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CHAPTER SEVEN

"Untouchable infant gangs" in group and social matrices as obstacles to reconciliation

Marina Mojović

I've built walls, a fortress deep and mighty, that none may penetrate.
I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.
I am a rock, I am an island. I touch no one and no one touches me.
(Paul Simon, 1965)

At the Untouchable International Conference (IIGA, 2013, Gonen, Golan Heights) the lecture "Untouchable 'infant gangs' in the group-analytic matrix" began with Simon and Garfunkel's song about coldness and withdrawal from love and friendship. Despite its content, it warmed people's hearts and many from the audience joined in the singing. Was the music slowly dissolving the untouchable, or were the memories of the Swinging Sixties' pop–rock movement and its enthusiastic ganging activating the youthful spirit?

In search of the rhythms of safety for conflict reconciliation

When the phenomenon of "frozen hearts" or selves "turned into rocks and islands" caused by relational traumas is symbolized by artists

through their songs or fairy tales, through dream-telling (Friedman, 2011) and dialogues in families, friendships, or in our analytic groups, which are in turn mentalized (Fonagy, 2001) into images, narratives, and melodies, as precursors of further change, indeed a bit of warming up may begin. Sensitive tuning in with the areas of the untouchable through fine pulsations in the relational field, while searching for the optimal distance from one moment to the other, might create a safe enough space for some resonance and sharing within these strange paradigms. The ultra-vulnerabilities are often so extreme that the "sparks of being" might fly away from contact due to the smallest errors in tone, timing, or internal desire to touch the untouchable—perhaps somewhat resembling beautiful migrating birds that meet at the Golan Heights near the conference venue to come together to keep warm in their habitat while they prepare for their far journeys. We can get in touch with their beauty if we approach them with appreciation and honesty, trying to attune to "rhythms of safety" (Tustin, 1986) and the natural fluxes of attraction and distancing, earning a bit of trust to take one step closer to the heart of the matter.

Traumas disrupt rhythms of life with cracks and disarray. To prevent annihilation, self-defensive maneuvers such as dissociation, encapsulating defences, and others enclose the trauma zone to protect whole persons, groups, or societies from "flooding"; "shrinking the tsunami" in the words of Bromberg (2008). However, along with this enclosing against injuries and pain, there is also a freezing or deadening of the "vital sparks", and of "dying a partial death," as Winnicott has stated (1964). When we engage in reparation and conflict reconciliation, and try to reconnect with the entombed "hearts of being" with the "essence of aliveness and forgiveness", our endeavors inevitably clash with the defensive "fortresses" and their "safeguards".

We need to approach the complexity of change carefully: establishing a warm and stable setting is certainly one of the major requisites for developing a sufficiently solid foundation of trust for the relational matrix—a crucial aspect of the reconciliation space. It supports both positive mobilization from trauma-free zones and re-creation of transitional spaces, which had been foreclosed in the trauma zones, or the "non-traumatized" parts containing the "traumatized", as was recently emphasized by Lopez-Corvo (2014). However, if the change is too rough and fast, instead of helping, we might provoke further disarray and destruction. In searching for the right

balance, it is noteworthy that precursors of containment and soothing may appear by intuition, aesthetic forms, rhythms, and other non-verbal communications that are able to resonate, crossing the walls as incipient mentalizations of the other side (Fonagy, 2009). Recent data from neuroscience inform us that traumatic memories are more easily available via implicit mythopoetic image communication (right brain) than via explicit interpretative language of insights (left brain) (Bromberg, 2008; Schore, 2011; Stern, 2004).

