Biodynamic Massage

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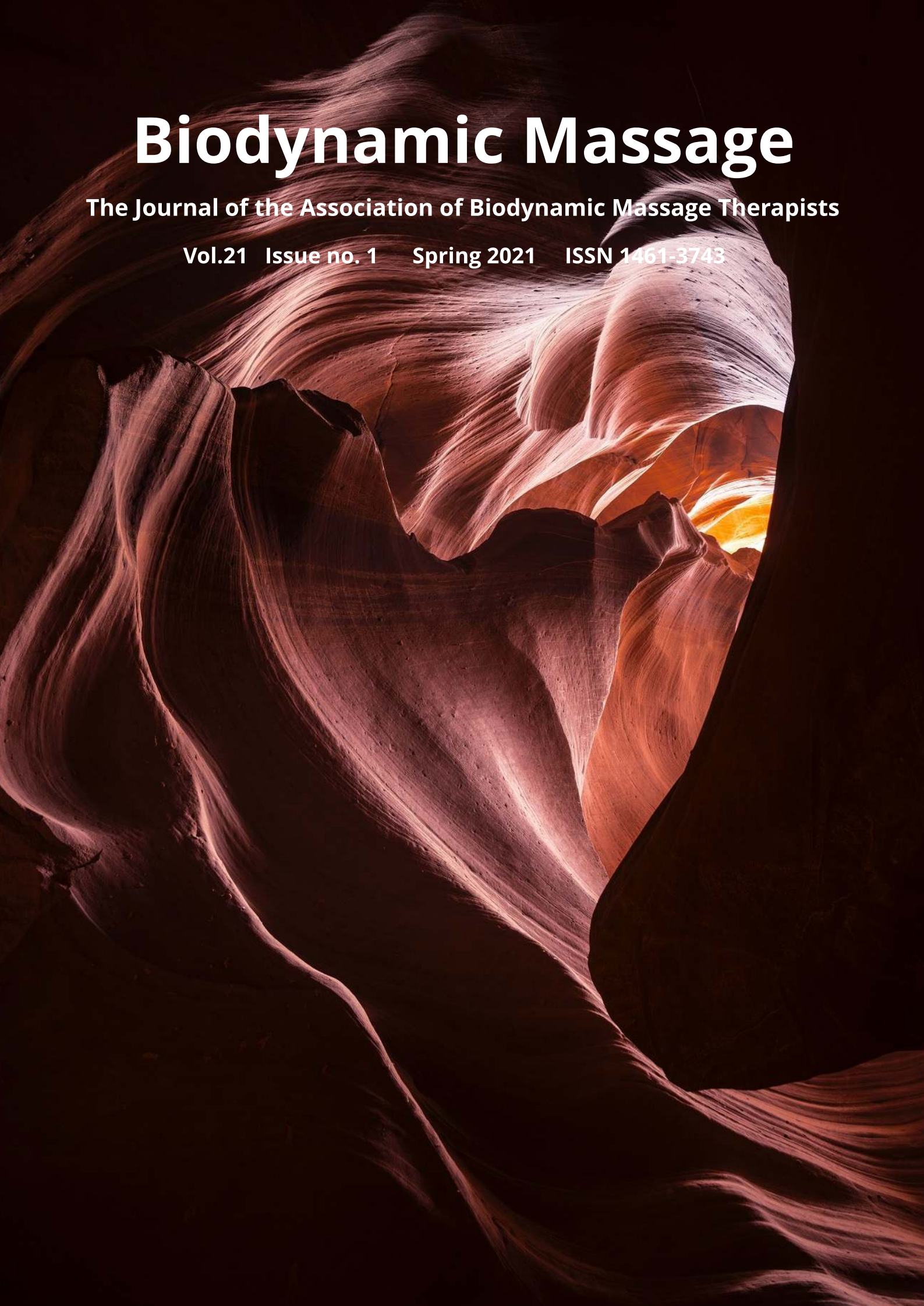

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
REBECCA WARNER-HODGKIN

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank you for your patience. Getting a journal written, produced and distributed during the last year has not been easy. Thank-you to everyone who contributed and shared their writings, as I repeatedly say, without you volunteering your writings the journal would not exist.

