

A S S O C I A T I O N S

Newsletter of the Western New England Psychoanalytic Society

December 2017

Editor's Note

Perhaps one motif uniting the articles in this issue is “thinking with each other” in the hopes of forming new ideas relevant to the present time. Sid Phillips invites us to think with him about racial diversity at Western New England. Deb Fried details this year’s course offerings. Jenifer Nields reports on a scientific meeting featuring Nancy Chodorow who describes how Western New England precipitated thinking toward an American Independent Tradition. Gretchen Hermes considers how a Nigerian visitor may think with dinosaurs—newly discovered to her—on her mind. Then she reflects upon the past year’s scientific meetings prompted by this perspectival shift. Matt Shaw lauds Joan Wexler’s contribution to how we think and write. In that tradition, think with a colleague and friend, write thoughts down, revise and revise, fearlessly send them to *Associations*: we will be the better for it.



Working Toward Racial Diversity At Western New England

By Sidney Phillips, MD

It has always seemed a bit strange to me that, after three decades of hard organizational work, American psychoanalysis is manifestly friendlier and more open to gay, lesbian, and transgender candidates and analysts than it is with our colleagues of color. This observation suggests that our racial biases may run deeper and be more entrenched than our homophobic and transphobic ones. A group of us at Western New England is beginning the hard work to

change this situation by examining our own racism and racial bias that has led to it.

I hope our members have been able to view the compelling and poignant video Black Psychoanalysts Speak available in the video section of PEP (see under videos: Winograd, B. Black Analysts Speak). I also hope you will take the time to read the three issues of *The American Psychoanalyst* (otherwise known as TAP) concerning race and racism in American psychoanalysis. These moving, substantive articles, three in each issue, are under the editorship of Michael Slevin and Beverly Stoute. (See TAP, 2016, volume 50, Issues 3 and 4; and in 2017, volume 51, Issue 1; if you put “The American Psychoanalyst” in your web browser, a link to archives of these older issues comes up; click on the particular issue to see the full text articles). Our Education Committee Chair, Dr. Lawrence Levenson, is leading our Institute to consider how we can become more racially diverse in our analytic community. I have joined him in this endeavor and will briefly detail the efforts we have begun.

In one of the TAP articles, “Race and Racism in Psychoanalytic Thought: The Ghosts in Our Nursery,” Dr. Beverly Stoute, a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist and psychoanalyst at Emory, reviews the psychoanalytic and related mental health literature for writings on race, beginning with Freud to the present time. She found that latent racist attitudes had impeded the development of psychoanalytic theory on racial difference, the investigation of the psychological underpinnings of racist thinking, and the diversification of the field. They may also have fostered an inhibition of curiosity in many psychoanalysts on the manifestations of race in

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their clinical work. I contacted Dr. Stoute, and she graciously shared her bibliography and a syllabus for a course on race and racism that she teaches at the Emory Institute.

Dr. Levenson and I are reading our way through this literature. We meet Fridays at 3:00 pm in the kitchen of the Institute, and we

welcome faculty and candidates to read along with us and join us for these informal discussions. Our idea is to delve deeply into this literature, and then to lead our faculty and Education Committee, who have already

committed to the endeavor, through it. Once we have reviewed the literature, the Education Committee (in collaboration with Dr. Barbara Marcus, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, Ms. Sybil Houlding, Chair of Faculty, and candidates who would like to join us) hopes to develop a course on race and racism for candidates. This course will consider how race, a biological fiction, is a social, political, and cultural construct. Going beyond this single course, we want to design ways to reflect a sensibility about race into the curriculum that allows us to examine how issues of race manifest in our clinical work. As the authors mentioned above note, this occurs in analyses where both participants are white, not just in those where analyst and analysand are of different races or ethnicities.

We plan to enrich these efforts by inviting analysts to speak with us over the course of the coming years. We have been collaborating with the Yale Child Study Center, the Yale Department of Psychiatry, and the Connecticut Society of Psychoanalytic Psychologists. On Saturday, December 2, 2017, Dr. Anton Hart spoke on "Opening Up Subjects of Difference: Beyond Competence, Towards Authentic, Curious Co-Participation" at The New

Haven Lawn Club. Western New England hosted Dr. Hart at the Institute for a light supper, presentation, and discussion on the Friday evening before the conference, on December 1st.