Conflict reconciliation processes always challenge defensive systems of persons and groups regardless of their circumstances, objectives, or settings; this is true no matter what their aim: peace processes applied to ethnic, religious, or political conflicts in communities, conflict management in organizations or families, psychotherapies, and others. Psychoanalytically or group analytically informed work tends to understand unconscious dynamics as being under the surface. Apart from the "soft skills" mentioned above, we also need to be prepared for destructive attacks from the defensive systems of "gangs" of organized objects or part-objects in relational matrices, both internal and external. Before transformative challenges begin, such gangs are usually invisibly lodged in the untouchable areas. With the shattering of defensive systems, gangs emerge to the scene more visibly, intruding into the matrices. They often become major obstacles to the task at hand. To contain and tame their wilderness, brutality, or manipulative perversity, additional skills are required. Prejudices frequently exist with regard to the internal images of infants and their groupings; it is often thought that these images always represent naïve or innocent aspects of a person's internal worlds. However, through my work over three decades with traumatized persons, groups, and communities, they often proved to be among the leading internal powers that sabotaged change. It is these gangs that are the focus of this chapter.

Shedding light on relational dynamics between them is important if we wish to discern this complexity. This is especially true when we wish to engage in reconciliation based on relational ethics involving acknowledgment, witnessing, and responsibility for damages and the dehumanization done to them and to us as sides in conflict, and to connect with otherness across fractures of hurt and suffering (Frosh, 2011). Coexistence of opposites within "thirdness" (Benjamin, 2009; Ogden, 1994), as a shared relational process of witnessing, attuning to, and recognizing psychic pain, potentially leads towards genuine

concern, forgiveness, and mutual healing as an "area of faith", in terms of Eigen (2004).

Thus, among the major challenges in this regard is how these very contrasting paradigms can be held simultaneously—not only regarding opposite sides in conflicts, but also regarding the contrast between extreme vulnerability and aggressiveness that exist within each side. It initiates feelings of absurdity, confusion, fragmentation, and meaninglessness by all involved. This leads to the paradoxical situation in which it is easier to bear the "clarity" of opposing sides in conflict than to cope with the confusing mixtures. We are dealing with uncertain endeavors that move within shifting vagueness. Fonagy (2009) emphasizes that "genuine forgiveness is an elusive experience and that the label is more often used in relation to pseudo-manifestations than a genuine experience" (p. 450).

Labyrinth of professional texts about infant gangs

The untouchable psycho-social areas are defensive systems, which serve to isolate and protect us from touching the unbearable pain of the core aspects of the self—variously called the "true self" (Winnicott, 1971), "private self" (Modell, 1993), or "soul" (Eigen, 2004; Grotstein, 2000). The vulnerable core is frequently represented in fantasies, dreams, and stories as an innocent child figure (Grotstein, 2009; Kalsched, 2013). Either it was never exposed to outside contact, like an "unborn self" (foetus or baby images), or it was exposed at a certain point in the past; however, due to traumatic dissociation, it retreated from the human family in the form of an orphaned self at the age when child-images linked to the time of traumas appear (Mojović et al., 2004). For both types of self, exposing them to outside contact is unbearable, similar to an existential threat; it is the fear of a "catastrophic change" (Bion, 1970). It might be to such an extent that recognizing the existence of oneself in the mirror of the other, even for a moment, could mean being destroyed in an immediate, violent death (Symington, 2000).

Maneuvers that protect the self from "soul murder" (Modell, 1993, p. 76), in the forms of benign or malignant saviors, gather around trauma wounds starting in early childhood. Over the years, they develop into defensive systems appearing in fantasy as inanimate

fortresses, caves, or islands with guardians in the form of friendly "toddler or youth gangs", "business organizations", "Mafia-like gangs", or "tyrannical sects" (Rosenfeld, 1987), etc. They keep *in* the trauma, that is, unsuffered pain of the traumatized/terrorized parts of the vulnerable self and keep *out* the annihilating persecutor/traumatizer/terrorizer. Any incipient relations are under ongoing perfidious "attacks on linking" (Bion, 1967) from those systems, similar to an autoimmune disease attack on the body's healthy tissues.

