

# A Flame in the Darkness



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Editor-in-Chief

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“**W**e can see the light of a flame in the darkness that, however small it may be, is fiercely resisting, with the strength of life itself, and is helping us all to continue our shared journey.”

—Edoardo Pera

The year was 1958 and my father – who believed that travel was the best education for a child – took me on a road trip through Europe.

In 1958, Northern Europe was still deeply scarred by the ravages of war. On any given day, we were one of a few cars driving through desolate towns and villages. We stopped by quiet rivers and bridges, in bucolic forests, and my father, who had spent the war years in London as a Canadian liaison officer, would tell stories: “*Let me tell you what happened here...*”

As a young French-Canadian girl growing up on the peaceful shores of the St Lawrence, war was an unknown. Driving through the Northern European towns and villages, I remember the innocent thrill of travel slowly giving way to an energetic imprint that was far beyond my understanding. Rubble; colorless dilapidated buildings; blank stares in people’s eyes. An unknown sensation filled my body – a dreadful pressure squeezing my heart. The family vacation I thought we were on was, for my father, a pilgrimage to important WW II battle sites.

In sharp contrast were the teary-eyed open-armed welcomes we received along the way: “*Vous êtes Canadien! Merci! Merci! Nos libérateurs!*” The Québec license plate on our car was a passport into people’s hearts. Deadened eyes lit up as people invited us into their homes, delighted to tell stories about how family members had found refuge in Canada, about how French-Canadian soldiers on the front lines had brought the message of liberation. More than 10 years after the war’s end, they graciously extended us the gratitude they felt for our countrymen.

I didn’t know it at the time, but I was witnessing Europe in trauma recovery. I was receiving a direct imprint of the slow, painful lifting of profound shock that permeated the land and its inhabitants. I was learning the meaning of the words “*the war is over,*” and

witnessing, through the open arms of its survivors, the heartfelt connection that signals healing.



While preparing for this issue, I searched the internet; the cost of war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is staggering. As best I could find, 203 million deaths from war and oppression: 33.5 million military deaths, 54 million civilian war deaths, and 169 million government-inflicted deaths. Global military spending between 1945 and 2000 amounted to \$35-40 trillion US dollars. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the bloodiest century in human history.

In war, the body is the target; on the front lines, it absorbs horrors and bullets, shocked and enraged by inconceivable violations. Meanwhile, even as war crimes continue to be perpetrated moment-by-moment, our somatic field is at the forefront of trauma healing. Through the advances in the science of trauma recovery, interpersonal neurobiology, attachment and polyvagal theory – and so much more – devoted researchers and clinicians are birthing a hopeful body-mind scientific understanding of how we are wired for safety and love.

When interdependence is violated, conflicts ensue leading to, at their worse, irretrievably deep cuts in the fabric of the heart and psyche. It is our hope that the message of safety, attunement, and collaborative reciprocity arising from somatic psychology and body psychotherapy opens the way to a journey of embodiment that is compelling, inspiring, and peacefully cooperative.

Will the carnage ever stop? Could the wisdom of compassionate heartfulness become a guide for the evolution of our human “family”? Could a concert of united voices with a resounding global reach arise that would imprint these words in the core of all humans:

*“Imagine if we measured success  
by the amount of safety that people felt in our presence.”*

—Jonathan Louis Dent

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## In This Issue...

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The authors in our special **War Trauma** section, each in their own way, shine a light into the pervasive darkness that is war. Our guest editor, Christina Bogdanova, who is also our Deputy Editor, has done a masterful job bringing together articles that deepen the equanimity needed to address the seemingly universal oscillation between war and peace in which humanity spirals. For a detailed overview of the articles in our War Trauma section, read Christina’s guest editorial on p. 10.

In our ongoing rubric **Interdisciplinary Approach**, Antigone Oreopoulou and I talk with Harvard neurobiologist **Ioannis Gampierakis** about his research. *Exploring the Connections Between the Microbiome and the Brain* reveals the growing recognition of the impact of inflammatory stress on depression and anxiety – a paradigm shift in understanding how the gut, the microbiome, systemic inflammation, the immune system, and adult neurogenesis all contribute to brain function.

In the **Research** section, **Courtenay Young** draws our attention to the importance of case studies and their role in outcome research. To further the goal of establishing a scientific basis for body psychotherapy and somatic psychology, Courtenay is planning, together with **Herbert Grassman**, a second volume to *Body Psychotherapy Case Studies*. **Case Study Research** draws our attention to three books that ground writing about clinical experience in a way that supports research – three important resources to support us all in taking concrete steps towards writing up our cases for publication. These two seasoned clinicians have the future of body psychotherapy at heart, and offer their expertise to help somatic practitioners take the necessary steps to grow their strength in an area where our field has been notably deficient – a paucity of publication that holds us back from due recognition.

The **Clinical Practice** section supports the expansion of our clinical trauma work. **From WWII with Compassion** by **Anita Blanchard** introduces the work of Pethö Sándor, a Hungarian physician who worked in refugee camps for the Red Cross during WWII. She gives us an in-depth introduction to Calatonia, the somatic approach Sándor developed, anchored in the reinstatement of self-regulated states through the neurobiology of dyadic regulation. Initially a trauma-based approach, Calatonia was later incorporated into psychotherapy treatments in Brazil, where Sándor settled in the 1950s. Although widely published and researched in Brazil, Calatonia has remained relatively unknown internationally, largely due to the language barrier, and, possibly to a bias from developed countries who, intent on exporting their methodologies, have neglected to look into the local knowledge. The practice of Calatonia sets in motion an array of neurological and psychological processes that practitioners who work with touch will find powerfully valuable.

In **Psychotherapy Around the World**, **José Martín Amenabar Beitia** introduces us to **Body Psychotherapy in Spain**. He reviews major historical body psychotherapy milestones, and draws attention to Character-Analytic Psychotherapy in Spain, one of the country's most influential modalities.

**Personal Viewpoint** continues to build on the theme of war with *Fragments of War* by **Natasha Kuhn**, a refugee from the Bosnian war who now lives in Seattle. She shares with us how body psychotherapy has allowed her to “sit differently with the pain of war.” Appropriately for our troubled times, **Antigone Oreopoulou** leads us in the discovery of the world of volunteering. At a time when so many are in need of help, **Volunteering: A Healing Process and Training in Awareness** introduces us to volunteerism, a way of life independent of political parties and ideologies, and a world of people who readily offer their knowledge, time, experience, and willingness to support and help others in order to better our world.

Lastly, we should all mark our calendars for two major events this year: the **USABP Biennial Conference** in May in California, and the **EABP Congress** in September in Sofia. The event details, and the call for submissions for both events, can be found at the back of this issue.

Whether you live away from social and political conflict or in an active war zone, whether you offer support to refugees or are a refugee yourself, it can be difficult to know when it is appropriate to take action, give significant support, have faith and offer hope, or simply listen deeply. We hope that you will find inspiration and incentive in this issue.

