

Lying and truth-telling

by *Teboho Monyamane*

The second online SAPI Conference entitled, *Lying and Truth Telling: A psychoanalytic Exploration of Human Narratives*, was held in the last weekend in February 2022. It was well attended by local and international colleagues.

In her opening address SAPA president Elda Storck raised the concerns of our Russian and Ukrainian colleagues following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and assured them that they have our support. SAPI chair Vossie Goosen, who followed on Elda, spoke of how Hannah Arendt warned against the prizing of lies after World War II.

As is tradition, SAPA candidate and Conferences Committee member Ntshediseng Tlooko captured us as an audience with yet another powerful preamble, skilfully and creatively exploring truth and lies. Her introduction sensitised and primed us for the conference themes. Sometimes lies or deception are overt, clear, incontrovertible. At other times they are relative, illusive, amorphous. Ntshediseng's question about who creates the milk – mother or infant – reverberated throughout the conference.

After Ntshediseng, essayist, poet and short story writer Makhosazana Xaba read two moving poems, transporting us to both the political and the deeply personal. Her first poem, "21 Houses", referred to the 21 unfurnished, unoccupied two-bedroom South African National Defence Force (SANDF) homes on the perimeter of Nkandla. Each cost R6m. They form part of former president Jacob Zuma's "security upgrade" which came to a staggering total of R135ml. In Makhosazana's poem the 21 houses are filled with lies and contempt. They are a prime example of what British psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe calls a culture of exceptionalism and uncared: having a nice day at the expense of the other, unwilling to see it is wrong. [Click here](#) to read about the wasteful debacle.

Our first keynote speaker was Redi Tlhabi, broadcaster, author and award-winning journalist. Redi gave a compelling, stimulating analysis of lies in the political sphere. Earlier in her career she believed truth will inevitably prevail, lies will become exposed and, ultimately, justice will prevail. Over time the complexities around truth and lies became clearer: people lie in the face of incontrovertible evidence, people's words belie their actions. Attention can be shifted, the narrative can be manipulated. In time truth becomes blurred. The lie lives side by side with the truth.

Redi reminded us that people who believe a lie seem to hold on to it even when it is proven to be a lie. Perhaps, she posits, the idea that it was a lie creates cognitive dissonance (other

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

CONTENTS

PAGE 1-2: Teboho Monyamane: *Lying and truth-telling*

• Ntshediseng Tlooko: *Tales and fables, truth and lies*

PAGE 3: Ntshediseng Tlooko: *Writing is like dreaming*

PAGE 4-6: Carol Richards: *Adjusting to life in rural farmland*

PAGE 6: Vossie Goosen: *Decolonising psychoanalysis*

PAGE 7: Jenny Perkel: *A call to colleagues to write for the academic journal, *Psychoanalytic Practice* (formerly, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*)*

PAGE 8: Beverley Marcus Gorelick: *The storm inside Katie* • Vossie Goosen: *Join a SAPI group*

PAGE 9: Vossie Goosen: *Support Ukraine*

PAGE 10: Ntshediseng Tlooko: *The full SAPI 2022 Conference preamble*



Tales and fables, truth and lies

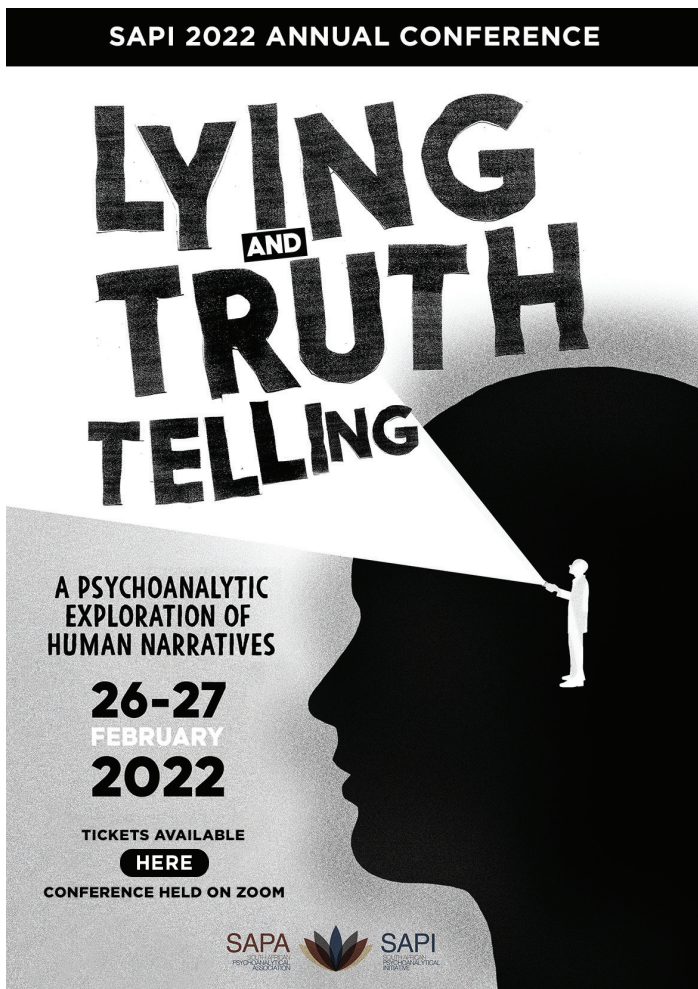
by *Ntshediseng Tlooko*

Fables and tales are good examples of how a lie can be used as both a defence and an offence. We all know about Pinocchio, as well as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* and the Sotho fable, *Tselane le Dimo*.

The Sotho fable that tells us about a little black girl, Tselane, who lived in the mountains with her mother. She was left alone, locked in the house, when her mother went in search of wood and food. The mountains were known for the strange men who occupied them, particularly Ledimo, the big giant who ate children.