Interestingly enough, a clear picture of these phenomena quickly disappears even from our professional texts. Although illuminating traces can be found at the roots of psychoanalysis and group analysis, and certainly a vast literature on the subject matter exists, yet one can still feel trapped as if in a labyrinth. Similar to a subterranean river that disappears beneath the ground and then suddenly reappears, they are known as "internal saboteurs" (Fairbairn, 1952), "fantasizing" (Winnicott, 1971), "mafia gang" (Rosenfeld, 1971), "inner cocoon" (Modell, 1984), "claustrum" (Meltzer, 1992), "encapsulations" (Hopper, 1991; Tustin, 1981), "psychic retreats" (Grotstein, 2009; Steiner, 1993), "imprisoning sanctuary" (Eigen, 2004), "social-psychic retreats" (Mojović, 2011), etc. Each of us, of course, has his or her own favorite papers and authors, who have touched our professional selves, perhaps due to some specific style that helped us recognize his or her experiences while rediscovering them in a fresh and renewed manner (Ogden, 2009). However, when you think you see a big picture beginning to emerge at one moment, it is quickly obscured in the next, as if some special veils were operating at the heart of the matter. Recently, there are a growing number of authors (Bromberg, 2008; Hopper, 1991, 2003; Mojović, 2014; Schore, 2011) who hope to "rescue dissociation from obscurity" (Goldman, 2013, p. 338).

Do we dare to disturb the infant gangs?

Do we really dare to knock on these doors? "Do I dare disturb the universe?" Grotstein (2000) asked his teacher, Bion. Are we dealing with imagined dangers or with the real ones? In my experience, it is not only a fantasy of danger; many self-destructive, suicidal, or other destructive acts occur within "negative therapeutic reactions" (Hinshelwood, 1989). Many often forget that when you succeed in

making contact with the hidden universe of persons, groups, or societies and "touch the untouchable", it is only one part of the endeavor. The other major part is coping with "emotional turbulence" (Bion, 1965) and crowds of shadow suites, which attack from underground. They are well represented in the persecutory landscape of Dante's Hell with bizarre images of demons, vivified creatures, phantom-like figures, archetypes of the Devil's servants, and fallen angels during the descending search for roots of suffering (Kalsched, 2013).

Omnipotent child figures, with their ghostly powers, are very much part of the whole drama. The true self is often surrounded by, and submits to, malevolent feral infant gangs as immediate guardians of the internal fortresses of psychic retreats. According to Grotstein, psychic retreats are a

> sabotaging cluster or organization of internal objects . . . that have all originated in Faustian bargain or a bargain with the devil in order to be safe—that is, the infant's "prophylactic" selective identification with the intolerable traits of his mother and/or father in order to "purify" them and keep them ideal, because they are needed. (2009, p. 191)

Those identifications, due to the internalization of bad, rejected aspects of parents, become aspects that further terrorize, traumatize, and are often lodged in the "cruel superego". Addiction to such internal arrangements, with fighting against injustice for the lost kingdom of the infant's omnipotence, increases with time. Special infancy addiction can be a kind of bitter martyrdom and grievance, with this "martyrdom" of the infant self becoming a sacred cause; abandoning this mission is experienced as unbearable disloyalty (Grotstein, 2009, p. 192).

The internal world of traumatized persons is populated by narcissistic infant gangs that hold decision-making power. While the adult parts might want to forgive and rebuild broken relationships, the angry internal child parts would rather hatefully and stubbornly maintain the position forever. Refusal to communicate with the adult world due to disappointment could characteristically be manifested in giving a privileged place to animals. During a quarrel in one group, a silent member recounted a recurring dream he had had since early childhood: "a child driving a car 'jaguar' with no humans in the car, but his close friends were sitting in the other seats in the car: a puma,

a jaguar, and a leopard". There was a playful resonance with other examples of favoring animals, and coming into contact with fears of dreadful wild aggression if activated. Only after that was the member able to engage in a new way in the group, sharing and giving more authority to his own adulthood and that of others.

