imprison the vital parts of the self.

Working with these patients in GA groups, I discovered how enormously they help. I described dynamic processes related to "group psychic retreats" (Mojovic, 2005), then realized that similar phenomena can be met in

families, organizations and societies – the "social-psychic retreats". They may be more positive or negative, partial or total. They become properties of the dynamic and foundation matrices of the social systems.

Significant is Basic Scenario in the drama: the victim, oppressor and his terrorizing regime. The central role of the victim is taken by the authentic self imprisoned in terror. The politics of the *internal regime* are characterized by expertise in manipulation, especially around barriers and boundaries between relations inside and outside its territory. The "ruling establishment", which organizes the pathological system, is invisible. Emperor always has new clothes! The primitive internal society sketched by Bion and elaborated by Rosenfeld operates at the depth of human minds. The drama of the internal world is a political one in which an internal establishment seeks to maintain its control by using lies and violence. The self-regulating aspects of the drama – that the subjects are always willing to be "taken-in" by the system.

The role of destructive superego is significant – the bad object placed there. The dynamics around the "bad" object are especially important, how it conducts its power. The destructive omnipotent object becomes an *internal totalitarian dictator*. This may appear as a figure of a child in a coffin, Snow White or Sleeping Beauty-anaesthetized or poisoned. When the good objects are unable to contain the self, attachments break down. The self is directly exposed to "nameless dread" or Bion's "O". Left without alfa-functions, the "alfa function-in-reverse" occurs. "Negative containment" and the "parasitical type of container-contained relationship" (Bion, 1970) keep the imprisoned self inside a diverted perspective of the world.

Briefly, *SPR* are unconsciously formed in groups, and societies below the surface. They involve highly structured systems of social defenses and object relations, which create alternative shelters from many macro- and micro-social mainstreams. Negative versions disseminate totalitarian patterns over social discourses, whereas positive may be protective against them.

Personal Example of Social Trauma Fracturing the Tripartite Matrices

Invitation for this lecture I accepted with real pleasure. The connections with Italy, its people and culture, were through my life inspiring and joyful. So, I was surprised, when during this writing's journey a traumatic memory emerged as a sudden internal wall. Why did this happen? I realized that it is related to the largest social trauma, I had ever experienced in my life! Time collapsed with old emotional storm coming to the fore – contents which were dissociated. I was afraid to share, but decided to trust this audience. So, I'll

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now tell the *trauma story from 22 years ago containing layers from the social/ professional/ family/personal matrices*.

I was a psychiatrist in the Psychiatric Clinique in Belgrade on my regular night duty with about hundred psychotic patients – the only physician with four nurses. We just finished the regular overnight medication, when at 8pm an extremely loud serene shaking everything. Automatically, I phoned my daughter, who arrived home from grammar-school, and was alone. She said: "Mama, the whole house is shaking, now windows are braking!" Screaming: "I see there in front of me huge bomb exploding", I could well hear the explosion through the phone "Mama, I am scared!!!". The fear for her went through my bones. An urge, in a second to be with her and hug. But, I ran to see what to do with my patients. It was 24th of March, 1999, the first night of NATO bombing of Belgrade, whole Serbia. I heard on radio that the very first bomb fell exactly there close to our house. I immediately became commander in charge to make fast decisions like whether to wake up the schizophrenic patients – take to the shelter…These minutes will never be forgotten! On the news: *all plains were arriving from Italy, from Avian* in my memory inscribed as the *Italian bombs*. The bombing went on night and day, without any break for three months. The destruction is enormous – the country will never be the same: tons of projectiles, forbidden bombs with uranium. Special Evil is that the uranium bombs are devastating this land for hundreds of years in the future – epidemics of *cancer* in our country is faster rising than covid.

Unbelievably and apocalyptically – no UN-security-council agreement, no war announcement! How was this possible?! *Fracture into relationships* with people in the Western countries – a betrayal never forgotten/forgiven, disillusionment into goodness and justice, turning us from this side of the social wall into *orphans of the Real*. Sudden *crack in the ordinary life paradigm*!

Human matrices for survival activate the 4th basic assumptions of incohesion, described by Hopper, with oscillation between states of aggregation and massification, as defenses from fears of annihilation. Then, searching for more stable states, matrices may co-create encapsulations and SPRs. Life-saving self-organizing groupings like were enclaves of neighborhoods or in shelters, are examples of positive SPR. Some would over time turn into more negative ones, like when aggressive people took advantage. Good illustration of a malignant SPR is in the film *The Underground* by the Serbian director Kusturica: story of living in shelters for decades since the Nazi Bombing of Belgrade in 1941.