The following writings are a collection of pieces spanning across the year. They include a piece by *Debbie Rothwell* written in the early stages of the lockdown reflecting on what it is like to live without touch. As I reread it almost a year later, I find it even more poignant, knowing what it feels like to live without touch for so long. I was particularly grateful to *Kate Merrick* for writing on the Black Lives Matter movement and why it matters so much for therapists to understand and appreciate how structural racism gets re-perpetuated in the therapy room and in training. What does it mean for us and our clients when all the approved writings and theories are written predominantly by white people? *Jessica Eve* generously shared an essay written for her Biodynamic Massage training and I am very pleased to be able to publish it in this edition.

Over the last year I have not been able to venture far from my home having spent most of it under some sort of restriction and lockdown. Unable to see family or friends I have used the spare time I had to explore a nature reserve near my home. I have found this an incredibly grounding and comforting activity and I share with you a collection of photos from across all the seasons.

I enjoyed very much reading Lindsey Nicholas' reflections on how she has supported and comforted her own heart through this last year and I plan to explore the people she mentions for further inspiration.

We wanted to take a moment and thank *Kate Codrington* for all the support that she has shown to the organisation over the years. Whilst she may no longer be a practising therapist, she remains an essential member of our Biodynamic family! Find out about what she is doing next on page 18 .

Finally, I want to acknowledge the challenges that all of us have faced as practitioners over the last year and to thank you all for showing up to our ABMT catch-ups. Whilst the future still remains uncertain and the road back to regular face to face work perhaps some time off, I believe that as an Association we have become stronger, more supportive, and better connected.

Rebecca

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
LINDSEY NICHOLAS

Lockdown has been hard for all of us. I feel what makes us human is our interconnectivity so even if our own lockdown experience has not been as painful as it has been for some, we are implicated in the suffering of others. For my own part, I am aware that all things will pass and that change is on its way, but I still feel 'stuck' and shut down in an atmosphere of isolation and what can sometimes feel like a kind of mass social agoraphobia.

So, in writing this letter, I found myself searching for material which has helped me feel differently about our current situation. In January, I was lucky enough to attend a one day on-line event organised by the Fascia Hub (www.thefasciahub.com)on the subject of the *heart*– and experienced learning about the 'dance of the heart' in a profoundly moving and exciting way.

The heart is not a pump – it is a spiral folded in on itself as a result of the twisting nature of embryonic development. Scientist, Gil Hedley (www.gilhedley.com), showed us, through videos of a dissection of a human heart, that it can be unravelled like a shell. According to Gil, being alive is 'spinning, vortical action' and the heart centre is a 'footprint of the spiralic nature of our energy forms'.

The heart is a place where the blood refreshes its movement, according to Rudolph Steiner. It is also a continuous organ in the shape of a person. What we think of as the heart is actually the *heart centre,* as interconnectivity through the body via the fascia affects the whole being. If we free the heart, we free the neck muscles, the attached nervous system and so on right through the body.

I was affected by somatic psychologist, Michael Shea's, proposition that, at the centre of the twisting heart, as a result of development, there is a quiescence, a still point, which we can access by slowing down and trying to feel our heartbeat inside our bodies, rather than by taking our pulse. We can connect to fuller levels of empathy and also a sense of light-heartedness by performing this practice. Shea asks 'how can we allow feelings, concepts and images to just flow through us', a question which excites his curiosity and motivates his work (www.sheaheart.com).

There is not enough space here to recount yoga therapist, Joanne Avison's wonderful presentation on the 'folding and enfolding process of being'; how we 'move through ourselves to become ourselves', demonstrated in the development of the heart. She sees the heart as 'the conductor, orchestrating both our inner and outer movements with visible and invisible forces of life'. I would love her to talk to ABMT members about her ideas which I think add dimension and depth to biodynamic learning.

For all sorts of reasons my heart has been sorely tested over the past year, but I now know it is much bigger, supported and connected than I'd imagined, and this gives me hope. I am looking forward to our get-together session on 6th March and to the energy this heart-felt sharing has given us over the past year. See you then.

Lindsey

THOUGHTS ON HOW IT FEELS NOT TO TOUCH
BY DEBBIE ROTHWELL

When I was a small child around 5 years old I remember an Uncle telling me firmly, 'Don't touch!' as I reached out to stroke the very lovely, shiny, smooth surface of his brand new pride and joy, a hi-fi system set in a pristine varnished case.

I felt the sting of that rebuke ring in my ears as I started to write this about yearning to reach out and touch.

'Don't touch' anyone who is not part of your household.

'Don't touch' too many items in the shop and so on.