Poetry about feral children, abandoned by ordinary families, has existed since ancient times: in the myth of Gilgamesh, legends such as the one of Romulus and Remus, as well as in the stories about Mowgli, Tarzan, Pinocchio, Peter Pan and the lost boys in Neverland, and many of the *puer aeternus* archetypes (von Franz, 2000). Andersen's fairy tale *The Snow Queen* focuses on the struggle between good and evil as experienced by a little boy and girl, Kay and Gerda. An evil troll creates a magic mirror with the power to distort people's beautiful features, while magnifying all that is ugly. The mirror breaks and shatters into a million splinters, which become lodged in people's eyes and hearts, freezing their hearts and turning them into ice. One summer day, while Kay and Gerda are playing in their garden, small pieces of the smashed mirror fall into Kay's heart and eyes. Kay becomes ruthless. He marvels only at the perfection of the snowflakes that take him into the kingdom of the cruel Snow Queen. But how could they melt people's frozen hearts? Gerda, filled with childlike love and faith, succeeds through her devotion and courage in spite of all the dangers that challenge her on her journey to reach Kay.

Our analytic groups and conferences provide unique relational spaces for similar journeys. Like reaching the frozen self through contact with animals, so, too, might other similar child parts of other group members resonate easily when they come into contact with each other and take the initiative to communicate. It is similar to Gerda, who helped Kay reconnect with his soul. Only then was he able to forgive and let go of his trauma. Some changes are not possible without the warmth of sibling relationships: the malignant gangs can be transformed only through the embrace of positive sibling gangs.

The Swinging Sixties and rocky relationships

Let us now take a look at the rocky relationship of the duo, Simon and Garfunkel. They both grew up in the same, mainly Jewish, neighborhood. Over the years, their friendship swung back and forth,

echoing the lines of their two hit songs "I Am a Rock", and "Bridge over Troubled Waters":

> I'll take your part, oh, when darkness comes,
> And pain is all around.
> Like a bridge over troubled water,
> I will lay me down,
>
> Sail on silver girl
> Sail on by,
> Your time has come to shine,
> All your dreams are on their way,
> See how they shine
> Oh, if you need a friend,
> I'm sailing right behind.
>
> (Paul Simon, 1969)

The latter lyric emerged just before their final break-up, as if it were one last appeal for reconciliation, not only between the two of them, but perhaps within the youth movement as a whole. It might have been an appeal to people's dreams to help them find their way to shine and sail on in spite of all the difficulties.

Indeed, "Bridge over Troubled Waters" appeared in 1969 in Songs of America, accompanying footage of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. It associates the assassinations of these three leaders with the huge disruption of the *Zeitgeist*, "when darkness comes, and pain is all around", betraying the pop–rock movement's faith in justice, turning its enthusiasm into despair and decadence with massive intrusions of drugs and other destructive agents. There are many illustrations of the movement's dominantly positive ganging being perverted into destructive ganging of various kinds. Instead of the peace protests being the counter-culture against the mainstream culture, which, in silence, conformed to the politics of Vietnam and other similar imperialistic wars, around the world we witnessed the emergence of violent demonstrations and destructive ganging of various terrorist groups such as the Red Brigade, Baader-Meinhof, ETA, IRA, and others. Over the years, they mutated into even more extreme forms of brutal guerrilla fighting groups, such as ISIS and other terrorist groups of today.

How the *Zeitgeist* and the forces of our social unconscious, in vast regions of the world, fluctuate between progressive and regressive

directions over time is, in itself, a meaningful socio-historical theme (Penna, 2014). Let me remind that group and social traumas provoke regression with the collapse of boundaries between people and their groupings, when concepts of personal trauma are apposite for the study of group and social trauma (Hopper, 2014, p. xxxvi). Traumas of the Swinging Sixties are widely present in the social unconscious crossing many boundaries. Traumatic psychosocial disruptions of hope and faith fragment relational matrices, detaching people from their needs for friendship and love (Ofer, 2011), when the dehumanizing forces easily take the lead over forces engaged in bridging troubled waters. The basic assumption of incohesion: aggregation/massification (Hopper, 2003) expands with regression, massive splitting, and fragmentation. Capacities to contain and understand the "good" and the "evil" diminish. The power of archaic national and collective myths rises.