Due to Ledimo's notoriety, and in the interest of protecting Tselane, Tselane's mother told her she must only open the door when she hears her mother coming up the mountain.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



than Arendt who believed the best liar is admired). She cited the misleading figures on the Vote Leave Bus at the time of the Brexit Leave Campaign which greatly influenced voters. Many continue to believe the lie even after it was exposed as hoax. [Click here](#) to see the link.

Redi quoted the Italian historian Marco Revelli who says lies are useful tools in the "revolt of the included". In America First, Brexit and South African xenophobic rhetoric the message is the outsider is threatening. In the furthering of political agendas such messages are promoted and rarely opposed.

Redi argued the post-truth era in which we live is even more ominous. While lies are about subverting the truth, post-truth questions the very existence of truth. Hearing both sides of the argument can sometimes sanitise and legitimise the lie. Post-truth requires of journalists to be less detached

Sally Weintrobe was the next keynote speaker. A fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society and chair of the International Psychoanalytic Association's (IPA's) Climate Committee, Sally explored a psychoanalytic understanding of our responses to environmental issues and climate change.

Sally sees the way we organise and present the truth about climate change as traumatic. Neoliberal exceptionalism contributes, largely, to the climate crisis. People falsely believe in an idealised entitlement, seeing themselves as exceptional: they can have whatever they want, dispense with moral limits and rearrange reality. A culture of uncare is bred through splitting, putting the other in the lesser position.

Exceptionalism grows fraud bubbles and enables a collective psychic retreat from reality. Its institutionalised, organised

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

How would she know that her mother was coming up the mountain? Her mother would sing, "Tselane ngwanaka, tlo nke bohobe o je" (Tselane, my child, come get bread to eat).

There is always that fateful day in a fable. Ledimo ate a piece of burning coal to make his voice sound like Tselane's mother's. He tricked Tselane into opening the door for him, so he can eat her.

Deception is the oldest lie. The lie that is acted, done to triumph over the duped other. Such a lie was described clearly in Redi Tlhabi's book, *Khwezi*. Khwezi, Fezekile Kuzwayo, was Tselane. A woman who thought she was safe because she was in a familiar space with a person she trusted.

Former President Jacob Zuma was Ledimo, a wolf in sheep's clothing, burning from the coal he just ate.

The truth is hard to bear. It is not easy to face reality, a fact that the Freudian baby knows all too well.

We navigate reality by creating our own perceptions of it because we eventually learn that we do not make the milk. This is a hard truth to accept.

We often find ourselves in the space between external reality and internal phantasy. The space where we can remind ourselves that the milk exists within us and it is because I was born that the milk had to be made for me.

This is the transitional space between phantasy and reality that Winnicott often speaks of. The lie can become a transitional object, the link to the breast that makes the giving up of the breast a little bit easier. The connection that allows for the bitter swallowing of the red pill.

A split in the mind can easily pervert this transitional space, making me believe that I do in fact make the milk and mother also in fact makes the milk. Therefore, I did not intentionally kill Reeva Steenkamp in a murderous rage because I believed she was an intruder in my bathroom. As Oscar Pistorius once claimed.

Perhaps the overt lie at times feels more reassuring than the truth because you know it is a lie.

A certainty exists in the knowledge of its falsehood. And often the truth can feel dangerous. Disconcerting. It can feel like touching the sun.

The psychoanalytic endeavour is the pursuit of truthfulness. And in the pursuit of truth, we learn to mourn our inability to touch the sun. We come in touch with the reality of giving up that which we cannot have.



Above: Tselane's mother returns from a food-finding trip. Ledimo looks on. He starts to hatch his plan.

framework excludes some anxieties and ignores loss. Its fraud bubble seduces us through telling and amplifying bits of the truth. In this culture of dramatised deflection consumers can "have a nice day", ignoring the violence against our own planet.

SAPA training analyst Sue Levy skillfully presented British psychoanalyst Alessandra Lemma's keynote paper, "The Many Faces of Lying", while weaving in her own thoughts. Alessandra, who unfortunately had to withdraw from the day, highlights the thinking of French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch who saw the existence of the other as the reason for the lie, as a strategy to cope in an uncertain world.

As we cannot really know the mind of the other lying is a reformulation of our object relationships, a refuge to fusion which gives certainty and control. In a relationship based on lying love is also based on lies. You never feel truly loved. How can you believe your object if you yourself lie?

Alessandra distinguishes between sadistic lying and self-preservative lying. Sadistic lying aims to harm to the object in a wished-for reversal of an original wound. It is about triumph and control.

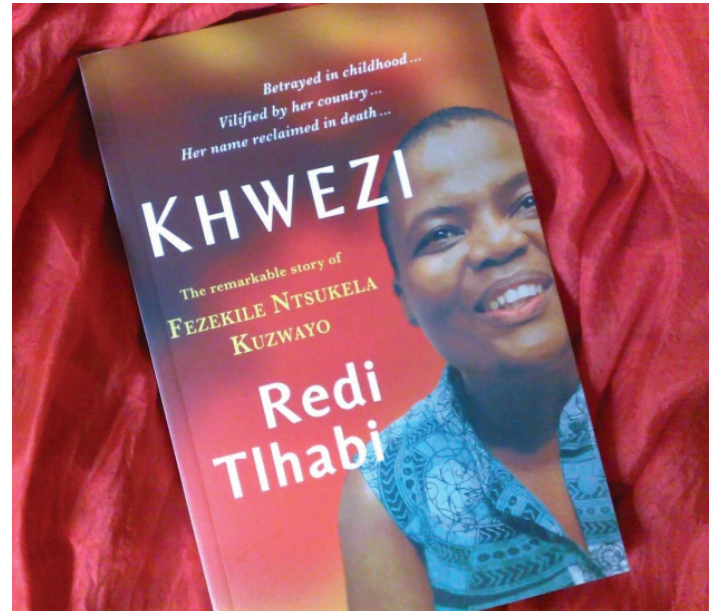
Self-preservative lying can happen when the object is perceived as an intrusive and omniscient threat. It puts some distance between the self and the object. Self-preservative lying also takes place when the object is inscrutable or unavailable and the self is hungry for the object's affection. The self then becomes a self that can elicit the object's love and care.

