



Introduction to the PsyArt Conference Proceedings
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Samir Dayal

Editor-in Chief, *PsyArt* Journal

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This is a special issue containing conference proceedings of the 40th annual PsyArt conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia. It brings together, at the request of the members themselves, a few representative examples of the papers presented at that conference. Only a few of those who presented at the conference chose to submit their papers for publication, in response to a call for papers for the purpose. Some of the presenters may have intended to publish more fully developed papers elsewhere, or may have presented at the conference excerpts from longer projects, and others simply did not have time to put their talks into a version that they wanted to have published. The keynote presentation could not be included either (it was an early form of a chapter scheduled to be published as part of a book about to be published), and there were other presentations that could not be completed in time to meet the deadline for submissions. This collection therefore does not pretend to be comprehensive. There were, as usual, other excellent contributions to the conference that are not published here. The hope however is that there is enough thematic variety and substance here to convey a sense of the richness of our small conference, mirroring the geographical diversity represented by the authors themselves—they are affiliated with academic institutions spread across the globe, from the United States to Finland and Latvia, and from Spain and Portugal to Hungary and Japan. Because the PsyArt Conference also aspires to be inclusive and open to presenters at different academic ranks or positions relative to the academy, work by junior scholars stands here shoulder to shoulder with scholars more advanced in their careers or with those with other professional statuses.

Being proceedings from the conference, the brief essays collected here have intentionally been kept in a state close to their original form, intended primarily for presentation, though subsequently they have in some cases been lightly edited for readability or to add detail or precision. The conference is usually open-themed, but given the size of our conference, this often leads to both unanticipated richness and serendipitous connections among apparently divergent topics. The approaches in these essays—essays in the original sense--range across a wide set of topics.

The essay by Aline Ferreira, “Twins, Wombs and Future Reproduction in *Dead Ringers* (2023),” offers a psychoanalytical perspective on *Dead Ringers* (TV series, 2023), a feminist reimagining of David Cronenberg’s own *Dead Ringers* (1988). The series blends horror with psychoanalytic and ethically provocative representations of a psychoanalytically complex relationship between twin sisters who are gynecologists with a feminist agenda. They are also scientists with a slant approach to a “fratriarchal” critique of patriarchy and feminism at once—the term is a nod to Juliet Mitchell’s *Fratriarchy* (2023), which foregrounds the Law of the Mother as a counter to the Law of the Father. Ferreira shows how the series dramatizes a difficult relationship between female siblings, which nevertheless projects an alternative to oppressive patriarchal regimes.

Reflecting on the #MeToo movement, Marcie Newton in her essay, entitled “#MeToo vs. #MenToo: A Psychoanalytic Examination of Sexual Economics and Violence in a Hashtag Battle” reflects on the significance of the #MeToo movement’s reverse image, what she designates as “#MenToo.” This is not to diminish the value of

the #MeToo movement of course, but to suggest that the harms that movement seeks to repair may also be suffered by those who identify as male, harms brought to the fore in the public sphere by the celebrity conflict of the 2022 Johnny Depp defamation trial, which featured false accusations of domestic violence by his ex-wife Amber Heard. Newton's primary texts here are the much talked-about Netflix television miniseries created by and starring Richard Gadd, *Baby Reindeer* (which bends and blends several conventions of gender and genre), and a book by the Pulitzer prize-winning reporters (who broke the Harvey Weinstein story) Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, ironically titled *She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story that Helped Ignite a Movement* (2019).

Discussing the linkage between psychology and improvisational arts in "Existential Resonances: Exploring the Nexus of Psychology and Performing Arts in Improvisational Practices," Agnė Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė, and Ramunė Balevičiūtė draw out the existentialist themes of authenticity, freedom, choice, and the pursuit of meaning in improvisational practices, as approached through a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. They focus primarily on the creative aspects of artists' personal experience as they intersect with performance practices and psychology.

Literary works have been valued as, among other things, repositories of the collected wisdom of humanity, as resources for moral education, for understanding human nature and its contradictions. Among the most perplexing contradictions of life of course is that between good and evil dimensions of human beings, something that has been a theme in Dostoevsky no less than in the Bible. Combining insights from

neuroscience and literature, Rita Tegen's essay offers an unusual take on this key conflict within the human heart. Tegen's meditation on the intersections of neuroscience and literature is illustrated by literary representations of malevolence. She considers the role of evil in the subject's moral development, counterposed against the imperatives of free will and ethical deliberation. Neuroscience suggests that manifestations of evil in literature can be attributed to impairments in brain function. This challenges the privileging in literary texts of subjective autonomy and agency, and thus of the individual's responsibility for her actions, her guilt, her very capacity for *choice*.

Hisao Oshima's essay, "Japan's Aging Crisis and Masahiro Kobayashi's Film Trilogy: *Haru's Journey* (2010), *Japan's Tragedy* (2013), and *Lear on the Shore* (2016)," addresses a pressing reality in Japan with profound material and psychological consequences: the long-developing aging crisis as portrayed in Kobayashi's trilogy, a probing experiment in psychological representation. Of course the other side of the coin is the declining numbers of the young workforce, the ramifications of which are already being registered in economic terms, but rather than discussing these economic concerns or the trilogy's filmic or representational strategies Oshima's essay testifies to the significance of Kobayashi's profound exploration of the psychological impact of the social problem.

If Oshima's focus is on aging in Japan, as a psychoanalytical psychotherapist and clinical neuropsychologist at the Therapeia Society in Finland, Terttu Mäkinen attends to an obliquely related theme. Focusing not on the elderly but on the young, she discusses challenges of parenting, as seen in a psychoanalytic perspective. Her

primary examples are not clinical but literary. As she observes, parenting is a multifaceted task, determined by historical circumstances and requiring adjustment to not only large-scale evolutionary changes, but also to shifting gender and sexual mores. It must also respond to special conditions of crises including war or trauma.

Rae Muhlstock explores the historical persistence of linked motifs of the minotaur and the labyrinth from Greek mythology through the ages. Muhlstock's essay, "The Minotaur: Artistic Ambiguity and Psychological Ambivalence," traces the figure of the Minotaur in key works of Western literature and culture—from Ovid to Picasso to the contemporary British sculptor and artist Michael Ayrton and author Mark Z. Danielewski. Muhlstock shows that the figure of the minotaur retains a crucial ambiguity and psychological ambivalence, taking on shifting forms that "resist codification."

Melancholia, Nora Sedianszky's topic, indexes an even more enduring cultural and literary motif. Here melancholy is approached as a multidimensional problematic in the work of some giants of literature and psychology: Shakespeare, Freud, and Kristeva, as well as others. Sedianszky traces the treatment of melancholy in notable writings by these authors, and sketches the importance of the theme in the Western tradition.

Picking up on the theme of existentialism, Kitti Jakobsen explores its significance in the work of the Beats--Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs in particular. They had an outsized literary and cultural influence. Jakobovits highlights psychoanalytically relevant aspects of their contribution, especially free association, which they emphasized, believing that spontaneous thought and writing might provide more direct access to the unconscious.