In the spring of 2018, we hope to have Dr. Beverly Stoute join us at Yale Department of

Psychiatry Grand Rounds. She also has been invited to participate in a conference and case presentations at Western New England. In May 2018, Dr. Dorothy Holmes will give the Ritvo

Lecture at the Yale Child Study Center and will similarly give a presentation and discuss cases here at Western New England.

In the fall of 2018, the Yale Child Study Center will host a gala celebration of Dr. James Comer and the 50th anniversary of his School Development Program.

This effort at addressing racial diversity at Western New England is just beginning. The Education Committee is open to suggestions and new ideas about how to achieve this long-term goal. Please write to or speak with Dr. Levenson, Dr. Marcus, Ms. Houlding, or me about your ideas or desire to participate. We welcome hearing from you.

The morning child analytic seminar reawakens!



Photo by Norka Malberg



Continuing Education for WNEPS 2017-18

By Deborah Fried, MD

We are off to a strong start this year in continuing education at WNEPS.

The courses are full and filling up, including these three that are up and running:

Drs. Angela Cappiello and Mary Ayre are offering a course entitled, In the Realm of Unrepresented States: Understanding the Patient Who is Difficult to Reach, in Glastonbury. This course looks at how the intersubjective work between therapist and patient can transform experiences that cannot be told in words into increasingly organized representations amenable to therapeutic work. They have a rich syllabus, including Bion, Ogden and Ferro and meet monthly throughout the year.

Drs. Ken and Lisa Marcus are teaching a clinical course on the Assessment and Psychotherapeutic Treatment of Gender Nonconforming Children, Adolescents and Adults. The assessment of nonconforming gender identities, and, when indicated, the clinical management of medical and psychotherapeutic interventions are discussed in the context of age, developmental level, familial and social circumstances, and the possible complications posed by co-occurring psychiatric conditions. Participants have an opportunity to present their own clinical work with gender nonconforming individuals in private practice and clinic settings.

Dr. Ira Moses tackles the whole endeavor of clinical listening in: Placing your Theory on the Couch: Models of Listening that Shape Therapist Inference. Using published therapy transcripts, the group will study and make use of interpersonal and relational theories and apply them to the actual clinical material at hand. Many have signed on to this class for its clinically-relevant approach.

More classes are offered later in the year and I will report on them in later issues of *Associations*.

Nancy Chodorow: “Toward an Independent American Tradition” with Rosemary Balsam, discussant.

Report on WNEPS Scientific Meeting September 23rd, 2017

By Jenifer A. Nields, M.D.

“Whenever I visit Western New England,” Dr. Chodorow began, “I am aware of how consonant your history is with my own psychoanalytic identity.” It was in pondering this identity, following an invitation to speak at a 1999 symposium on “What’s American about American Psychoanalysis?” that the idea of an American Independent tradition first took shape in Dr. Chodorow’s mind. She titled this afternoon’s talk: “*Toward an American Independent Tradition*,” thus capturing the open-endedness and process-orientation of her conceptualization.

The American Independent Tradition, as Dr. Chodorow sees it, has its roots here in New Haven, specifically in the work of two pioneering thinkers, Erik Erikson and Hans Loewald.

While both Loewald and Erikson, Dr. Chodorow tells us, would have comfortably identified as ego psychologists (and followers of Freud), each acknowledges, too, the manifold influences of interpersonal relationships and culture. In different ways, the work of each of these men illuminates how interactions with others inform psychic structure, how the external environment is reflected and remade internally. Dr. Chodorow offered Erikson’s stages of development, as well as his case studies of Luther and Gandhi, as examples of this cast of mind. Cited too, were Hans Loewald’s abiding interest in internalization (think verb, not noun) and his having invited the sociologist Talcott Parsons to New Haven for a conference on internalization.

Dr. Chodorow remarked that for both Erikson and Loewald, (as for other ego psychologists) the trajectory of development is one, broadly speaking, toward greater autonomy and individuation—for Erikson, culminating in ego-integrity and, for Loewald, in emancipation and atonement. This emphasis is paradoxical, however, as the development of the individual thus attained is inextricably colored and shaped by interactions with the external world and comes to reflect that world in



complex and profound ways.

Much as the British Independent Tradition distinguishes itself from two dominant and antagonistic schools (A. Freud and M. Klein), so the American Independent Tradition steers its way between ego psychology and “cultural-interpersonal (now relational) psychoanalysis.” Although diverse, American Independents share “a family of resemblances” whose “synthesizing theory” Dr. Chodorow has named “intersubjective ego psychology.” This approach “remains committed to ego psychological understandings and technique while also claiming, without identifying as interpersonal or relational, developmental and transference-countertransference fields.” Dr. Chodorow includes within this tradition Boesky, Jacobs, Chused, Renik, Poland and others whose work she cites in this presentation, as well as Dr. Balsam and herself.