Fragmentation in matrices, often occur along the inborn "fault-lines" For example, old conflicts in former Yugoslavia between communists and non-communists emerged in bizarre aggregates, even in families. Parts cease to

know about each other – shutting down into spaces, which give the impression of safety. Often we don't realize that the traumati*zing* agent had been smuggled into the retreat – get introjected through identification with the aggressor, or in other ways kept inside. For example, families keeping-the-blind eye on their school children involved in criminal. Destructive figures are often hiding around the gates, pretending as-if safeguards, and preventing changes of the internal *totalitarian regime*. Unless we find strength for opposing them, we'll have to stay too long *locked dawn* in those shelters.

Role of *responsible physician, commander of hospital for the first war night, and the role of a mother*, at that very same urgent moment! No dilemma I had to stay in the hospital. But, deep crack into the safety provider as a mother, a serious *betrayal of my motherhood*! How could I let my daughter be alone, when whole life could be annihilated – like at the threshold of Hell? That internal black hole of the unimaginable was soon settled by various trauma creatures, pushed into dissociated land of somatization and insomnia. All mentalizing processes on the theme were impoverished. For long I didn't dream, but my daughter did with extreme nightmares for many years.

Similarly, on a wider scale: Serbia was for many years in the Nineties locked-down by sanctions – a sort of a *huge jail*. But, even when we were able to travel, many didn't. The anger, disappointment into colleagues, and world institutions, was so huge, that we couldn't talk about it all. Step-by-step, a long healing journey followed.

Interesting dynamic occurs when *into the Trauma Darkness Beams of Light Come In*. Just to mention one during the Bombing: Greek warship-captain, Marinos, refusing to take part in NATO's destruction, returned his ship to port, crew supported, as did Greek public, but court sentenced him to prison. Those *cracks in darkness,* where light come in, might seem insignificant, but actually, are not! Pearls of humanness opposing principles of "banality of evil", I terms of Arendt (1994), can shine with long-lasting effects. Those islands of positive experiences, keep reminding, that hope might not be lost forever.

Knitting Patches of Hope in the Reflective Citizens

From similar hope we engaged into psychosocial work of *Reflective Citizens (RC)*. Began in the Nineties as grassroots citizens' need to reflect in random social groupings… we developed RC methodology together with citizen participants. People's interest for reparation through sharing, learning to listen to the "other" perspectives, and reflect is natural and around us all. Sometimes it really felt like *standing in the trauma cracks endeavoring to widen the zones for light*. Small patches of the wounded social fabric were

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held by peer citizens like orphan groupings making homes for such needs. RC is developed in many towns in Serbia, the region, and other countries. In Italy and Greece new branches are developing.

Illustration from RC in Banja Luka, Bosnia, also bombed by NATO and experienced terrible ethnic conflicts. Fear of new conflicts is still there. Social dreaming enabled initial containment with specific envelopes for looking into trauma images in spite of many wounds.

Z. "I had two Labradors – they went everywhere with me. I dreamed our town was bombed again. I was in sanctuary, food supplies dried up: children were starving. A thought: 'I must kill my Labradors to feed the children. I decided that I had to do it myself'".

A.: "We tend to deny that the terror penetrated into our most intimate feelings, forcing us to make unbearable choices. Your soul either dies or you turn into a monster!....".

D.: "I am scared, politicians are yet again behaving irresponsibly… we saw how nationalistic forces can make a hell of our country!… we are now citizens, who have to make effort to change".

A.: "I agree, fear in people is still so strong. And we can't even talk about it... My parents were frozen when faced with terror. When I invited them for RC they only waved me off".

N.: "Communist culture was resting on similar patriarchal/authoritarian norms".

P.: "For me, the dream tells that sometimes we have to participate in decisions that may result in painful losses for generations to come".

B.: "Now I remember Gershwin's song 'Summertime', with which we started the very first Reflective-Citizens in this town. This was the black mother's lullaby as she dreamed the future for her baby. It was like protecting the new-born-RC from conception-trauma and providing with hope for the future-time".

A young man said: "Until recently, I wouldn't be able to imagine anything else either. My father was killed in Srebrenica because they were Muslims. I saw, that it is possible to overcome feelings of hate and revenge... look how we talk here!".

We see a flavor of emerging negative-SPR in RC matrix, and how they begin to dissolve… Have to leave further elaboration for discussion.

Negative Therapeutic and Negative Psychosocial Reaction

...are of enormous importance to be understood and recognized. Omnipotent traumatiz*ing* objects don't leave their territories easy. Worsening

immediately after positive relational experiences, like collapse of hope, or reemergence of symptoms…, seems paradoxical, pushing into desperation. It is linked to phenomena of the "*mafia retaliation*" kind of dynamics, in PA known as the *negative therapeutic reaction*, in community work *negative psychosocial reaction*. Careful keeping the work process ongoing with openness to meet the destructive objects, the awareness of inevitability of up-and-dawn movements in processes… Using the imaginaries from dynamics on the "event horizons of trauma black holes", as the zone of potential transformation towards positive developmental, are useful!