SAPI secretary Zamo Mbele facilitated a panel discussion after the full and vibrant keynote addresses.

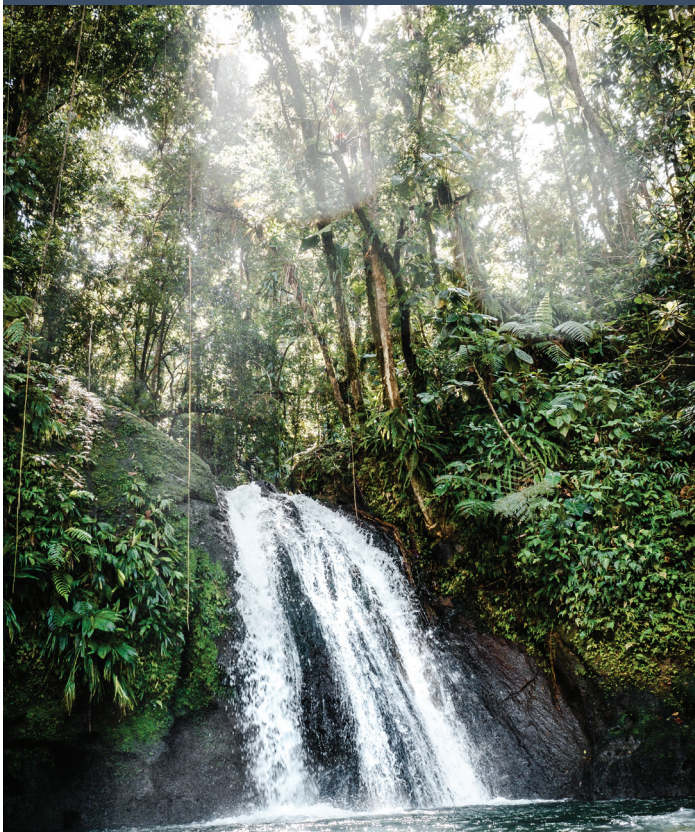
The second day of the conference included two case presentations, firstly by SAPA analyst Patricia Oosthuizen and, secondly, by British consultant psychiatrist Ronnie Doctor.

The case presentations were followed by a plenary session.

Congratulations to the SAPI Conferences Committee and all participants for once again pulling off a truly enlivening conference.



Writing is like dreaming



by Ntshediseng Tlooko

Writing is like dreaming. The colours of the words flow together to paint a picture. Relaying the vivid images of my mind's eye.

I dream the words, allow them to flow in and out of my mind before I commit them to paper.

There's a beautifully free associative nature to writing, where one word leads to another and together they weave a fantastical piece of literature that I did not expect.

My love for words began with the hymns my mother sang. The Sesotho radio stories I listened to with my aunt. The humour of my father's jokes. The poetry in rap music.

I feel honoured that the Conference Committee trusts me to dream the preamble into existence. Sue Levy and the committee have guided me through my preamble writing journey, helping me find my words and, more especially, my voice.

All this and more has inspired me to continue writing what I dream.

Adjusting to life in rural farmland

by *Carol Richards*

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa in March 2020 ushered in monumental changes in terms of my professional and personal life. My husband, Ruben, our son, Daniel, and my parents and I relocated to the rural farming town of Clanwilliam in the Cederberg region during the first half of 2020. Our daughter, Tanya, moved to Worcester where she is a medical intern at the local hospital. We have all undergone an urban-rural migration.

Ruben, as always, has largely been responsible for ensuring that our lives are never dull. In Cape Town, for example, he was instrumental in getting the whole family involved in restorative work with the gangsters on the Cape Flats. More recently, as

... his “glass is overflowing” attitude.

the only black commercial citrus and vegetable farmer in the Cederberg region, he decided to run for mayor and got our son Daniel to manage his election campaign. Community uprisings linked to service delivery protests were threatening to destabilise the Clanwilliam economy and Ruben was called in to mediate between farm owners (white), workers (a black and coloured labour force) and irate community leaders. This set the stage for Ruben being asked to head up a new “political party” which adopted the motto of “residents serving residents”. As a result, Ruben became mayor of the Cederberg region in the 2021 municipal elections and this has changed the landscape yet again.

Somehow Ruben manages to find the time to farm, be mayor of the Cederberg region, write books and positively impact the farm workers and community members with, amongst others, his gender-based violence workshops, his drive to be an agent for change and his “glass is overflowing” attitude.

Sometimes I feel trapped in a time warp in this small rural farming town. Since Ruben has become mayor it feels like we



From left: Daisy Doris May Richards, Daniel Mpilo May Richards, Carol and Ruben Richards, Tanya Nomsa Richards and David Anthony Sturrock.

continued from "Adjusting to life in rural farmland"

have become revered by many and attacked by even more. I don't know what's harder to bear, the scorn of racist whites, the fawning of those riddled with white guilt or the awe and/or envy of coloured and black people who are not able to place our family in the traditional rural coloured racial box of subservience.

Daniel, with his creative spirit and inexhaustible energy, inspires the younger generation through his active positive citizenship. He is the epitome of innovative and wholehearted living. Whether he's picking up garbage with the children in the township to the beat of funky music, inviting youngsters to create a rap song to capture the essence of the "residents serving residents" election campaign or introducing his British wife to the nuances of South African life as the only inter-racial couple in the region. He is just so inspiring.

