

# Worth a Third Read: Six ANZJFT Readers Remember

Lorraine O’Gorman, Chris Lobsinger, Des Casey, Colin MacKenzie, Jo Grimwade, Marta Lohyn

---

*If we do not sometimes look back over our shoulders to remind ourselves of the ANZJFT’s past achievements, we may forget, and newcomers may never be stimulated to explore earlier contributions for themselves. For this reason, six subscribers were asked to write five hundred words in answer to the question ‘Over the time you have been reading the Journal, what article sticks in your memory the most?’ The one restriction that was placed upon their choice was that if they found themselves unable to choose between two articles, they were to discuss the older of the two, to help assure a wider spread.*

---

LORRAINE O’GORMAN<sup>1</sup> writes: In June 1995, I began working in Galway doing Family Therapy within a Child Guidance setting. I was delighted to find a number of journals in the library dating back fifteen years or so. Present among these was *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* from 1981 to 1987. I began subscribing to the Journal in 1995. What caught my eye, in the summer of 1996, as I browsed through the journals, was the placing of Jung and Bateson together (‘A Jung–Bateson Correspondence’, 8, 1: 1–5).

Since I first became interested in family therapy in 1985, I have enjoyed reading related books and journal articles, finding them full of useful ideas and discussions, as well as offering ideas for practice. It was not until more recent years, through self-discovery reading, that I came across the name of Carl Jung. As I read further, I was fascinated at the range and depth of meaning and ideas from the stories related by Jungian thinkers, finding them very stimulating in making sense of myself, in my own directions in life and indirectly useful in therapy. It was at this juncture in my own thinking that the article stuck out and beckoned. I remember the moment vividly, as I was curious to read how the ‘correspondence’ would unfold.

Andrew Relph within the Jung–Bateson ‘correspondence’ links some ideas about tapping the unconscious to uncover a different way of thinking or doing which is within the reach of the individual client—in a sense building on themes around personal agency and competency. The use of metaphor, story, myths and symbols connect the individual’s meanings with those across cultures and throughout history. Jung, in the correspondence notes that ‘the unconscious is the context, the matrix for consciousness, and contains all new possibilities for life ...’ The dramas enacted in so many stories passed down the generations leave us with related experiences that provide us with that ‘news of difference’ (Bateson’s letter) and which enable ‘maximising

the creativeness of people which seems to be expressed in the combining of opposites’ (Jung’s letter).

In re-reading Andrew Relph’s article, I was reminded of the delight and anticipation that I experienced in wanting to hear what the next letter would say. I enjoyed the style of the debate, the respect represented by each letter written, as each took the time to give and receive a fuller hearing to the smaller parts of the whole. As Andrew Relph states in the Postscript, as far as he knows the two men never actually wrote to each other, ‘but it is intriguing to imagine such a correspondence between them and the systems of thought they represent’. So yes—thanks to Andrew for imagining and sharing!

CHRIS LOBSINGER<sup>2</sup> writes: Considering the ANZJFT articles I have read over the past six or so years, I have enjoyed many for various reasons, on topics including social justice, ethics, systems theory, and the notion of pathology. Selecting one was mostly a matter of thinking about the one I have most recently been reminded of, which at this point in time happens to be an article by Andrew Relph, published in 1991: ‘Family Therapy and the Theory of Logical Types’, 12, 1: 1–7. I have revisited this article on a number of occasions and each time found it filled with a rich combination of theory, history and practical application. On examining the article again, I was impressed with Relph’s ability to highlight some of the core ideas which distinguish family therapy from other therapies.

Relph weaves a rich and well connected tapestry, beginning with Bertrand Russell and Alfred Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica*. The quotation with which Relph begins emphasises the importance of the *Principia Mathematica*, and the theory of logical types, in relation to the biological sciences and by association, family therapy: ‘In so far as behavioral scientists ignore the problems of *Principia Mathematica*, they can claim

approximately sixty years of obsolescence' (Bateson, 1972: 250).

