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Special Section

International Sándor Ferenczi Network Series

Hypnotic Influence of a Leader

Koritar, E. (2022). **Introduction: Hypnotic Influence of a Leader.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 341–348.

The rise of authoritarianism in political leadership worldwide has been a troubling development especially in democratically constituted nations like the United States, where their constitutional democracy was nearly overthrown by an incumbent president. Parallels to the rise of fascism in Europe in the early part of the 20th century were often voiced in the media. Psychoanalysts were sought out by journalists seeking to diagnose a leader that they called a pathological liar, a narcissist, and a moron. In the ISFN Webinar series titled “*Listening with Ferenczi*” (2021), psychoanalysts endeavored to analyze the underlying dynamics of the nature of the apparent hypnotic influence the leader had over the populace.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09363-w>

Koritar, E. (2022). **The Leader’s Hypnotic Influence and the Creation of Alternate Reality.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 349–363

Abstract: Psychoanalysis has traditionally been an insular practice by analysts in their offices sequestered from any outside intrusion. However, in recent years a demand for psychoanalytic perspectives on the underlying dynamics of political figures and social phenomena has arisen. Media representatives have increasingly approached psychoanalysts for insight into such conditions as narcissistic personality disorder, compulsive lying, delusional thinking, when attempting to understand the irrational machinations of authoritarian leaders. Here, we will not be investigating the individual psyche, but rather the relationship between psyche and the culture of the populace (i.e., the polis). This paper considers the complex underlying dynamics of leaders’ hypnotic influence and the creation of an alternate reality.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09362-x>

Prince, R. (2022). **Creating Alternative Reality: A Case Study.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 364–373.

Abstract: The sense of reality that underlie political beliefs are created through a group process that emerges from the intersection of the psyches of leaders and followers. An alternative reality is constructed by the demagogue's assertions which express or channel unconscious needs. Antecedents of the contemporary American situation are evident in earlier populist and Fascist movements, the hallmark of which were an attack on all "truth" except that which reflects the power of the leader. Faults in the social field and demagogic techniques lead to alternative narratives and "facts" that are maintained with fervor. Reality is characterized by a lack of complexity or ambiguity. Emotional investment is intensified by primitive needs of the self. Cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias guarantee a resistance to reflection. Evidence and logic give way to wish, loyalty and power as the criteria for truth. Ultimately a clash of realities results in complex social trauma.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09360-z>

Miller, I.S. (2022). **Second Thoughts: Pseudo-reality Between Hypnosis and Spectacle.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 374–383.

Abstract: "Second Thoughts: Pseudo-Reality Between Hypnosis and Spectacle" expands the discussion of Endre Koritar's and Robert Prince's presentations in the 2021 International Sándor Ferenczi Network Listening with Ferenczi (Koritar, [2022a](#); Prince, [2022](#)). Beginning with a segue from Prince's reference to Thomas Mann's "Mario and the Magician," the present paper expands focus from the dynamics of leadership to the grooming of followership along the pathway of *image* as the American national addiction to *pseudo-reality*, a fascinating and omnipotently expected, always disappointing entitlement (Boorstin, [1961](#)). Political *spectacle*, ascendant in American executive, legislative, and judicial performance since 2016, functions as image—supercharged, with its guarantee of gratification powerfully overcoming disappointment.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09367-6>

Frankel, J. (2022). **The Narcissistic Dynamics of Submission: The Attraction of the Powerless to Authoritarian Leaders.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 384–404.

Abstract: Ferenczi's conception of identification with the aggressor, which describes children's typical response to traumatic assaults by family members, provides a remarkably good framework to understand mass social and economic trauma. In the moment of trauma, children instinctively submit and comply with what abusers want—not just in behavior but in their perceptions, thoughts, and emotions—in order to survive

the assault; afterwards they often continue to comply, out of fear that the family will turn its back on them. Notably, a persistent tendency to identify with the aggressor is also typical in children who have been emotionally abandoned by narcissistically self-preoccupied parents, even when there has not been gross trauma. Similarly, large groups of people who are economically or culturally dispossessed by changes in their society typically respond by submitting and complying with the expectations of a powerful figure or group, hoping they can continue to belong—just like children who are emotionally abandoned by their families. Not surprisingly, emotional abandonment, both in individual lives and on a mass scale, is typically felt as humiliating; and it undermines the sense that life is meaningful and valuable.