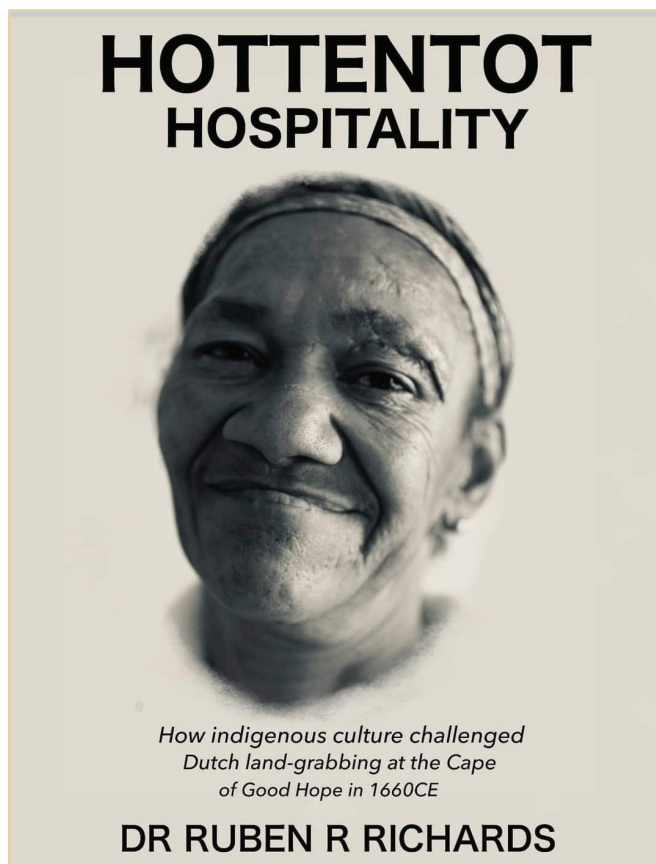
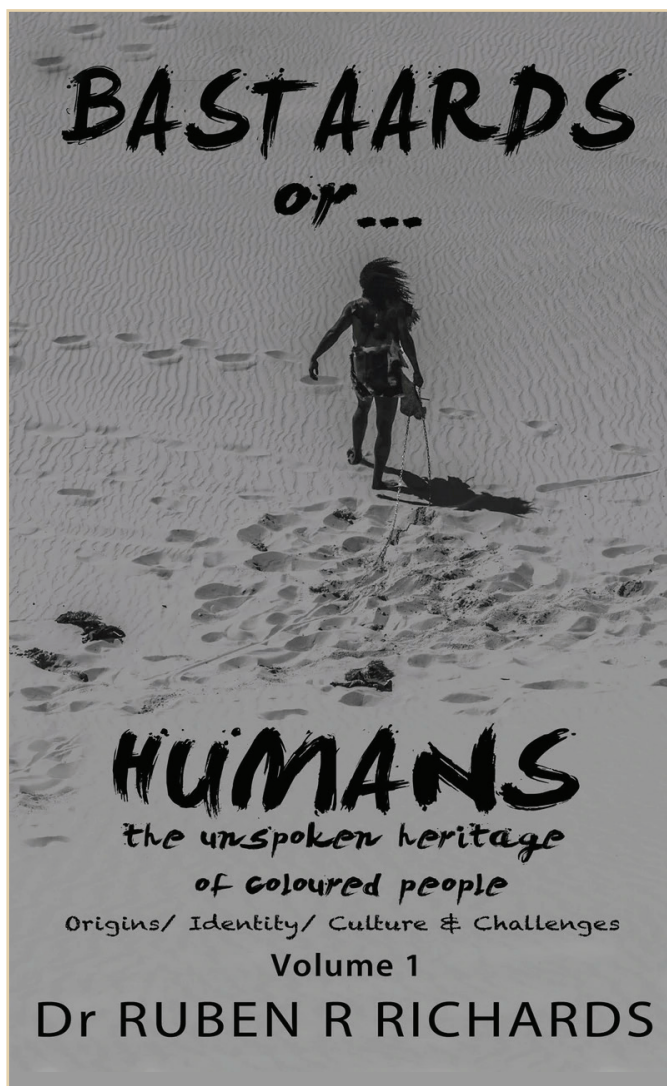
... a rap song to capture the essence of the "residents serving residents" ...

I, on the other hand, am trying hard to instil in the Richards' men the importance of "striving for balance". That it's as important to make time to rest and recover as it is to keep up with the endless and ever-increasing demands from a community where positive male role models are lacking and being drawn into countless social engagements by those who are intrigued by the father-son duo - the bald-headed farmer turned mayor who came from nowhere with his shoulder-length-haired son. They are indefatigable.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

The lively and involved Richards family

Watch YouTube videos on Cederberg Eerste (Cederberg First) [here](#) and its rap song [here](#). In the first one Ruben sets out the thinking behind the Cederberg First residents' movement. In the second SPIKE performs the winning Cederberg Eerste rap song. The videos are both in Afrikaans. Please email us on sapi.exco@gmail.com for a translation. Daniel Mpilo May Richards filmed them. He also designed the covers of the two books below and is the waterman/beach ranger ("strandloper") on the first cover.



Above: Ruben's latest book, *Hottentot Hospitality*, was launched in the Clanwilliam Museum on Human Rights Day. Saartjie Andrews, who lives on the same farm as the Richards, is on the cover. [Click here](#) to listen to the launch.

Left: Ruben's second last book, *Bastaards or Humans*, the unspoken heritage of coloured people, is a new take on the history of the Cape, its original inhabitants and coloured people.

I am the only qualified psychologist and psychoanalyst in Clanwilliam and this sometimes feels overwhelming because the needs feel so great across the spectrum. I practice online from home, with an increasing population of local and international patients which feels quite ironic considering that for a long time I felt banished to a dorp that refuses to engage with me outside of the role of "farmer's wife" and more recently "die burgermeester se vrou" (the mayor's wife). It's quite different for me to encounter being respectfully referred to as "Tannie" (Auntie) by white people, even when they appear to be older than I am.

Needless to say, amidst the ongoing challenges, there's a lot of heartening and soulful community work that enables us to draw strength and plod on.

The struggles of some of my local patients still bear the ugly scars of an Apartheid South Africa, especially within the coloured and black townships where alcoholism, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and unemployment remain rife.

We're all very hopeful about repurposing one of the local farms for a gender-based violence restoration centre where women will be provided with possibilities to remove themselves from abusive environments and engage in programmes that are sustainable, economically and psychologically.