At times *submitting to the death forces* feels as the only solution, letting the inner protectors turn into persecutors, and the spirits of darkness take then the total lead. Not rarely we hear Serbian citizens saying: "They should have bombed us all! It would be better not to exist at all. We are no worth of anything!". In such states allowing beams of light to come in, feels as the most dangerous move! My first dear neighbor couldn't bear the tension. His heart broke in the only day we were not bombed, died. When you adapt to Hell, then beams of hope can really be dangerous if special care is not made available.

Standing on the Edges between Two Realms

Caesura occurring with trauma enables the exposer to the other realms, which have different names like: the *numinous, eternal, celestial, mystical, or "O",* in Bionian terms. Art, rituals, mythopoetic work, our GA groups make the *transitional areas* between the ordinary reality and the "O" possible.

Like the *birth trauma*, at the same time, dangerous and painful, and the greatest wonder of life, so most other traumas have *two sides*. Similarly to birth, is with the *fact of death* – dealing with it brings most of us into contact with the two sides – putting us into the challenge of either falling dawn into abyss' of despair or moving on towards new levels of being. Even if the containment during caesuras is good, contact with the infinite, the "O", will occur through the cracks in containment. In fairy tales with birth helpers from the numinous are immediately available, like are fairies, guardian angels, among other archetype-images. The transpersonal story holds the pain before the human story can be told.

The protection is never perfect and the interacting drama keeps framing our worlds. Michelangelo's Drama of Genesis in the Sistine Chapel is related to Man facing his destiny at the edge of pre-abyss. While stars are born, God is floating in his loneliness, then flesh transits from Gods to Man's finger. The pre-mother, wakening from dreams with the first pain bearing from the

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first hope... Miraculous finding of the strength to turn the flow of river upwards towards the spring, despair into hope is related to endless circles of human destinies.

Divine Comedy (*La Divina Commedia*), by Dante, which he wrote in the last years of his life, is describing his vision of the human soul's journey – *struggling between Hell and Paradise like on a wheel*. The Roman *poet of love, Virgil*, appears as Dante's guide through Hell and Purgatory towards Heaven. Inferno, the persecutory landscape of the ruling dark Lord is a great portray of the terrifying inner world of trauma, their private "hell". It is among best art works of our civilization on the subject.

Keeping the open contact with the two realms at the same time, and not using either world as an escape of the other, is a difficult to reach! Most of the time, we are not able. Alternative worlds are created for rest. If we stay there too long, we get stuck in development. If some good-enough groups and communities, external or internalized, are present for us, holding the pain for a while, perhaps as Virgil did for Dante along the way, we might recover. We can then return our orphaned parts to the human groups, perhaps also experiences of encountering archetypical figures. Our capacity for two realities grows and keeps windows open for our fellow people. Thus, like artists do for citizens, so groups and communities help the traumatized to take the dangerous, but potentially transformative walk as *Citizens of the Two Realms*.

SPR in the Tripartite Matrix – Vignette from a Small Group

I wish to return to the *home where I started from* related to discovery of the phenomena of SPR – in my small GA groups. I will share a vignette from a regular small group analytic therapy group, which moved into the zoom setting due to pandemics.

At the beginning of the session before summer break N. shared a dream: "I receive information that the whole world will disappear except a small number of people, but I am not sure whether I am in that small group that will survive. I wake up with a terrible sense of explosion in my body". While reactions from the group were arriving, I suddenly found myself not listening at all, in a film from apocalyptic genre, *Melancholy*: Melancholy, a planet hiding in front of the sun, moving towards Earth, will bypass but give humans a unique experience. But, major character C. realized that the Earth-Melancholy encounter will mean the end of the world. My counter-transference was like a *reciprocal dissociative process* transposed into the film-SPR. As if the explosive trauma was weakened opening a twin apocalyptic story… I was back to reality with the group, which was for a while holding the apocalyptic threat pouring. A feeling

of ground shattering of all: N's body, and life, the group and whole world. Questioning if N. has place in the survival group was also a voice for all.