The twin dichotomy of the good and the evil child, which appears as the biblical theme of Cain and Abel, symbolizes the split occurring in the mind at birth. One twin is identified with the positive power of the sun. The other twin must bear the guilt of fallen light and travels as a mirror image through the shades of the underworld in identification with a sun that emits darkness. In our collective unconscious, we all have archetypes for twin dichotomies such as that of Cain and Abel, or of "evil-child gangs" and "good-child gangs", rooted in archaic histories of mankind. Versions of these myths exist in our social unconscious. These are specific to a particular society (Weinberg, 2007) influencing many generations. For example, Serbian epic-folk oral poetry is rich with motifs of the Serbian *hajduk*-gangs fighting the Turkish conqueror-gangs. In Serbian tradition, there are similar patterns in poetry about other guerrilla gangs such as the partisans who fought Nazis in the Second World War, dichotomies between communist partisans and *chetnik* gangs (associated to Serbian monarchy), and other civil war-related dichotomies. Lines of symbolization can be traced through to later fights during political protests or contemporary hooligan football violence. There is certainly a kaleidoscopic mix among such groupings, often making it difficult to distinguish between their types and roots.

Still, it is essential to understand the basic distinction between the different types of gangs: those protective positive gangs aimed at progress and those negative aimed at destruction, decadence, and extremism. Of course, one type can turn into the other, and *vice versa*.

To support the desired goal in reconciliation work with groups and societies, we need to learn to discern these differences. We need to be capable of recognizing the leading aspects in dialectic movements as well as having the skills needed to attune to, and offer, protection when destructive attacks intrude. How can we be equipped with such multiple skills with opposing styles of interaction?

Migrating bird habitats as transitional spaces

Another important question relates to the optimal quality and sustainability of a reconciliation space—symbolically, the *habitat*. In today's world, real human violence is everywhere, *ante portas*, ready to destroy various aspects of humanity. In this regard, I have often thought about the Golan birds, when, just a year after the Gonen Conference, the brutality of real war intruded into the region. Were their migrating rhythms disrupted? This brought to mind a similar habitat in my hometown of Belgrade, situated at the confluence of Danube and Sava rivers, co-creating a large, wild island in the heart of the city. Over the centuries of turbulent Serbian history, the island remained untouched by any human settlement, but embraced migrating birds. Why is it called the War Island? Is it because of its location at the edge of so many wars—similar to the Golan Heights? It might represent a transitional space for transforming hate into "sparks of hope", flying in their natural aesthetic rhythms of "going-on-being" (Winnicott, 1964), carrying potential meaning which is accessible only if sensitively approached. Group-analytic groups, workshops, and conferences remind us of those temporal habitats for warming up, the places where we can learn through experience the rhythms of safety, as well as the incipient skills needed to sail over troubled waters, for long journeys and going-on-being, skills and wisdom which can then be acquired and applied in faraway habitats.

Infant gangs in groups

Let me now share a few illustrative examples from my group-analytic groups and from the reflective citizens workshops held in Serbia.

The first is a description of the change in a woman of thirty-five, who is in therapy due to panic attacks with agoraphobia. At the time,

T had a daughter of five and was pregnant, expecting a baby boy. She often talked about her twin brother, who got most of their mother's attention during her whole childhood. She withdrew from many social situations, often feeling estranged from those around her.

A few weeks before the change she shared a dream with the group:

> "There was a huge wall clock, and suddenly a monkey jumped out of it, at first on my shoulder, then on Marina's lap, then on other group members. Maybe it was my wish that all of you see that I am not bad indeed!"

A few weeks later, there was an essential change:

> "I again felt that terrible dense cloud around my head pressuring me, making me anxious, almost to the point of leaving the group. However, during that session, while everybody was so empathic, something inside me, like a capsule, broke. I feel it will never return. The capsule broke, in which that little girl lived in the garden world full of narcissus flowers. They reminded me of those narcissi that grew in the garden of our family house. For all these years, the little girl refused to join the world due to its ugliness." She cried with deep sorrow. "I felt terrible, in total breakdown, as if I were going to die of shock, being exposed to the new world. Even my skin was hurting. As if I was now growing a new skin and immunity. Not only that, I cannot go back to that garden refuge; I do not wish to do that anymore. However, it is so disturbing—I now see clearly—that the badness which I massively projected onto people and even to you here, is in fact part of myself. The dark cloud is a terrifying internal figure, selfish and cold, similar to an all-mighty God. But it is not somebody else—it is me! I see how I used to be indifferent, even cruel to many people. I behaved in a hysterical and confused manner, which I never wanted to admit. And at the same time, I see a weak baby with its eyes mainly closed, as if not wanting anything. It is lifeless." She cried again and talked about identification with the baby in her body and the worries she had for her baby boy. She wondered if she could have enough faith for him, since she had this feeling of the lifeless internal baby that paralyzed her.