In addition to my private practice and community work, I find myself holding space for my feeble, vulnerable, recently-widowed, almost 90-year-old mother and keeping in regular contact with my daughter who faces numerous ongoing

Yes, I am living proof that change is possible!

challenges. I'm trying to adjust to life in a conservative dorp where there's lots of potential for positive change, one step at a time. And, interestingly enough, I find myself searching for English words lately instead of wracking my brain for the Afrikaans expression! Yes, I am living proof that change is possible! Even if it means getting used to a new identity as "die burgermeester se vrou", as if I do not have my own identity.

Clanwilliam, with all its natural and wondrous beauty, set in the magnificent Cederberg mountains, is a constant reminder to us all that adjusting to life in a rural farmland can also be enjoyable, adventurous and fun-filled.

Decolonising psychoanalysis

by Vossie Goosen

On Saturday afternoon, 23 April 2022, the British Guild of Psychotherapists holds its second seminar on decolonising psychoanalysis titled, *Occupying Psychoanalysis in a Post-Colonial World: Fanon's 'zone of nonbeing' and the subject of racism*.

The series is hosted by the guild's Race and Culture Committee and aims to give "clinical responses to academic decolonial work".

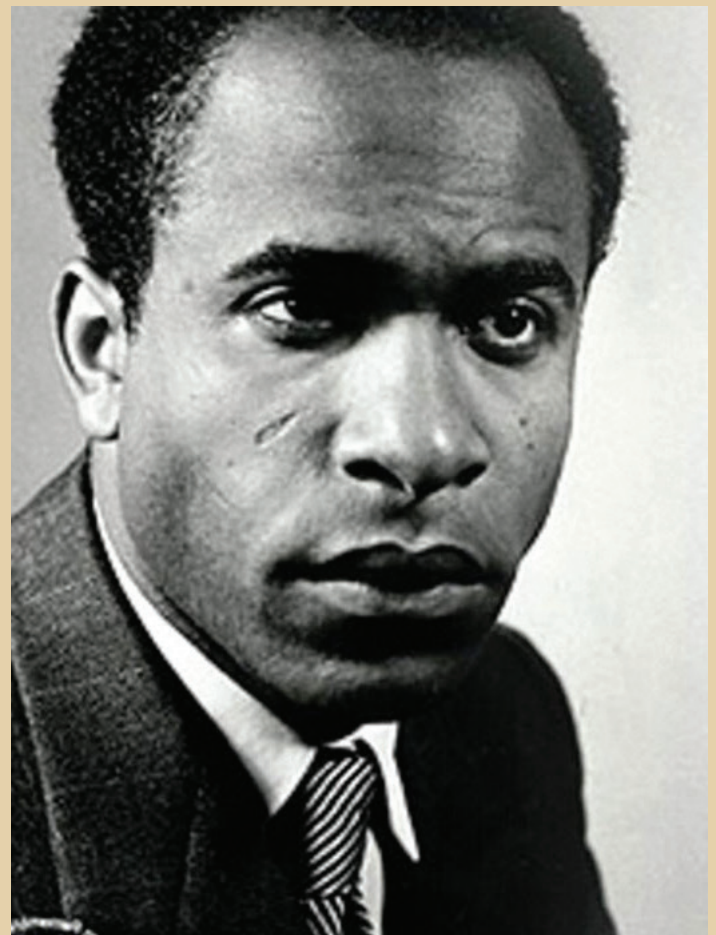
North American English professor Gautam Basu Thakur will be the speaker at the event. He will combine Freudian and Lacanian thinking together with Fanon's work "reimagining the function and form of race, racism and xenophobia in our contemporary world".

To book for the event, please [click here](#).

Former Freud Museum deputy director Ivan Ward, who was also its head of learning, sent us the invite, pointing out the guild's committee used a South African image in its ticket brochure (immediately above). You can also see the illustration on the guild's [webpage](#).

The South African Psychoanalytic Confederation (SAPC) Transformation Team and Minazana used the same artist's work in their *Fanon in Conversation* course posters last year. The Fanon images are the work of Russian-born illustrator Anastasya Eliseeva whose visuals often appears in *The New Frame*, a South African digital news publication.

Ivan's paper on a similar theme, "The psychological effects of racism", was delivered at both a Freud Museum conference and as a Tavistock and Portman talk last year and can be accessed on YouTube.



A call to colleagues to write for the academic journal, *Psychoanalytic Practice* (formerly, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*)

by Jenny Perkel

The editorial board of the journal, *Psychoanalytic Practice*, would like to encourage our psychoanalytically inclined colleagues to write for the journal. We aim to be supportive of aspiring authors and, where necessary and appropriate, to guide them through the process of writing academically.

We recognise that for many psychotherapists and clinicians there could be concerns about the academic rigour that might be required when submitting an article to the journal. Some colleagues might feel that they lack this particular kind of skill and that their academic writing ended once their training was over. But psychoanalytic and psychotherapy training is never over and the writing and publishing experience is a powerful exercise in professional growth and learning. Each article submitted to the journal is anonymously peer reviewed by two independent reviewers. The author is then given comments, feedback and advice about how their article can be modified in order to bring it in line with the requirements of an academic journal. It is a useful and constructive process that aims to promote and develop increased academic writing skills.

As psychoanalytic psychotherapists we witness ongoing, observable evidence of the psychoanalytic processes in our working lives and with our own patients. It is not always easy to communicate these meaningful encounters and experiences outside of the therapeutic context. Psychoanalytic thinkers recognise that the more formulaic models of therapeutic approaches to mental health challenges are perhaps easier to measure and are thus more likely to produce the highly prized 'evidence base' that is required in order to evaluate outcomes in psychotherapy. But in order for psychoanalytic theory and practice to thrive and find the recognition it deserves, it needs to appear in a more widely visible way in the academic literature.