Touch, something we as humans cry out for, is now a dirty word.

What is it about touch that is so very nurturing, so appealing, so very human.

In answer to this I am recalling moments of touch, some recent, some from the distant past that touch the part of me that is calling out for it in the here and now.

These touching individual moments, arranged in no particular order, I have written down as they float up in my sensory memory.

My 7 year-old great niece's warm little hand nestling in mine as we stroll down a South London street together.

Later that same day her Dad, my 50 year- old nephew, comes to stand so very close to me; a gesture of affection as I sit on their settee, not quite touching me but invoking the fond memory of that small boy who would sit *sooo* close to you whilst watching cartoons on the telly.

My big brother asking for an extra hug as he said goodbye: 'I'll have another one of those'.

My teenage son reaching over to cover my hand with his as we drove up the M1 on the return journey to his university.

Hugs with my grown up daughter who is very huggable and puts up with me repeatedly kissing her on the cheek.

Reconnecting with an American friend in the UK whom I had met once on a previous holiday and being hugged so genuinely by not only her but all the other Americans in her group as if I was their long lost friend.

Standing on a peaceful Spanish forest hillside looking out at the view as my partner stood beside me with his hand resting on my back (I was tired and in pain from the long walk with an achy knee). Asking me out of the blue as we stood admiring the view:

'What **is** Body Psychotherapy?'

My simple reply was, 'This is'.

So in this world of 'don't touch' I am sustained by my connection to:

a small warm hand,

that boy in the man,

a big brother's extra hug,

a son's tender care,

a daughter's cuddlesome embrace,

a nation's open hug,

a touch to show you are there.

This is my way through today.

THERAPY AND ANTIRACISM WORK
BY KATE MERRICK

The Black Lives Matter movement gained worldwide recognition this summer, its momentum triggered by the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis, USA.

Whilst people the world over sat up and took notice, many black people and people of colour felt the overwhelm of re-traumatisation; of knowing that yet another one of our black brothers and sisters lives had been taken prematurely and brutally, with little to no value placed upon the existence of black people's minds, bodies and spirits, and little to no thought given to the consequence that such an act of violence might incur. That such acts of violence have become a frequent and commonplace experience for black communities across the world speaks, in part, to this re-traumatisation.

However, it is not only the violence perpetrated that triggers both explicit and implicit memories of racist micro and macro aggressions, violence, genocide, displacement, terror, rage etc. but also, the collective denial and disassociation of people the world over; a refusal to acknowledge that black people and people of colour have been living with the legacy of a deeply traumatic history spanning 400 years and remain living in deeply traumatising, systemically racist environments – where the very existence of this is denied or downplayed - to this very day.

The anti racism dialogue that opened up in the UK over the summer months has shone a light on themes of systemic racism, unconscious bias and white privilege. Articles have shown how grossly under-represented black people are across governments, in higher education, positions of senior management, house ownership to name a few, whilst grossly over-represented in the criminal justice system. Recent data cites that, in addition, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are up to twice as likely to die from Covid 19 than people of white British ethnicity, and that black women are five times more likely to die in pregnancy, childbirth or during the postpartum period than their white counterparts (1).

It has also been highlighted just how under-represented black people are in our therapy institutions. Faculty and students are predominantly white and our theoretical foundations, regardless of approach and orientation, are euro-centric. There is a call to begin the process of decolonisation in the field of psychotherapy and mental health; a call to begin to amplify black voices and black theorists, integrating their knowledge and concepts into our curricula; a call to begin to understand the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and what is meant by the term Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome; a call to recognize the embodied impact of racism and racial trauma; and a pressing need for therapists to become aware of our own unconscious bias/ transference towards the black client, so that it does not remain lurking in the shadows but is available for us to work with in therapy and in supervision.

"There is a silence generally within our profession concerning racism, but I believe also that a silence can too easily develop in the consulting room. It is a dangerous silence for the therapy because it contains too much background noise for it not to infect all other work we try to do. A frequent response by the black patient is to stop and leave therapy, often silently. Another response is not to enter in the first place, which is the loudest silence of all." (2)

In my own training organisation where I completed my psychotherapy training,

there was an attempt - during our annual residential group process training - to explore race and racism. The same process unfolded every year, with the dialogue reaching a frustrating and unsatisfying impasse, as the black trainees - attempting to give voice to their experience of racism - were met by the white trainees who would invariably respond by feeling shamed and defensive. The dialogue would then shut down, with both black and white trainees left holding the frustration and anger of the whole group. This of course, is just a reflection of what happens outside our institutions, in the wider societal field.

