

Response to Janek Dubowski's keynote "An Ancient Memory from the Distant Past and the Arts Therapies now and for the future."

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In the introduction to his keynote Janek Dubowski mentions three crucial things that set the tone and focus of his paper:

1. Remembering, in the meaning of recalling but also of piecing together something torn apart.
2. Trauma, and
3. Times of war.

Janek contextualises the Arts Therapies as being born of 20th-century trauma and the need to express the complex and often repressed feelings and experiences connected to it. Gradually, the arts were recognised as a means that facilitated the expression of the unspeakable, found their place in psychiatry, and formal training for Arts Therapists emerged later in the 1970s (Waller, 1991). This placing of the historical development of the Arts Therapies also touches the history of, and the need for, ECARTE. "Nothing is stronger than an idea whose time has come" (Hugo 1877). History had provided the momentum for founding this consortium of European universities in 1991. It emerged shortly after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the end of the Soviet era in Europe. At ECARTE's founding conference in 1990, the conference logo was a scribbled map of the European Union. At the conference plenary, hopes were high that soon this map – and with it, the 'map' or shape of ECARTE, would change and grow, as new countries would join this congregation of free and friendly nations that the EU constitutes.

Europe as a whole, as each state of post-war Europe itself, is built on and recovered from the trauma. However, after 1945, it was disjointed, violated and torn apart, suffering and still suffering from the wounds and atrocities brought about by two World Wars, the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust and the ensuing so-called 'Cold War'.

Such traumas do not end with the generation who experienced it; we, the following generations, partake in spoken and unspoken memories of our parents and grandparents, of things we did not,

and yet may feel as if we have, experienced ourselves. This is the nature of transgenerational trauma. As Marianne Hirsch (2008) wrote, we are a generation of 'post-memory and if we take a moment and consult our family history many of us can probably verify this thought.

Together with other eminent figures in the professions, such as Di Waller, John Evans, Line Kossolapov, to name a few, Janek has played an active role in this on-going process of forming a trans-European body of universities with, or interested in, Arts Therapies programmes; some years later he was working with colleagues from Lithuania towards developing their art therapy programme. Such work has not resulted in a homogenous landscape of Arts Therapies but rather one that allows for differences and tolerates inconsistencies, which is very much like what we, as Arts Therapists, are helping our clients tolerate and integrate as they mirror ambiguities inherent to the arts and the individual psyche. This multilateralism and integration of diversity is the opposite of the different forms of totalitarianism that traumatised the world in the 20th century. As such, ECArTE stands for a community that celebrates the healing potential of the arts in all their complexity and forms, providing a platform for continuous dialogue and collaborations across countries, cultures and professions. In a way, and to use Janek's metaphor, the family has come together and keeps talking to each other, which is a lot, when thinking of how difficult family dynamics can sometimes be. The UK has since left the EU, but it has not left Europe, nor has it not left the conversation and bodies like ECArTE ensure that it continues.

Janek also points to the pitfalls of the increasing regulation and recognition of the professions: the essential freedom and the need for a safe and 'fit for purpose space' for the client to express, and practice the arts, is at odds with contemporary institutional ideas of efficiency. These pressures towards conformity have impacted clinical practice and university training programmes. While the 21st century sees most countries in Europe freed from totalitarian regimes, what the French have named 'savage capitalism' is running rampant (Bourdieu, 1998). One of the direct results is the disappearance of the designated art studio, music room, dance, movement and drama spaces that Janek describes as "offering our patients an alternative creative sanctuary within the Institution" or what Michel Foucault termed "Heterotopias".

These 'other', 'different' or 'unorthodox' places are vital to our patients' recovery, yet many of them have disappeared in favour of bland multipurpose spaces.

Another question that Janek raises is the involvement of Arts Therapists in research, or more precisely, the dominant paradigm of evidence-based practice and the call for manualisation. He asks if there is 'something in the identity of the Artist, striving for originality, that results in as many versions of Art Therapy as there are Art Therapists?' However, looking closely, there may also be as many versions of *verbal* therapy as there are verbal therapists. The psychoanalyst Irvin Yalom (2003) once said that sometimes it seemed as if he had to invent a new form of therapy for every individual patient. In a way, manualisation seems adverse to the arts and an approach in the arts therapies tailored to an individual or specific groups - with their social, cultural, historical contextual issues.

We must ask ourselves: would it be helpful to our clients to manualise the practice of the arts? Artists tend to have an individual and unique relationship to their work. Moreover, can there be a manual on replicating our therapeutic relationships with patients, which are unique? Relationships, or the lack of them, cause damage and are healed through other relationships. In keeping with the myth of Osiris that Janek uses to illuminate the dynamics of remembering, Arts Therapists may fear that a standardised and homogenised practice dismembers and destroys the potential of a *unique* affective and aesthetic relationship between a therapist and a client and between a client and her *art*. The most often articulated criticism of manual-based treatments is that they may lead to a bland, rule-governed, and emotionally detached form of therapy. Some therapists fear that practising therapy under these conditions may feel more like following a recipe than the intuitive and creative process that drew therapists to the field. While another criticism is that 'clinical situations rarely mirror the tightly controlled conditions of a clinical research study' (Mansfield and Addis, 2001).

On the other hand, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are not the only type of research needed to establish the evidence base for art therapy. Buck Taylor and Dent-Brown (2014) have suggested 'they can be seen as an essential link in a sequence of research in which they are preceded by proof-of-concept single-case studies and closely observed case series and followed by broader more naturalistic studies to ensure that results achieved in a highly controlled setting are replicable in routine clinical practice' (Buck Taylor 2015; Salkovskis, 1995; Gilroy, 2006).

In these authors' view, although not sufficient on their own, RCTs are an unavoidable link in the chain of evidence development, constituting a sufficiently specific definition of the treatment, such as that proposed by a manual, which meets the necessary condition for a robust RCT. Thus, the profession potentially faces a dilemma, between the recognition that developing art therapy manuals may be helpful for the development of the evidence base for art therapy and the fear that using a manual might be reductive.

The critical question put to us is this: 'Is it possible to produce creative manuals that reflect rather than prescribe the process of art therapy and which draw on the individual creativity of the art therapists who use them?' Perhaps that is an issue that ECArTIANS would like to debate.

In conclusion, like Janek, we have experienced how clients left behind old identities defined by illness in favour of a new identity as artists, which, as he states, is a "testament to how radical and transformative our practices can be".

We could not agree more.

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