In Dr. Chodorow’s descriptions of the American Independent Tradition (including examples from her own work), certain key characteristics become clear: the central emphasis on internalization; the interest in psychic development as an ongoing process throughout the life cycle; an emphasis on psychic processes rather than static entities as forming the components of mind; a quality of openness; an attitude of ‘listening to’ (the patient) rather than ‘listening for’; an attitude of *not knowing*; a willingness to be ‘multi-theoretical and technically creative’; an awareness of how flexible movement among psychic levels contributes to aliveness, hence not privileging one level over another but rather seeking to open channels of communication among them; a respect for the ‘indestructibility and power’ of the unconscious as providing ongoing energy and raw

material throughout development; an emphasis on the patient (and the analyst) as an individual, unique and multi-faceted; a focus more on the patient’s mind than the analyst’s. In this latter regard, Dr. Chodorow suggests that the analyst can be a “co-actor without being co-star or claiming center stage.” She suggested that the analyst needs to observe her own particularity without necessarily sharing these observations with the patient.

Dr. Balsam began her discussion by recounting how Dr. Chodorow’s “luminously descriptive idea of the ‘American Independent Tradition’” struck her like “a good interpretation,” with a feeling of immediate recognition. “If we

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**2018 WNEPS
SPRING SYMPOSIUM**

**Saturday April 7th, 2018
8:30 AM – 12:45 PM
YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER**

**Treating Our Young Adults:
Three Child Analysts in Conversation**

Norka Malberg PsyD, Eric Millman MD, Charles Parks PhD



**Sponsored by:
The Western New England
Psychoanalytic Society**

For more information contact the Registrar:
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Mary Ayre MD, Christine Desmond MD,
Deborah Fried MD, Linda Mayes MD,
Christopher Leveille PsyD, Joan Poll MD,
Neayka Sahay MD, Jean Vogel MD

have a name, we have an identity,” Dr. Balsam said, and expressed the hope that Dr. Chodorow’s careful elucidation of the qualities of this tradition would help secure its legacy. She commented that Hans Loewald would have been happy with the idea of a ‘tradition,’ not a ‘school,’ the latter being more suggestive of instructiveness and dogma, rather than an approach and an attitudinal stance, “a way of mind within analysis.”

As a kind of case example, Dr. Balsam fleshed out some of the implications of this grouping as related to her work on the body and on femininity. She pointed out the irony that, although relational analysts have contributed much to the dialogue on sex and gender, the body itself seems to have gone missing from this discourse. “Without this ‘body’ there can be no ‘mind,’” she quipped.

She commented, too, that, although Freud’s theorizations regarding femininity were off-base, he was nonetheless the only person of his time to listen deeply and carefully to women, to hear and document their stories in such a way that others after him could reinterpret them. Affirming the attitude of openness characteristic of the independent tradition and noting the diversity of valuable approaches within psychoanalysis generally, she encouraged “facing as ‘fake news’ that anyone has a special access to something called ‘truth.’”

What emerged from the afternoon’s presentations was a view of an American Independent Tradition as offering a kind of ‘free swinging attention’ (to borrow a phrase from Dr. Carlson’s 2002 paper, which Dr. Balsam quoted) to the individual as a universe unto him/herself and to the relationships, body and environment in which he/she is embedded; a view that appreciates and embraces both the particularities of life and the synthesizing powers of the ego and of psychoanalytic understanding. It is this dialectical (at)tension, never settling into one side vs the other (or one ‘level’ of psychic mentation vs. another), that makes this tradition as presented today both lively and compelling, gives it (one hopes) an openness to novelty and change without loss of continuity with its deep roots in the past.

President’s Remarks on the Founder’s Award Recipient, Joan Wexler

By Matthew Shaw, PhD

What a delight to present the Founder’s Award to Joan Wexler today. While working at Yale, Joan was one of the first people I met from the Western New England. She warned me early, with a mischievous glint in her eyes, “Watch out, you’ll offer the Institute a finger and it will take an arm.” And she’s right. It has. And yet her smile, her very presence, suggested what this community would offer in return: an intellectually rich, lively, creative space.