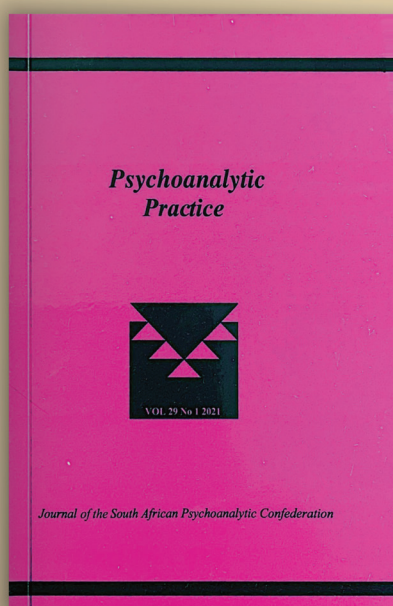
Psychoanalytic Practice replaced the existing professional journal, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, originally established in 1992 by Trevor Lubbe and Tony Hamburger. We



invite and encourage submissions with content that is informed by a broad and diverse range of psychoanalytical theories. Papers suitable for *Psychoanalytic Practice* include but are not limited to traditional psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The journal is open to contemporary psychoanalytical thinking, with or without a practical component. Clinical or theoretical papers are both welcome as well as papers on the application of psychoanalytic principles in group or community settings, outside of the consulting room. Papers that focus on psychoanalytic psychotherapeutic work in individual, couple, family, group or organisational settings are welcome. We also invite authors to submit commentaries on and responses to other papers that have been published in *Psychoanalytic Practice*. Any topical issue or clinical question - for example accounts of recently attended conferences, ethical issues, training, scope of practice - will be considered for publication. Reviews on psychoanalytically informed books and articles are also welcome.

Writing for an academic, peer reviewed journal is a meaningful learning experience that crystallises ideas and thinking. Background reading and putting thoughts onto a page in a coherent way enhances and enriches psychoanalytic formulations and thinking. It allows psychotherapists to share experiences and it stimulates thinking amongst the community of psychotherapists. Each article published in the journal earns the author 15 CPD points as an acknowledgement of the learning involved.

To find out more about *Psychoanalytic Practice* and how to prepare your article for submission, see www.ppsajournal.co.za or contact one of the editorial board members. The editor, Katherine Bain, can be contacted via e-mail at katherine.bain@wits.ac.za.



The storm inside Katie

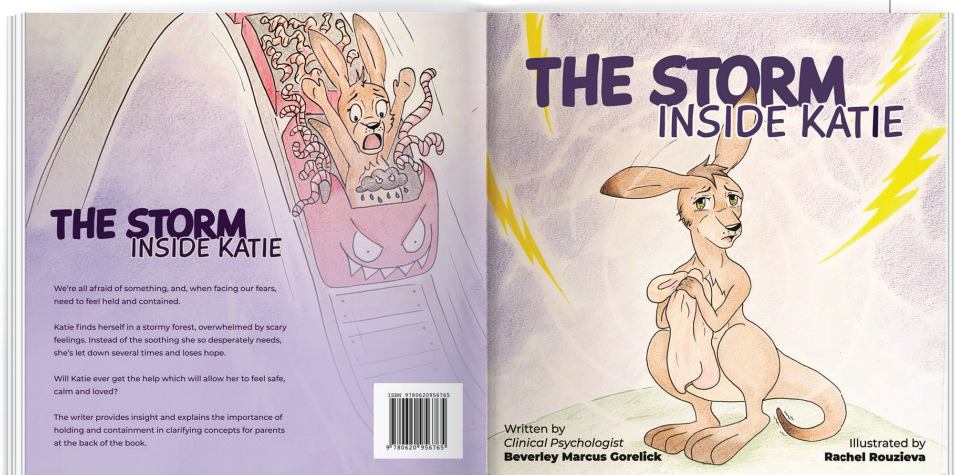
by Vossie Goosen

The storm inside Katie is Beverley Marcus Gorelick's first children's book. It is really written for children and their parents as it outlines the story of exactly what Katie fears most and the kind of help she needs in such a situation: not a leaky, emotionally absent, angry nor an anxious or depressed mother. When Katie is traumatised, she needs a holding, containing mother who can help put her feelings into words and allow Katie to think about her feelings and make sense of them.

With illustration by Rachel Rouzieva, the last page inside the book gives short descriptions of clinical psychologist Beverley and self-taught artist Rachel. Just before that, and after the story, is a two-pager which clarifies the concepts of holding and containment for parents.

The book which is available in hard copy can be purchased at Reader's Warehouse Norwood or ordered directly from Gerald at R150 per copy by calling or messaging him on his cell 083 233 0649.

According to Beverley she has more children's books up her sleeve but they will have to wait until she and her family have really settled from their move from South Africa to Australia end of last year. An activity which, in itself, requires lots of holding and containment.



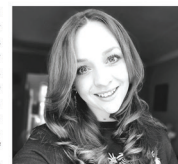
About the Author

Beverley Marcus Gorelick is a qualified Clinical Psychologist with over 12 years experience in private practice. She has a background degree in Speech and Hearing Therapy that has been invaluable in her work as a psychologist, particularly working with parents of children with special needs. Her areas of interest include parent-infant psychotherapy, play therapy for children and individual adult psychotherapy. Beverley has a passion for making key psychological concepts accessible. "The Storm Inside Katie" was written with the hope that it would highlight the idea of helping children manage difficult feelings through characters that are easy to relate to for both children and parents. Beverley lives with her husband and two children.



About the Illustrator

Rachel Rouzieva is a self-taught artist living with her husband and fur babies in Johannesburg. She explores her passion for art through a wide range of mediums from pencils and crafts to photography and dance and is always on the lookout for acquiring new skills to challenge and express herself artistically. Through her art she can manifest the wonders of her mind into the physical and with each work she leaves a part of herself in the subject for the viewer to explore. Her unique characters in "The Storm Inside Katie" have an anthropomorphic quality with their wide range of expressions influenced from her love of Japanese manga and anime.



Join a SAPI group

by Vossie Goosen

SAPI has three different types of groups.