We can see the transformation process of a zone which was for years "untouchable", when main components of the internal arrangement became vivid, in Grotstein's terms (2009, p. 213): "adult cooperative personality", the "stuck infant-self" (her lifeless baby-self),

"sabotaging sub-personalities", who attack the relationship of the cooperative personality and the therapist/group (omnipotent garden-girl, teenage-refugee-girl, hysterical non-thinking woman), and the "ghost", the unconscious "wraith", threatening the change as part of the whole gang (the returning dark cloud).

* * *

To illustrate some aspects of a group process with the focus on infant gangs, I offer another vignette from a small weekly group-analytic group formed after the bombing of Serbia, gathering mixed disorders including borderline, phobia, depression, abused, and traumatized members with a few refugees.

One member of the group, a professional clown, D, came to the very first group session with his little dog and childishly sat on the floor. He shared his stories about being a "clown doctor", making children laugh in hospitals and orphanages. He was a nomadic person, living at times in caravans in the woods. It was surprising that he stayed with the group for the whole year. He succeeded in stopping much of his self-destructive behavior and apologized for having to leave. D personified the childish, manic, rebellious anti-group gang.

After D left, there was a silent, apathetic atmosphere with –K (Bion, 1962) dominating the matrix. A middle-aged, depressive man, who was a refugee from Sarajevo with a history of horrific family war losses, was forcing a deadly silence where all communication was blocked due to his massive projections of absurdity over any communication. Moreover, it was as if an invisible dreadful threat and wraith hovered over the group, allowing only horror images. An old artist talked about her sculpture: a lying body without a head, situated in a black metal cage. A mirror was placed below the body, and a huge black widow spider was placed on the cage. It was not easy to associate. Shudder and horror was felt in the air. A young man talked about his wish to poison the water system in a normal tone of voice, miming the actions—a story that completely stunned everybody. A student, who was putting off studying for exams so that he could gamble, stubbornly made comments that the group looked stupid and absurd, adding to –K. It was a group-phase in which perverse gangs dominated.

In dreams and fantasies, war dragons, water hydra-monsters, and gorgons seemed to be warning everybody to remain immobile. A

dream appeared of a funeral procession marching in dark dense waters holding a baby, while the dreamer was sitting on a stone in the water with a grandmother telling old stories. Transgenerational transmission of trauma suffering was able to slowly emerge.

Generally, the setting was appreciated by the group members. Its containing function, with the stable presence of the therapist and the group, had to last long enough, without forcing the group to build safety and trust, encouraging growth in spite of turbulence. Personal psychic retreats of members were able to be disentangled step-by-step and join the various transient interpersonal group and subgroup social/psychic retreats as challenging transitional spaces (Mojović, 2011).

The stiff paralyzing atmosphere culminated in three sessions of practically total silence. A dream emerged of a group crouching for years in a submarine, stimulating rich reflections about whether the dream represented collective escape from personal problems, whether hiding from circumstances of war, or a sort of unconscious suicidal submarine journey. That session happened to be a turning point of the group process. Work group capacities increased.

Thus, in the matrix, there appeared to be feral haughty children: clown child, gambling child, spoiled arrogant child, funeral procession child, later a crusade child. From invisible territories of destructive narcissism, the hitherto invisible aspects of group matrix, the infant gangs in powerful mutual coalition, became increasingly open to thought.