But the intolerable loss of belonging and of the feeling of being a valuable person often trigger exciting, aggressive, compensatory fantasies of specialness and entitlement. On the large scale, these fantasies are generally authoritarian in nature, with three main dynamics—somasochism, paranoid–schizoid organization, and the manic defense—plus a fourth element: the feeling of emotional truth that follows narcissistic injury, that infuses the other dynamics with a sense of emotional power and righteousness. Ironically, the angry attempt to reassert one’s entitlements ends up facilitating compliance with one’s oppressors and undermining the thoughtful, effective pursuit of realistic goals.

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Regular Articles

Grünberg, K. (2022). **Afterwards—Forgetting, Remembering, Transmitting. Extreme Trauma and Culture in Post-National-Socialist Germany.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 405–425.

Abstract: Facing the rupture the Shoah marks in the history of humanity and in the life of survivors and their relatives, this article approaches long-term psychosocial consequences—*after* Auschwitz. The dimensions of “forgetting” in post-Nazi Germany are brought into focus by the remembering and passing on of extreme traumatic experiences of persecution. To gain insights into these processes, this article differentiates between traumatization and extreme traumatization. Survivors remember and pass on their experiences of persecution, especially through non-verbal communication and in the form of unconsciously shaped “scenes.” This *Scenic Memory of the Shoah* is conveyed in relationships with descendants, to fellow human beings, to the environment and thus also in experiences of anti-Semitism in Germany today. The fact that extreme traumatization is expressed precisely in scenes of coexistence also means that it must be understood as an embedded factor in society, in culture—in forgetting and remembering “afterwards.”

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09368-5>

Karniol, R. (2022). **Whose Genitalia Are Involved in the Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex in Boys?** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 426–455 (2022).

This paper addresses the issue of whose genitalia are involved in the dissolution of the castration complex in boys. Freud and his followers suggested several different possibilities which are elaborated herein, and these alternative models are discussed from the perspective of psychological research regarding children's emergent gender identity and their awareness of genital differences. The reviewed data show that contrary to Freudian theory, preschool children's emergent gender identity is not dependent on their awareness of genital differences. However, preschoolers with younger siblings, primarily opposite gender ones, evidence greater understanding of genital differences, as Freud suggested. The discussion emphasizes the importance of children's family constellation and their awareness of self-other similarity and dissimilarity in the development of their gender identity.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09347-w>

Chernus, L.A. (2022). **Through a Glass Darkly: A Clinical Journey.** *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 456–479.

Abstract: The use of the empathic mode for engaging and communicating with patients has become widely accepted by many psychoanalytic psychotherapists since Kohut's early formulations (Kohut, 1971; Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). However, diagnostic understanding based on ongoing empathic immersion with our patients is often complicated because it is continually being modified as we know them more deeply and as transference and countertransference factors influence our perceptions. To illustrate the complexity of diagnosis when it is grounded in ongoing empathic engagement with our patients, I describe in detail my treatment of an elderly woman who initially presented with severe and acute symptoms of psychological, cognitive, and physical impairment. As the treatment has progressed, my diagnostic understanding has been continually modified to include a combination of psychodynamic and organic factors including PTSD, intense unresolved grief, and extreme feelings of guilt and need for punishment. Adding further to this conundrum, I have been frequently challenged by my own responses to the fluctuations in her progress, especially to periods of hopefulness followed by periods of despair and regression.

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Book Reviews

Covitz, H. (2022). **Book Review: *Reading Freud's Patients: Memoir, Narrative and the Analytand***, by Anat Tzur Mahalel, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2020, 225 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 480–483.

We are far from being able to understand under what conditions or how and exactly when memories are laid down. If Grandpa died on Christmas Day or Dad left Mom just before Thanksgiving of 1965, at the very time that memory was being inscribed, there was likely no conscious perception that a lifelong mnemonic trace was being etched into the Psyche that was to follow that person throughout life.