Clinical seminar group members pay our full annual fee of R3 995. They are facilitated by psychoanalysts in three rotations per year. In the first month of each rotation the analyst talks about how he or she works and, sometimes, a group member gives the history of their case. In the two months that follow the same group member presents the same case. Johannesburg has four and Cape Town three Clinical Seminar groups. SAPI also recently started a Remote Group that will always be online. This group meets on a weeknight, the other seven on a Saturday.

The second type of group is our Intergenerational Transfer of the Trauma of Apartheid (ITTA) groups which discuss race issues. Some of the groups have a specific programme and others

are unstructured. Johannesburg has three and Cape Town two groups. There is also a sixth group which will remain online and consists of members across the five original groups. The just ITTA annual fee is R2 000. If you belong to a Clinical Seminar group and an ITTA group you pay the full fee mentioned above.

Cape Town and Johannesburg also have a Low Fee Service (LFS) each. In Johannesburg members who only belong to the LFS pay a fee of R1 100. SAPI members who don't belong to a group also pay an annual fee of R1 100, as does Clinical Seminar group members who are on a Leave of Absence. From this year our current community service groups that are run like Clinical Seminar groups, but are facilitated by senior psychologists, also pay an annual fee of R1 100. Johannesburg has two such groups and both these groups have members who are in other centres and will therefore stay online. Our third, former community group in Johannesburg pays a fee of R2 000.

Support Ukraine

by Vossie Goosen

Both the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) and the Board of the Ukrainian Psychoanalytic Society published calls for financial help for our colleagues in the Ukraine. The IPA also decided to donate a \$100 000 from its own reserves.

Additionally, the IPA also established a Psychoanalytic Assistance in Crises and Emergencies Committee “to build links at a societal level to co-ordinate requests for help and offers of support”, such as free counselling sessions and resources or services which can be publicised on the IPA website. The IPA is also asking organisations that need assistance to contact them.

The Ukrainian society also implored us to “express in a direct and open way our condemnation of and outrage at the Russian attack”.

To donate money via the IPA visit their website and donations page. Anonymous donations can be made via Accounts@ipa.world

The Ukrainian society sent a list of organisations that need support. [Click here](#).

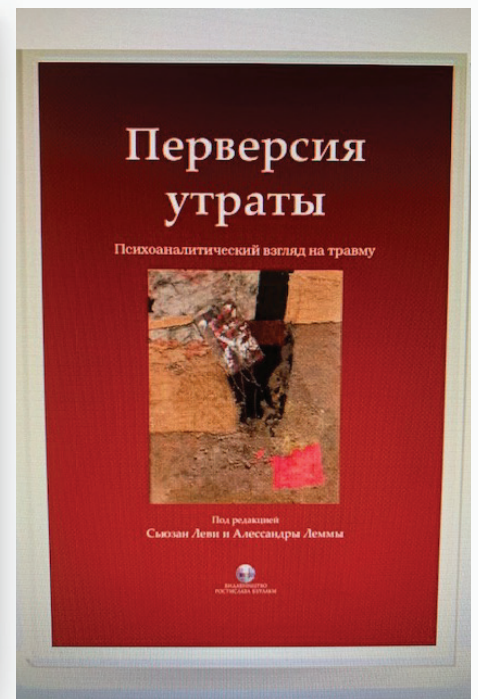
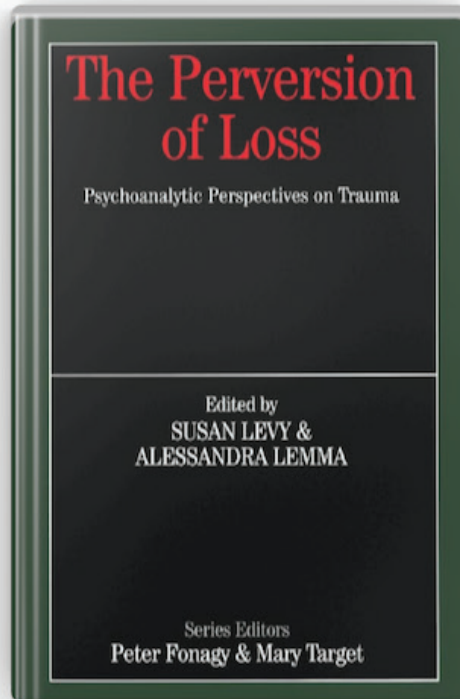
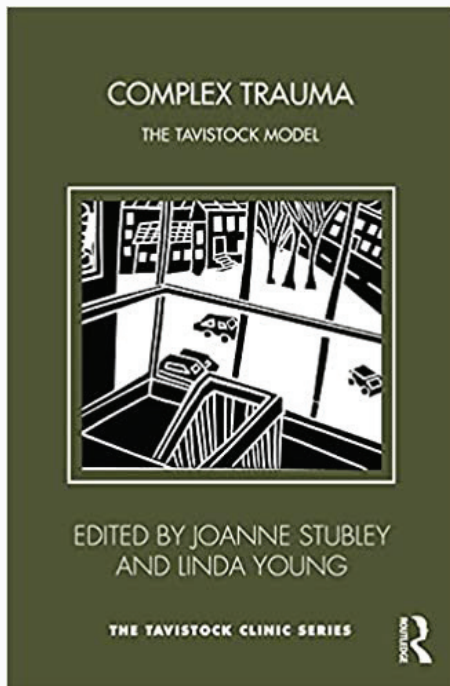
See the IPA's email of Friday, 18 March 2022, to access a form you can fill in to indicate how you would like to help. It offers

access to the statements from office bearers, resources for clinicians, mental health support and services, as well as discussions.