In the last year, two female members joined, both divorced with children. The older one was sixty-four years of age, a refugee from Bosnia, and the other, a middle-aged consultant. There was welcoming behavior, but also a lot of anger towards them. Both were devoted to the problems of others and they shared that attitude often shown by strong women who are capable of enduring all suffering, which irritated a few members even more. They became group scapegoats. Group rebellion was enacted in relationship to them, as if symbolizing the cruel superego. The older one could not bear any more, saying that she was hurt. She told me, "I finally must not obey! You have to understand that I will not go to that group! It is my new freedom!"

That caused huge emotional turbulence in the group. There was a particularly strong reaction from a new painter, who was an orphan,

and vulnerable to women's suffering. His few years spent with his mother, who became ill after delivering him, were a treasure for him. A few sessions of very emotional discussions, with fights among the members, resulted in very creative and fruitful group work.

The infant gangs, which were more or less hidden, finally came into the open—a lively desire to know each other better. A female refugee talked about a *hajduk*/guerrilla gang in herself, remembering how, at the age of twelve, when the war in Croatia (in the city of Vukovar) broke out, many Serbs were persecuted and massacred around her. At that point, she was compelled to take up arms to fight for the lives of her family. Terrible feelings of special loneliness cried out—pain she could share only with her refugee group: "What does any of you here know about the pain?!"

Splitting between refugees and others emerged. A student, who was a child in the mass exodus of the Serbs following the Croatian military operation, when over 200,000 Serbs were exiled from their homes in Croatia in only one day, opened up for the first time about that deeply rooted trauma. A dark internal girl came out, now visible to everybody in the group, totally submerged in murderousness, and shared her dream:

> "I rushed into the room in which that General was: 'Now, I shall torture you instead!'"

Other members' hatred became accessible for expression, too. It was a very difficult work group period, but it saw the beginnings of some deep healing. Terrible crying broke out and others joined in: "Why don't all these miserable children just hug each other for a while?! They should also hug Croat children!"

Immunity gradually increased. New themes came to the fore, such as rivalry, especially among infant parts. A new submarine group dream was shared:

> "This time the submarine was huge, with a lot of space inside and many colorful interesting rooms. It was on a journey towards the North Pole for the Eurovision Song Contest!"

There is certainly a lot of further work awaiting this group. Obviously, it still needs images of underwater environments and barriers of (untouchable) steel amor for their group-social-psychic retreats, but it now enjoys a wider space, in which it is easier to breathe and conduct dialogue.

* * *

Why a submarine headed towards the North Pole? Does the group feel brave enough now to encounter the Snow Queen jointly and directly? Her kingdom, as a metaphor for the "death narcissism" with the "dead mother complex" (Green, 2001) of people, in which selves are buried in her necropolis and all vitality for nourishing the tombs, might occur in our groups. This seems to be the case especially with traumatized people or in traumatized countries. However, when the anti-group is disarmed to some extent, and the deep hatred contained, then "group as an object of desire" (Nitsun, 2006) as an organizing principle may gain strength. Only then can some space emerge for the warm tears of love and faith, similar to Gerda's tears, to start melting frozen hearts and dislodge troll mirrors from human eyes. In this group, there are now tears in every session; the underlying sadness is oceanic. It is to be hoped that the mourning can last long enough before new traumas freeze it again.

Infant gangs in the group matrix, as coalitions of internal gangs of members, might, on the one hand, be the invisible cause of the group's resistance, rebellion, and refusal (Billow, 2010), but on the other hand, may also represent essential and vital assistance for positive transformation.

Appeal from the Reflective Citizens workshops: songs penetrating the ghetto walls

Let me share another illustrative event from the Gonen Conference which altered my internal walls: in connection to Serbia being, for decades, stuck and excluded from all families of countries, even from the Eurovision Song contest, but now slowly moving away from isolation, my Gonen lecture ended with a glimpse into Serbia's recent winning Eurovision song, called "Prayer", about love, but perhaps representing an appeal for hope for this country and its citizens. When the audience was touched, and began to sing and swing, I realized that my own internal ghetto with frozen parts of my social unconscious started to dissolve. These were meaningful emotions

brought to life, which I was then able to take to my groups back home. So, this conference, like many others, which are co-created "by" and "for" our professional "tribes", can be an enriching temporal habitat for learning through experience, and also learning how to cope with untouchable matrices of our groups and societies, to earn a bit of additional trust and skills that can help us navigate through the whirlwinds and abysses originating in traumatic wounds and scars, to prepare us for further journeys and then to share this experience with matrices in our other faraway homes.