Relph goes on to discuss the confusion caused when a class is seen as a member of itself, causing a self-referential paradox, e.g. all Cretans are liars and I am a Cretan, so paradoxically I cannot be telling the truth and yet cannot be lying. He then discusses author practitioners such as Bradford Keeney, Lynn Hoffman, Paul Watzlawick and others. Although 'Family Therapy and the Theory of Logical Types' was published in 1991, I find it particularly important reading now when family therapy seems to be asking the question 'just what makes a therapy a family therapy?' The systemic ideas he discusses are inextricably linked to the family therapy movement. Another plus is Relph's practical application of the theory, focusing on, among other things, the therapist's position in terms of relationship to the family and the usefulness of providing meta-communication in order to influence the frame and invite change.

In his conclusion, Relph, having started with mathematical metaphors, walks the reader through the theoretical and practical implications inherent in the consideration of logical types, bringing the reader to an unexpected and pleasantly aesthetic ending.

... logic ... is important in rigorously understanding and describing what therapists do, but these theories should never be believed in as a model for how the world works or how therapy works ... When held up against mathematical logic, Nature fudges it and family therapy is an imaginative and creative process which depends on this (1991: 7).

I think that reading 'Family Therapy and the Theory of Logical Types' is a bit like eating a Mississippi mud pie. The chocolate brick needs to be eaten in several bites, each bite consisting of nearly a whole dessert. Rushing the eating just would not be right; not having a go is simply missing out!

DES CASEY<sup>3</sup> writes: I remember, somewhere in the distant past, a friend commenting to me that I showed little enthusiasm for discussing ideas for ideas' sake—that I would invariably enquire whether the particular idea *worked* or not. I'm not sure whether it was a genuine or a back-handed compliment. Whatever, my appreciation of Susan Nicholson's article 'The Narrative Dance—A Practical Map for White's Therapy' (16, 1: 23–28) confirms something of my friend's observation.

By the time I first read Susan's article, I considered myself to have a good grasp of the theory and practice of Michael White's work. The article took me several steps forward, deepening and at the same time simplifying my understanding of the model. The theory worked! Something I found particularly exciting was how my teaching of narrative ideas and my work with supervisees took a substantial lift. New possibilities for clients seemed to emerge easily. We would plot the journeys of many 'Elizabeths' brought for supervision, and a variety of things might happen: new possibilities would surface, the need for a re-visit of work already done would

become obvious, or a glaringly obvious missed step would show itself.

Reading 'Elizabeth's' story in White's 'classic article' ('Deconstruction and Therapy'), then following Susan's placing of that story on her grids, provides a vivid picture of Elizabeth's dominant and preferred paths. As I listen to the life journeys of individuals, couples and families who have lost their way, and as I reflect on Susan's work, 'deconstruction and reconstruction', 'landscapes of action and consciousness', 'unique outcomes', and 'dominant versus preferred narratives', I observe how readily my clients' stories fit into this framework.

Just last week (September, 1997), in a supervision and training group, one member described how she had become stuck in her work with a man with a head injury. She had been introduced to Susan's work only two weeks earlier, but it had provided a break-through. The key for both her and her client centred round 'meaning': meaning following experience. Susan's concept of the narrative dance, and her inclusion of the three dimensions of time, all plotted on six grids, are an excellent tool. Susan's is not the only article which has helped to polish up my work, but it is the article I most recommend to others.

Back to my friend—I don't think he was entirely correct. I value debate, and debate for its own sake, and I believe the loss of an opportunity and an enthusiasm for it in modern tertiary institutions has left a huge gap. (Debate might also assist Family Therapy Conference participants to be less precious about *their* ideas.) Learning has become just another marketable extract, to serve individuals who pass narrow requirements that will plunge them into the service of national and global arenas that have Output and Input, Outcome and Income, as their gods.

However, assuming that people arrive to visit us as therapists because change is at the heart of their dreams—as stuckness is at the heart of their pain—having ideas that promote a difference would seem to be a good idea in itself. Thank you, Susan, for this important contribution to my work

COLIN MACKENZIE<sup>4</sup> writes: I have been lucky enough to have subscribed to the *Journal* since its first issue. I was on the Editorial Board for a number of years as State Representative. I think I have read nearly every article printed. Since I am a fairly isolated practitioner in Tasmania, the *Journal* has been a very potent influence on my professional development. How do I decide which article was the most outstanding? Is it the one that moved me the most emotionally, the one that was the most erudite, the one that provided a creative and valuable strategy that I found useful? I know of articles that fit all these descriptions.