Conversations around race and racism tend to provoke strong reactions of anger, defensiveness, fear, and confusion, with the territory fast becoming too uncomfortable and sticky to navigate. Fight – Flight – Freeze responses permeate the ground, which invariably leads to the breakdown of any meaningful contact; a withdrawal and a shutting down tends to follow, an inability to remain open to our own experience and the experience of others. However, there is endless scope for us as integrative and body psychotherapists; so much opportunity for us to build the muscle to tolerate and stay with our own feelings of discomfort around racism, as well as supporting our clients in this. By working with our phenomenological embodied relational experience we are able to consciously enquire into our own and our clients' felt experiences of fight, flight, freeze. We are able to mention the often unmentionable, track the triggers, build internal resources and cultivate embodied self-awareness. We understand the legacy of trauma and how we carry the history of our lives in our bodies, as well as the history of our ancestors. We can use the vasomotoric cycle to see where we typically get stuck, withdraw or are mobilised into action. We are able to work with Biodynamic massage to help release and discharge the impact of racial trauma from the client's body.

When we think about unconscious bias, the question is not *if* we carry unconscious bias but *how? "Unconscious bias is not the shark but the water we are all swimming in" (3).* How has being born and raised in a systemically racist society organised my embodied experience? How has racism landed in my body and how does it express itself in relation to black people and people of colour? How do I feel when a client of colour shares their experience of racism? Can I remain empathic, connected and attuned to the client and their experience, even when our experiences may differ wildly? If you are a white therapist, can you tolerate being the "bad object" when the experience of racism and racial trauma is named? What is your relationship with your own whiteness? How do you move through the world as a white person?

There is call to begin, continue or deepen the work of anti racism and to do so in a meaningful way that affects change both in our professional field and society at large. Part of that call is to begin to chew over these kinds of questions, to enquire honestly and deeply. The intention is to bring about integration, harmony, and healing. When it comes to racism, unconscious feelings of anger, rage, shame, hate, fear and guilt are often left to fester outside of our awareness, not only interrupting our personal process of growth and transformation but hindering our collective human evolution too. May we, as therapists, also begin to heed the call to action.

Recommended reading and resources:

Isha Mckenzie-Mavinga:.Black Issues in the Therapeutic Process

David Olusoga. Black and British: A Forgotten History

Dr Joy De Gruy, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing

Resmaa Menakem. My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies

The Black African and Asian Therapy Network for podcasts, blog posts and CPD.https://www.baatn.org.uk/

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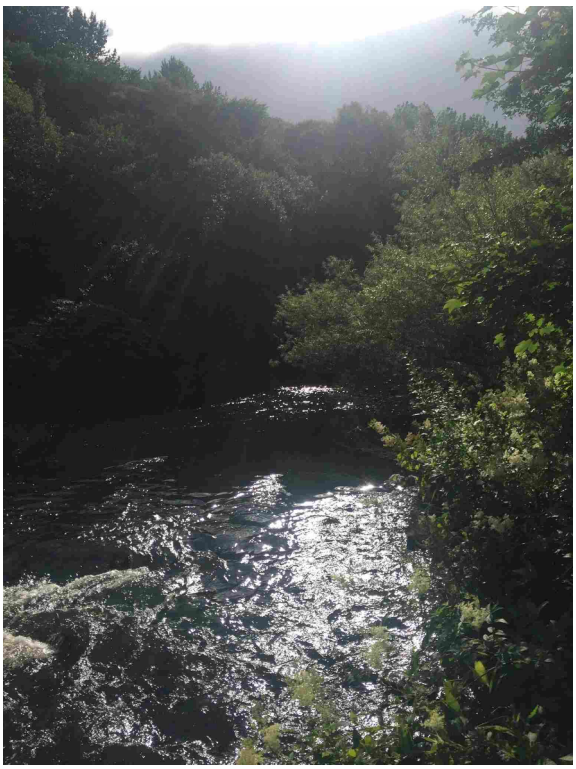
STAYING GROUNDED IN A PANDEMIC
A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS
REBECCA WARNER-HODGKIN

I moved to Glasgow in mid 2019. Just as I was starting to feel settled and getting used to calling this city my home we were plunged into a national lock down. As a means of getting outdoors I began exploring a very underused and untended to nature reserve right on my doorstep. What follows is a year long observation of Dawlsolm Park, a place I ventured to almost every day throughout 2020. Over the months I have become intimately acquainted with its paths, and its flora and fauna and in return it has kept me grounded, connected to nature's cycling and conscious of the truth that even if I felt like nothing was changing, life itself was marching forwards.