So, what of the memories that are etched into our minds about and during a psychoanalytic treatment? More than a hundred years ago, people came from the United States and from Russia and from Western Europe to be analyzed by—as his patient H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) called Freud—The Master. Psychiatrists and others seeking to train in psychoanalysis, and poets, and writers and religious folk sought him out and Freud allocated to them usually some brief months to work out their difficulties and to learn of the workings of the Unconscious Mind, of *das Unbewusste*.....

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Hristeva, G. (2022). **Book Review: *Innovations in Psychoanalysis: Originality, Development, Progress***, edited by Aner Govrin and Jon Mills, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2020, 256 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 484–487.

"Psychoanalysis is internally divided [...]. We can neither find agreement nor consensus" (p. 1). This is the troubling diagnosis that Aner Govrin and Jon Mills have placed at the beginning of their book *Innovations in Psychoanalysis: Originality, Development, Progress*. It is true that the history of psychoanalysis is not free of various attempts to restore the lost unity, to find common ground, to bridge the gaps, thus also gaining "scientific credibility" (p. 1), but unfortunately there is also a long and sad history of excluding dissenters and of classifying criticism as threat. Govrin and Mills do not dwell long on the negative aspects, though: Psychoanalysis is worth preserving and fortunately there are still "independent thinkers within contemporary times" determined to work on "a renewal of intellectual energies" (p. 1).

Govrin and Mills's edited volume is about the power of innovation. It brings together contributions and experiences of a number of well-known psychoanalysts. The editors are well aware of the difficulties of their enterprise:

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09366-7>

Iscan, C. (2022). **Book Review: *Why War?: Making Sense of Consciousness and Self***, by Mario Rendón, International Psychoanalytic Books, New York, 2018, 663 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 488–493.

The question that is asked in the title of this book is heavily weighing on many minds as humanity is facing another war. Albert Einstein, in a historical correspondence in 1932, posed this question to Sigmund Freud. He was hoping that the founder of psychoanalysis had the answers at a time humanity was trying to recover from its first World War and the second one was brewing. Dr. Rendón is not satisfied by Freud's response. The outcome is this book. Dr. Rendón, a child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, drawing on his vast knowledge in various fields of human intellect establishes a sound and compelling argument for a more hopeful future for mankind than Freud. The book is evocative, engaging, a page-turner for the reader who has the stamina to keep up with the dense text.

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09365-8>

Janowitz, N. (2022). **Book Review: *Three Characters: Narcissist, Borderline and Manic Depressive***, by Christopher Bollas, with Sacha Bollas, Phoenix Publishing House Ltd, Bicester, Oxfordshire, 2021, 76 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 494–497.

This slim volume, with no index or bibliography, includes three lectures Christopher Bollas delivered to The Chicago Workshop (1991–2007) and the Arild Conference (1983–2010), followed by twelve pages of his answers to questions posed by Sacha Bollas (PsyD). The format of a collection of essays is familiar from Bollas' previous books, as is his focus on character. He encourages psychoanalysts to think about character structure since "the advantage of any character structure is that its repetition makes the person's distress findable" (p. xiii).

Go to: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-022-09364-9>

Koritar, E. (2022). **Book Review: *Clinical Spinoza: Integrating his Philosophy with Contemporary Therapeutic Practice***, by Ian S. Miller, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2022, 348 pp. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82(3), 498–502.

Ian Miller's tome on Baruch Spinoza will likely become an essential reference text for psychoanalytic and philosophy researchers interested in the historical roots of psychoanalysis in philosophy. But this book is much more than a scholarly rendition of the origins of psychoanalytic discourse. Miller explores the relevance of Spinoza's ideas to contemporary clinical technique. Miller distills Spinoza's incisive insights into epistemological and ontological aspects of his reflections on a theory of mind and body. Unlike Freud's dualistic consideration of the individual experience in terms of life or death drives, objective brain activity distinct from subjective minding, and thinking versus experiencing, Spinoza's conception of the individual experience is monistic considering that mind and body are different manifestations of the same substance. The individual's substance or soul is equivalent to the person's mind and being.

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