Joan Wexler graduated from Sarah Lawrence College, earned her M.S.W. from the Columbia School of Social Work and completed her analytic training here at the Western New England. She has taught at Yale Health, the Connecticut Mental Health Center, in the Society’s extension division and the Institute.

The many places she has taught rival the breadth of content she has covered. Her courses have ranged from Group Psychotherapy to Couples Counseling to the Writings of Hans Loewald, and to a fantastic class on the Interpretation of Dreams. She also has revitalized our writing program by teaching candidates how to write analytically for the past 12 years. No easy task.

Joan has published in the Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, written numerous APsA reviews for books about parenting, breaking up, and making art. And she has been a good citizen of both the Society and the Institute, serving on countless committees and working groups.

If Joan had pursued half of these activities, we would be delighted to grant her this award. She not only performed all this and more, but she’s done it in her own remarkable way. Joan is fiercely creative, kind, generous of spirit, and amidst this often grave work, easy to laugh. If you’re like me, whenever we come together, you hope you’re sitting next to Joan. I argue that her greatest contribution to our community is her very presence: her lively, big-hearted presence.





OFF THE COUCH

Candidates' Column

By Gretchen Hermes, MD PhD

Thinking with Dinosaurs

Over the past year, the Peabody Museum of Natural history hosted *Dinosaurs Take Flight: The Art of Archaeopteryx*. The exhibit, through artistic renderings, celebrated the discovery in 1861 of the *Archaeopteryx*, a remarkable creature whose fossil remains have been critical to understanding the origin of birds and flight. The exhibit described the *Archaeopteryx* as “an icon of evolutionary theory.” Its discovery explicitly linked dinosaurs at the brink of extinction to their survival as birds in the modern era, thus making the *Archaeopteryx* one of the most joyous and inspiring scientific discoveries of the last 200 years.

Concurrent with the Peabody’s *Archaeopteryx* exhibit, a series of scientific meetings at the Western New England Psychoanalytic Society seemed designed to accompany it. None were explicitly on the topic of the ‘ancient wing,’ yet they can be seen as imaginative elaborations of dinosaurs nevertheless. In the proto-mythological form of Maleficent, the betrayed and deeply traumatized winged-fairy; as Mabel the Goshawk, from *His for Hawk*, who tethers author Helen MacDonald to *terra firma* during

the most fragmented phases of mourning her father’s death; as a small plastic toy held in the hand of a troubled, neglected boy struggling to choose life over death. The prehistoric representations in these cases are less iconic and more totemic than *Archaeopteryx*, offering ways not so much of thinking about dinosaurs but in thinking *with* dinosaurs about the inner lives of human beings, particularly about dimensions of time in human experiences of death and development.

Maleficent

The ravishing Maleficent is a powerful but betrayed and deeply traumatized fairy who condemns the newborn Princess Aurora to a [death-like sleep](#) from which she will never awaken, as in the original story of *Sleeping Beauty*. In this re-telling, however, Maleficent is not doomed by her infanticidal wishes; her inner powers are mobilized in a moving expression of love and caregiving for the young princess. In the film, Maleficent takes over parenting from a group of bumbling fairies who wish to grow into motherhood as *easy as 1-2-3*. But it is Maleficent who struggles to grow into that role and to ‘hold in time’ the mutually rough and tumble, developmental processes of parenthood and childhood. This other mother, from another world, who has survived nearly

asphyxiating odds, bears the long sleep and disconnection of the Princess in the sleep of adolescence. And in this newer version of *Sleeping Beauty*, Maleficent restores the princess from her deathless sleep with a true love kiss.

Hans Loewald along with other philosophers wrote of *'nunc stans'*, “the abiding now, the instant that knows no temporal articulation, where distinctions between now, earlier and later have fallen away or have not arisen, leaving time suspended” like the fairy’s young charge. For us, the age of the dinosaurs, like that of the titans and the gods, stretches so far beyond human comprehension of time as to have this effect on any conception we might have of the moments and individuals within it. And within those timeless millions of years, life underwent an evolution of parenthood similar to Maleficent’s, in the most fundamental of ways, as the relationship between living things and their offspring moved decisively from indifference, even hostility, to one of self-sacrificing care and protection, though the underlying reptilian tension of interests remains to complicate parenthood, like Maleficent’s character, to this day.