Two articles remain in my mind after my first reading of the letter from the Editor requesting this article. I will discuss the one published earlier. Moshe Lang's 'Bad Therapy—A Training Technique' was published in April, 1980 (*ANZJFT* 1, 3: 102–109). Although

the article describes a very practical, useful technique, it can also be read as a metaphor about deeper issues that the field of psychotherapy, and family therapy in particular, struggles with: issues about orthodoxy and creativity, about the emotional interplay between therapist and client, and about intuitive and unconscious processes.

Masked by Moshe's delightful, light-hearted style, the article seems to be a call for liberation from constraints, an attitude that was instrumental in the early development of family therapy, an attitude that the field may be losing sight of in this era of correctness and rationality. The article speaks to the intuitive and unconscious processes that are operant in any therapeutic encounter. Therapists need to be aware of these processes so that they can, with appropriate care, utilise them to advantage.

JO GRIMWADE<sup>5</sup> writes: Perhaps the only extended series of articles in the *ANZJFT* is the Lang and McCallum articles on the Black family from Bendigo (published 1982–1983). Verbatim accounts of four successive sessions at Williams Road were analysed in detail by Moshe and Peter over the course of a year or so. The video records were viewed and reviewed by various notables (Bruce Tonge, Alan Rosen, Norma Grieve, Eva Learner, Max Cornwell ...) The family had been referred urgently by a local psychiatrist who was treating the mother (who had attempted suicide in the recent past). The family referral had come because the teenage daughter had attempted suicide also and was asking to leave the family. The case was offered for publication in order to encourage family therapists to spend less time discussing theory and more time attending to the nuances of case material. The authors hoped that others would attempt to publish similar material.

I heard of this series of articles when they were first published, whilst a clinical psychology masters student at Melbourne University. Margaret Topham referred to them during my mid-eighties training in Leeton, NSW. Andrew Wood remarked on them at a talk given at Southern CAMHS, Adelaide in 1988 as having a major influence on his development. I looked them up and saw the writing of a family therapist interested in emotion, rapport, and seemingly, his own counter transference responses. It was about this time that I became a regular reader of the *ANZJFT*. Re-reading provides further learning, now.

I take the following lessons from the work: attention to detail, attention to beginnings (referral, the therapy, each session), openness to emotional nuance and openness to your peers. I remember the 'model wars' (Lask's 'cybernetico-epistobabble') of the eighties within family therapy rendered genuine exchange about case material a dangerous activity. Embedded is a sub-plot (unresolved) about the history of Victorian family therapy: the split between Bouverie and Williams Road.

The spirit of offering the material and the gathering of colleagues around it was not emulated in print—

seemingly, anywhere. Internationals do seek publication in our journal (Carlos Sluzki, in 1988, then Editor of *Family Process*, regarded the *ANZJFT* as one of the five most important family therapy journals in the world), so the series might have been read and appreciated by many. Probably, potential authors have seen how hard the work was to produce.

Nevertheless, this appreciator of process and the emotional unfolding in therapy remains a student of the Blacks!

MARTA LOHYN<sup>6</sup> writes: Moshe Lang's article 'Silence: Therapy and Holocaust Survivors and their Families' (16, 1: 1–10) both moved and shocked me. I wonder if what I write here might be offensive or seem trivial to someone who suffered directly under the hands of the Nazis. My own view is that pain is not a competition, and that everyone's experience counts.

I am always shocked by any material about the Holocaust, but when I read Moshe's article, the shock reminded me of something I had forgotten. As a fourteen year old, I studied French at high school. Our French teacher was a handsome young man of British origin, and we were a small group of self conscious adolescent girls. I for one blushed often, said very little, and enjoyed numerous reveries about possible romantic encounters between this teacher and me. Needless to say, my attention was usually at least a little aroused during French lessons. One day (was it on Remembrance Day?) he began talking to us about the Second World War. All I remember is seeing vivid and intense images of a concentration camp and my fantasy of the gas chambers, and feeling dreadfully nauseous. At the school assembly for Remembrance Day, which I think was held shortly after our lesson, I saw he cried. There was a whisper amongst the students later that his father had died in the war. I remained nauseous for at least the rest of the day.