At the same time Jo Stubly and Linda Young published and launched their book, *Complex Trauma: The Tavistock Model*, which features the work of 12 authors in “a vibrant and innovative collection of approaches using psychoanalytic thinking to drive effective treatments for traumatised people”. SAPA training analyst Sue Levy, who has a chapter in this book, attended an online launch of a translation of her and Alessandra Lemma's book with colleagues from the Ukraine days before the war started (see the English and Russian covers here)

Irina Shirstiuk, who led the launch on behalf of her Ukrainian colleagues, told an audience of psychoanalysts and other clinicians from the Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, the United Kingdom, South Africa and Germany how they were given a copy of *The Perversion of Loss* after the war in the Donbas in 2014. At the start of the lockdown in 2020 they decided to translate it in Russian.

It is our hope that resources such as these two books may also contribute to help our colleagues in the Ukraine and Russia and that they will also support the world's peoples in war zones. Visit the *New Frame* online and search for the article by Aragorn Eloff in which he enumerates the many current conflict areas around the globe.



The full SAPI 2022 Conference preamble

by *Nthsediseng Tlooko*

**“Where have I come from, where did you pick me up?”
the Tagore baby, in his poem, “The Beginning”, asked its
mother.
The mother answered, half crying, half laughing and clasping
the baby to her breast,
“You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.
You were in the dolls of my childhood’s games; and when
with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made
the unmade you then.
You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship
I worshipped you.
In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my
mother you have lived.”**

And, so, the Tagore mother explains to her baby the mystery of her existence. That her baby comes from the vastness of everything that has been the mother.

Where we all come from, how this life began, who we really are is but a mystery. We may think we know the answer to where we started but, as the Tagore mother demonstrates, we do not truly know the desires that have informed our existence.

It is the enigma of the enigmatic messages that are carried through generations, unconsciously. This is the truth of our being and we know this from the start of life. The Freudian baby is born into a muddle, an untruth of sorts. What is me? What is not me? Am I the dolls of my mother’s childhood games? Do I create the milk? Oedipus had to ask himself, “Would I really kill my father and marry my mother?” The truth of which was too arduous to see.

Reality is harsh. And we need to create perceptions of reality that feel bearable and protective, that can help us transition from our godly omnipotence to the humility of ordinary life.

Did the scorpion truly lie to the frog when he said to her that, “I will not bite you”, as he begged her to carry him across the river? Could it be that the scorpion was earnest in his promise that he would not bite the frog for he understood the fatal implications of such an attack? But, it is in our nature to believe that we are better than what we are. Therefore, we make the false statement despite our best intentions not to.

And this is the truth of nature, that at times we need to lie in order to survive. The caterpillar poses as a twig as a defence against predators. The chameleon uses his environment to camouflage, to deceive its prey and its predators. The leopard conceals itself in the tall grass of the savannas. The wolf dressed in wool. The theologically cloaked lies of Apartheid. In one of the many faces of lying Alessandra Lemma notes that we often lie to protect ourselves and we often lie to gain power over the other, just as Russia continues to lie to gain power over the Ukraine.

The fables and tales are good examples of how a lie can be used as both a defence and an offence. We all know about Pinocchio, as well as The Boy Who Cried Wolf and the Sotho fable, *Tselane le Dimo*. The Sotho fable that tells us about a little black girl, Tselane. Who lived in the mountains with her mother. She was left alone, locked in the house, when her mother went in search of wood and food. The mountains were known for the strange men who occupied them and one in particular, Ledimo, the big giant who ate children. Due to Ledimo’s notoriety, and

in the interest of protecting Tselane, Tselane’s mother told her she must only open the door when she hears her mother coming up the mountain. How would she know that her mother was coming up the mountain? The mother would sing, “Tselane ngwana ke, tlo nke bohobe oje” (Tselane, my child, come get bread to eat). Even so, there is always that fateful day in a fable. Ledimo ate a piece of burning coal to make his voice sound like Tselane’s mother. He tricked Tselane into opening the door for him so he can eat her.

Deception is the oldest lie. The lie that is acted, done to triumph over the duped other. Such a lie was written about in Redi Tlhabi’s book, *Khwezi*. Khwezi, Fezekile Kuzwayo, was Tselane. A woman who thought she was safe because she was in a familiar space with a person she trusted. Former President Jacob Zuma was Ledimo, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, burning from the coal he just ate.

The truth is hard to bear. It is not easy to face reality, a fact that the Freudian baby knows all too well. We navigate reality by creating our own perceptions of it, because we eventually learn that we do not make the milk. This is a hard truth to accept.

We often find ourselves in the space between external reality and internal phantasy. The space where we can remind ourselves that the milk exists within us and it is because I was born that the milk had to be made for me. This is the transitional space between phantasy and reality that Winnicott often speaks of.

The lie can become a transitional object, the link to the breast that makes the giving up of the breast a little bit easier. The connection that allows for the bitter swallowing of the red pill. But, a split in the mind can easily pervert this transitional space, making me believe that I do in fact make the milk and mother, also, in fact, makes the milk. Therefore, I did not intentionally kill Reeve Steenkamp in a murderous rage because I believed she was an intruder in my bathroom. As Oscar Pistorius once claimed.

Perhaps the overt lie at times feels more reassuring than the truth because you know it is a lie. A certainty exists in the knowledge of its falsehood. And often the truth can feel dangerous. Disconcerting. It can feel like touching the sun.

The psychoanalytic endeavour is the pursuit of truthfulness. And in the pursuit of truth we learn to mourn our inability to touch the sun. We come in touch with the reality of giving up that which we cannot have.

In mourning we can start to come close to the truth, the truth we repressed as a result of the neurotic condition, as Freud would say. The symptoms found in neurosis, according to Freud, are repressed truths trying to free themselves. The psychic defences that we so often see in our psychoanalytic work, such as repression, denial and disavowal, defend us against our own truths. And the psychic defences that we see so often in society, such as repression, denial and disavowal, defend us against the truth of climate change, as Sally Weintrobe would say

It can be understood that it is not the facts of the truth that we cannot bear. Rather, what feels unbearable is the meaning that we ascribe to these truths and what they will do to us. When you really start to think about it, you realise that truths and lies and all that exist in between, are in everything and everyone. And some truths and lies, just like the unconscious, can never be truly known.