H is for Hawk

In Helen MacDonald’s work, *H is for Hawk*, Mabel, a Northern Goshawk, among the most fiercely primitive and ‘other’ of birds, one whose connection with eons past is most clear, takes the role of the lost object in the weeks and months following the death of MacDonald’s beloved father. MacDonald writes: “my mind struggled to build across the gap, to make a new and inhabitable world. The problem was that it had nothing to work with. There was no partner, no children, no home. No nine to five job either.” While for Maleficent, the expanse of time provides the relativistic distance required to transform, MacDonald’s experience reminds us why Limbo is Dante’s First Circle of Hell, the descent into the depths of despair when human time is suspended. And yet in her saurian way, it is Mabel’s holding of MacDonald’s process in time, tethering her to a living being as she works through the initial phases of mourning, that makes negotiation of these depths possible. When MacDonald allows “palpable lines, not physical ones: lines of habit, of hunger, of partnership, of familiarity. Of

something the old falconers call love,” when she realizes how crucial it was to feel love brought to her on the return flight of this hawk, she is engaging with time’s arrows as a release.

But as Dr. Levenson described, “... at some point the survivor is faced with the illusory nature of magical reunion and when that occurs deep depression can ensue — or the beginning of true mourning. Indeed, recognizing that one had been under the spell of the magic of reunion with the lost beloved may mark the beginning of true mourning.” It is the hawk, winging its way from the primeval that facilitates contact with the depth of loss and trauma and ultimately as Sybil Houlding noted in her remarks, “the integration of earlier unthinkable losses.”

Birds Becoming Dinosaurs

In a third meeting in the series, Dr. Larry Brown presented materials from clinical work with a young boy named Sean who had had a relatively normal development in the first months of life but then suffered overwhelming neglect as the result of his mother’s addiction to crystal meth and his father’s schizoaffective disorder. Dr. Brown described Sean’s experience as the “emotional equivalent of a Permian extinction,” a fully deoxygenated world from which the boy’s grandparents ultimately provided rescue. Sean was brought back from the brink of oblivion through an interpersonally rich environment with his grandparents, his nanny, and intensive work with behavioral therapists.

He continued to struggle in play with his peers and was brought to Dr. Brown to engage in play therapy. Sean’s play character—little Sean—succumbed continuously to violent predators in the environment. Specifically, in his play with dinosaurs, he was not in the imaginary world of a squishy soft lavender *Apatosaurus* from a Happy Meal; this was a hard-edged scary toy version of a young embattled life in chronic defiant retreat to extinction. An important facet of Dr. Brown’s work with Sean was the awareness that dinosaurs survived extinction as birds. But Sean’s inner world struggled against this. In play, toy dinosaurs refused to become birds and toy birds turned back into disappearing dinosaurs. This enduring therapeutic struggle brings to mind another dimension of time—everlastingness.

Hans Loewald described everlastingness as a dimension of time separate from eternity. Everlastingness is not beyond the human mind to imagine. He gave the example of the revolution of stars and astronomical motion as everlastingness; the music of the spheres may continue for all time, yet we are able to break it down into repeating cycles that are within our comprehension. Sean has created his own cycles—from life to death— so as to hold on to time and his understanding of the terrors of the world. We celebrate, as the little boy does not, the mutability that is time's inevitable consequence. Dinosaurs survived despite the most harrowing moments of environmental degradation. They live in our world today in beauty, song, flight and feather, offering hope in a way that stars cannot. Their fossil remains tell us something of what they were, but could not have predicted what they would become. This too is the hope for Sean.

Thinking with Dinosaurs

During the *Archeopteryx* exhibit, an eighteen year old woman from Nigeria, from a culture far more ancient than our own, was visiting my family. We took her to the Peabody Museum, not fully cognizant that the educational curricula in her country do not include the history of dinosaurs. She entered the galleries uncertain that dinosaurs had ever existed. When she first saw the fossil remains of the *Apatosaurus* in the Great Hall, she felt terror. She didn't know if the skeleton was going to move. Her fragile sense of safety in the Museum strengthened after she saw the fossil remains of *Archelon ischyros*, a species of ancient turtle weighing close to 3 tons, measuring 11 feet from snout to tail and 15 feet from the tip of one fore paddle to the other. She recognized this as a massive version of the smaller turtles she routinely saw at home, and so the possibility of dinosaurs seemed real.

As this realization took root, it opened her up to us in ways that our familiarity with her culture had not. She could imagine the horrible permutations of existence that led to life post-extinction. Shortly after the visit to the Peabody, she began to discuss the experience of Boko Haram in her village. It was hard not to relate the story of what she had seen in her village to the evidence in the Peabody Museum of what the earth could bear. She was thinking with dinosaurs.



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