

GRACE NOTES II

DR SALMA SIDDIQUE continues her quest to make us listen to the grace notes.

THERE ARE STORIES we tell our (many) selves and then there are stories which are transmitted out into the world which are known as myths. Films, plays, songs, dreams and myths are traditionally orally transmitted stories of different degrees of truth. The story of the film *A Dangerous Method* (Hampton) gives one version of the relationship between Spielrein, Jung and Freud and their influence on the birth of psychoanalysis.

In a recent issue of the UKCP's *the psychotherapist* Samuels (2012:22) asks the screenwriter Christopher Hampton '...what's your take in terms of Jung's response to Spielrein's work? You know he removed references to it from his own writings?' Hampton responds. 'I think that's a very unsympathetic thing about him – and they were both like that. Freud was a little more gentle, presumably because he wasn't personally involved with her, but I think both of them – this is one of the things the piece deals with – were so ferociously driven ambitious for the reputations of themselves, I think they found granting credit a little grace note that they could well skip.' Perhaps this concept of grace notes should never be skipped?

I was reminded of Andrew O'Hagan's (2004) book *The Missing* which refers to forgotten children 'the police call them the mispers, they are everywhere and nowhere, in the same world and out of it; each of them different and each the same.' This concept of 'mispers' could be applied to the narrative of *A Dangerous Method* too where women are given less significance and consideration. In this case the mispers refers to Sabina Spielrein (1885-1942) and Antonia Anna "Toni" Wolff (1888-1953).

How familiar this is – women not always being given credit in the development of psychotherapy. History can often leave out Herstory – a feminist perspective telling the story of the women missing in the annals of history. As therapists we need to be writing our story as well as hearing their story (I'm OK, you're OK, they're OK). Even TA has been clouded with the women's issue, particularly in the past. Jung and Freud were practicing in a

particular context and time. However, Levin's article on 'The Woman Question and its evolution in the TA world' in a recent *TA Journal* (2010) makes similar points about TA. She shared her own experience of being sidelined by Berne and others until the 1970's conference when Berne's attitude began to change just before his death.

With the increased participation of women and development of TA the situation has improved. TA theory has generally moved beyond the sexist language and 'blaming the woman' views which were prevalent in attachment theory, ego states, life scripts etc. However, Levin raises the question still of whether the numbers of conference presenters and authors of articles match the actual power base and numbers of women practicing as psychotherapists?

Are there other mispers-people whose stories are not heard? When reflecting on my own practice I perhaps don't always give full and equal cognizance or appreciation to all clients even though I recognise my own difference as a female Scottish Pakistani Muslim psychotherapist. There are mispers among my client group, let alone those who don't make it into the therapy room.

One example from my own practice is an older male, small, quiet, socially withdrawn. He told me about the diagnostic label of learning disabilities other people had assigned him throughout his life. He talked about how frustrated he was that people didn't look beyond his limiting developmental abilities. I initially colluded with this presentation by the way I spoke with him; he brought me up short by saying 'is this how it's going to be with you, Salma?' At that moment I realised what I was doing and suggested instead that he created his own diagnosis and made meaning of his experiences to date.

He described his social anxiety and story writing skills and how he would like a referral to be in a group like himself who were telling a collective story. I asked him to write his own referral story/letter for services for people with aspergers. He moved from being a misper to be the author of his own story; he was able to shape his own autonomy. I reflected on how easy it is to miss the individual and their story.

How many others are there like that where 'grace notes' could help them to move out of their early script and move into an annotated personalised story?



Dr Salma Siddique CTA(P) PTSTA is a clinical anthropologist, researcher and university lecturer. She also works as a volunteer clinician with survivors of torture and is Co-Director (Clinical Research) at Edinburgh Napier Research Initiative for Complementary Healthcare. s.siddique@napier.ac.uk