It came to mind, how Freud's work *The Interpretation of dreams* (1899) appeared at the same time as filmmaking was in its infancy. Films are projected in the dark, just as were dreams for Freud. It appeared at the turn of the century, as at the following turn, in 1999, the cataclysmic trauma happened to us. This group was actually conceived in 1999. All members changed since, but its birth was inscribed in the matrix. With group's existential threat, *birth trauma* layers might emerge. In fear of death, we cry for our mother, recall the birth. Perhaps, I did this too – related to Freud and the birth our profession. What was my transposition into that film about? Although dissociated from listening the group, it might had helped me in the very moment to cope with the explosively fragmenting ba I:A/M state, moving me into a film-journey, which served as a temporal SPR, and only then unpacking the multilayered trauma and becoming a bit more thinkable. In the final film-scene a small family group creates a shelter as a *magic cave* to endure moments before death. Perhaps similarly, providing here for the group a shelter to endure massive annihilation anxieties middle in pandemics! Questions and fears could be shared: Is it a global experiment over human species offering us a unique experience, a lecture from God, or a reality of the End of the World? The group was moved from its regular setting of its group room into the zoom room, which additionally had shattered usual group containment. All that had also shattered some of the longer lasting established group-SPR. When the summer break comes, the usual insecurity with many complex feelings, was now additionally multiplied. Is the *end of the group planet* come? Lot was further shared by group members in that session.

It was remembered that N. joined the group due to extreme nightmares, seeing entities in the room. "I am a very rational person, and here, in the group, I needed long time to REALLY understand, make emotional link with me as a baby being left by my parents alone for hours, when they just went to a night cinemas and pubs... you all know this...". This part of her work in the group helped a lot – diluted her fears. However, early childhood trauma dissociations were in addition trans-generationally complicated. Extreme traumas of grandparents of Czech, Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, and hidden Jewish roots, with many war and concentration camps experiences… Three of her grandparents lost all families as children in various social traumas. As a single child, N. living on her own, still single (after a short marriage, with abuse), she felt as her life task to make harmony within richness of ancestors legacy. She was devoted to ideas of forgetfulness, spiritual peace, and usually made in the group interventions from that, for her, safe position.

Some group members told her, that the lock-dawn wasn't easy in her life situation, perhaps feeling loneliness more directly, and robbed from her usual helpers' activities. *Will everything disappear? Will she be held by her small group?* She was able emotionally to connect with that. Only then her dream could be further used as a group dream. Freedom was felt, even for opening some tricky group conflicts near the end of the session, linked to anger related to different political thinking about lock-downs, with uneasiness of not being resolved before saying good-bye for 5

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weeks. Was there, eventually, also a need present, to leave me over the holidays with lots of discomfort, as their trauma burdens or to feel their anger?

In the following weeks N. felt warmly connected and more relaxed. It seems, as if over the years of feeling in her group safely-enough, N. established many internal integration. However, only during the new trauma (pandemics), when the most horrifying apocalyptic explosive kernel was in resonance with others, she could allow the group to come closer to the area of the unbearable trauma pain. Yet, in her identity of the family helper, she had first to offer her dream work for the group. It was gently and empathically accepted. Knowing her well enough in the group, the scarred internal baby with films of nightmarish uncanny monsters and demons in the darkness, could finally be soothed and jointly dreaming future happiness for N.

Ending…
In old Poem by John Donne *No man is an Island…*

With trauma we learn, that at the same time it separates and connects us, all islands and continents of mankind, teaches us to widen our minds and hearts for the *citizenship of the two realms*. Finding trust to tell personal story related to Italian bombs, made possible the toxic pieces, still hiding, as if mine field, carefully to be "excogitated". Internal touch with the richness of friendship increased, reaching further, towards old collective and family layers. Just few snapshots.

In my home, at the book-shelf beside Dante and Virgil's Oneida, is an old book of my grand-grandfather, dr. Nikola Đorić, a long, *Kosovo Poem,* about the *14th century social trauma*, the only existing as such, from literature point said to be comparable to Oneida. He wrote it in the WW1 during the largest Serbian Golgotha, when the Serbian King, all army and people, retreated for survival from the Austro-Hungarians through Kosovo to the Mediterranean cost – my grand-father, was there a doctor and a poet. Although allies' ships of were so close, people saw them passing by, they refused to help the starving to death Serbian people. All would have died, if the Italian ships haven't helped and transferred to Corfu for recovery. Some ships took children to France, like to Nice, as was the destiny of my grandmother with 14. She later gave me my name, with her love for the Italian song – Marina.

With this writing process I realized that: Voices from the crypts of some ancestor's stories began appealing for a certain place to be heard, actually ever since Alice and me joined the *Traveling RC* through Kosovo with the

bus in 2018. In that Serbian province some of the largest war/ethnic destructions had happened. At the same time, Kosovo shares hundreds of the most beautiful Serbian old medieval monasteries – most under UNESKO protection. Traveling RC visited Dečani monastery, for long safeguarded by the Italian UN-solders from Albanian terrorists. It is linked also to Italian NGOs, their special ability to value the precious medieval art and spiritual beauty. Images of prior Monk Sava story-telling Alice around the frescos in fluent Italian became a shining internal area accompanying me through this writings journey of mine and of ours.

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