My family of origin is Ukrainian, and lived through the war before emigrating to Australia in the late 1950s. As a child, adolescent and adult, I frequently heard my mother talk about the war years. Unlike Moshe's families, my family spoke openly and frequently about their experiences. But they were lucky, for their origins were not Jewish, so they did not experience the extreme deprivations and horrors that words cannot describe.

Yet while my mother talked so frequently about her past, in all my time of knowing her (she died last year) she could never speak of a positive picture for herself. It was as though she was deeply anxious and constantly expecting something catastrophic and terrible to happen. This spectre of doom was always present, but usually unacknowledged.

My mother was sixteen when the war broke out; she, together with my grandmother, grandfather, one sister and two brothers, was living in Warsaw when the Germans invaded Poland. She remembered that event vividly, the sound of the marching, the uniforms, the boots. Her wartime initiation into adulthood left her with an

uncompromising prejudice against the German nation. She believed that many 'ordinary' German citizens knew what was going on with the Jews. How could they not, she said, when she herself, very early on in the war, saw truckloads of Jewish people being taken away? How could they not know?

She told me that once (she must have been nineteen or twenty) she was travelling by train to visit my grandparents who by then were in another city. The train was travelling at night, and suddenly stopped. Germans boarded, demanding to see everyone's papers. She was taken off the train, because they thought her papers (she was a student at the time) were false. They said she was really Jewish, because she had long dark hair and dark eyes. She was taken and put under a cold shower (clothes and all, in mid winter), and photographed. But then, a senior officer decided to release her, because she reminded him of his daughter.

Whenever I heard this story, whenever I think about it, as I write it, my heart races and I can see it as vividly as if it were happening before my very eyes. I am stunned to think that my mother was almost sent to a concentration camp because she had dark hair and dark eyes. The seeming randomness of this event shocks me to my core. How then could this, and other events as well, not profoundly disturb this young woman's expectations of a safe future? And I believe I have learned something of her fear of the future, not because she explicitly told *me* to be frightened, but simply because, for so much of her young adult life, and her mature adult life, *she* was frightened. I frequently think about what it would be like to endure the trauma of a concentration camp. I never told my mother about that; she also never told me, despite her frequent stories about the war, how it affected the core of her. Perhaps she did not know, or perhaps she did not want to tell.

In closing, I want to note the eloquence and sensitivity of Moshe Lang's writing in this article, as he paradoxically articulates something of the nature and function of silence in the lives of Holocaust survivors. Paul Gibney, in his address to the 1997 Australian Family Therapy conference, offered an astute critique of family therapy. One of his arguments was that as a field, family therapy has little to offer clients who endure great suffering. Clearly Moshe Lang has something important to teach us all: how to be with our clients in their unspeakable pain, how to be still, and listen and feel the silences. How to respond when words are not enough.

#### References

- Bateson, G., 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, San Francisco, Scranton.
- Lang, M. and McCallum, P., 1983. Blackmail is Against the Law—Part Two: Do You Want us Back? *ANZJFT*, 4, 2: 99–119.
- Lang, M. and McCallum, P., 1984. Blackmail is Against the Law—Part Four: We Don't Need it Any More, *ANZJFT*, 5, 3: 185–215.
- McCallum, P. and Lang, M., 1982. Blackmail is Against the Law, *ANZJFT*, 3, 4: 173–195.
- McCallum, P. and Lang, M., 1983. Blackmail is Against the Law—Part Three: Ernie will Kick up a Fuss, *ANZJFT*, 4, 4: 225–249.
- White, M., 1992. De-Construction and Therapy. In D. Epston and M. White, *Experience, Contradiction, Narrative and Imagination*. Adelaide, Dulwich Centre.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Lorraine O'Gorman, Lyradoon, Family Centre, 65 Lower Salthill, Galway, Ireland.
- <sup>2</sup>Chris Lobsinger, 46 Rosalie St, Bardon, Queensland 4065
- <sup>3</sup>Des Casey, Waitakere Counselling and Family Therapy Centre, PO Box 21–771, Henderson, Auckland 8 NZ.
- <sup>4</sup>Colin MacKenzie, 29 South Esk Road, Launceston, Tasmania, 7250.
- <sup>5</sup>Jo Grimwade, Dept of Psychology, Victoria University, Box 14428, Melbourne City MC, Vic. 8001.
- <sup>6</sup>Marta Lohyn, 296 Payneham Rd, Payneham SA 5070.