One such sibling, group-analytic learning space is the Serbian Reflective Citizens Project. The project consists of regular, seasonally held group-analytic workshops open for citizens interested in social dreaming, social drawing, and reflection in large and small groups on any freely emerging psychosocial content. We try to enable participants and groups to follow their own spontaneous rhythms of dissociating and integrating. In one of these groups in Kosovo, the topic of Rodriguez, a Mexican-American pop–rock star from the 1960s, portrayed in the Oscar-winning documentary *Sugarman*, emerged: while Rodriguez lived and worked as a construction worker in the USA in relative poverty and obscurity, he was an enormously popular and important figure in South Africa for years. His anti-establishment rock songs very much influenced citizens under apartheid, in times when this country was bound by conservative restrictions and cut off from the rest of the world by sanctions. The musician did not know anything about it, and neither did his fans know that he was alive and had not died during a concert, according to a widely circulating legend. One day, the reconnection of those two parts of Rodriguez's life happened, with a few very touching live concerts in Cape Town. In the Reflective Citizens' group, this story symbolized hope for the future reconnection of forgotten psychosocial aspects, which, for a long time, can be dissociated and frozen in some social/psychic retreats. Is it possible for those valuable, vibrant aspects of people, groups, and communities to be preserved, even if isolated in ghetto cities such as Kosovska Mitrovica, or countries such as Serbia, keeping them safe for some future time to come? Can unhealthy dissociative cracks be replaced by a healthier, creative use of dissociation—replacing frozen hearts with the sharing of imaginations and dreams (Goldman, 2013; Mojović, 2014; Winnicott, 1971) in the joint endeavor of uncovering their hidden meanings? Do we dare to let hope and love come in?

A beam of intense darkness: the pop–rock star as a forgotten peer

Splitting of peer relations is deeply rooted in the human mind, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically. It is represented in the myths of Cain and Abel, Apollo and Dionysus, and many others. Sibling rivalry in fighting for territory, possessions, power, and love shaped much of human history. Rejected or excluded peers hold at least some significant aspects for the others—processes which we always need to bear in mind when coping with reconciliation.

The troll servant of the Snow Queen distorted the beautiful aspects of people and magnified the ugly, similar to destructiveness that so massively occurs in human relations around us. Bion stressed that, in psychoanalytic work, "one must cast a beam of darkness so that something which has hitherto been obscured by the glare of the illumination can glitter all the more in that darkness" (1970, cited in Grotstein, 2006, p. 1).

Rodriguez had faith in his creativity, although his star was shining in a world far away, in an encapsulated apartheid country, where the splinters of his 1960's singing enthusiasm touched the people's hearts and caused them to start glittering in their social darkness. It is, perhaps, similar to the intensity of attachment and care for survival and creativity found among siblings who lose their family home (Hindle & Sherwin-White, 2014). Rodriguez had modestly to bear the burden of being a forgotten peer among his fellow American stars of the time, deprived of the joy of playing and swinging with his natural peer gang. He was left out from belonging, as was the country of his fans, and like many others who were destined for exclusion. Was it an enactment of America's social unconscious linked to his Mexican roots, or just the way the wheel of sibling destiny turned at the time—a fate attributable to the positions of the stars at that time?

When we carry the fallen light as mirror images through the shadows of the underworld journeys like splinters that emit darkness, either as individuals, families, or communities, we can easily lose our faith in justice, and in any meaning at all. How can we then be able to accept a friendly bridge over troubled water to be laid down for us, to trust that, indeed, the time has come for us to set sail and let our dreams shine and glitter in darkness? Or would we rather keep safe behind the shields in absence-of-being, with contempt for friendly laughter and love?

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