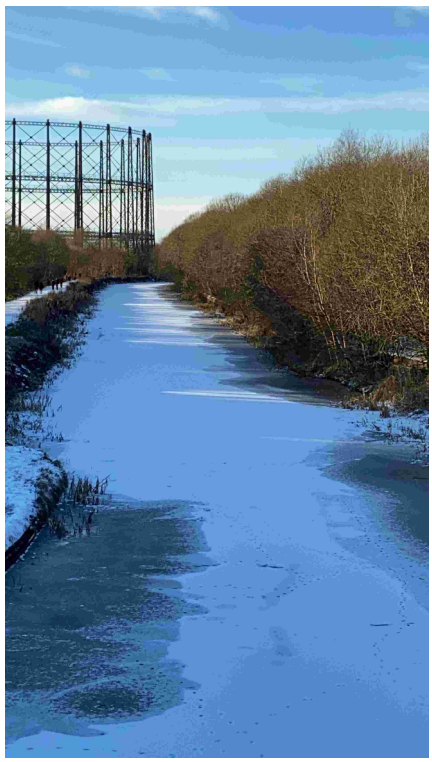
Over the last 12 months my favourite thing to do has been to come down to the river and just listen and watch. Often I am gifted the still companionship of a heron as my reward for being able to just quietly take in my surroundings.

By summer the park had been discovered by everyone else, so I took to coming early; the advantages of the north meant I could do my explorations and wanderings all before 8 am. Deer, kingfishers, parakeets, foxes and woodpeckers all make their home in these woods. Many of the trees are over 200 hundred years old and I took much comfort in their sturdiness and presence through the summer season. From the bluebells and wild garlic of early summer to the typical rains of August some sort of solace was found.

Autumn brought its own challenges. Buoyed by a brief week in Wester Ross, I returned to a Glasgow that was becoming steadily more restrictive and on edge. The wet autumn weather had driven the summer crowds away and I was thankful to feel as if I had the park to myself again.

Whilst I carried on working and doing massage it was clear that we were destined to be locked down further. That week was the last time I saw any of my family, I could not possibly have imagined that it would be so long time before I saw any of them again. By November we were back in lockdown.

Christmas came and went. It was my first one ever alone, and I surprised myself by actually quite enjoying the lack of ceremony and fuss. By New Year's day, temperatures had plummeted and the canal frozen over. An early morning walk before anyone else was out gave me an opportunity to explore the park and its winter face all over again.



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SOUNDING, SPEAKING AND SELF-EXPRESSION IN BIODYNAMIC MASSAGE

BY JESSICA EVE

Since beginning to work with biodynamic massage, I have come to realise that I had been constricting and restraining my voice for most of my life. I had grown up unconsciously believing that I couldn't speak up for myself, probably because I had decided that it was safer for me to not to say anything. Thus, in order to suppress painful feelings and to mitigate the likelihood of criticism, I believe I learned that to keep quiet was all I could do. This effort to cope with the stress of my surroundings was self-defeating because – at the same time – I so desperately wanted to be noticed. I paradoxically hoped that if I could make myself sufficiently invisible and quiet, people would be sure to notice, would draw me back out of myself, and would shelter me with love from thereafter. While this strategy of silence made me feel safer at the time, by adopting this defence, I also lost myself. I have, since beginning my training in body psychotherapy and biodynamic massage several years ago, come a long way with my ability to express myself and am now capable of freely expressing my needs, my desires, my knowledge and my opinions. In this article, I will discuss some ways in which biodynamic massage can aid the development of self-expression; the process by which this can occur, and the role of the therapist in facilitating this. Throughout this article, I have used anecdotes from my own personal experience of working as both client and therapist in order to illustrate the types of experiences which can arise when working with biodynamic massage in this way. How the process can move in the client.

Biodynamic massage, unlike forms of massage which operate at a complimentary therapy level only, works with expressions of energy, character and the unconscious, as well as the physicality of the individual. Through working with my body's physicality and energy in biodynamic massage, I have experienced great benefits in terms of my ability to speak up for myself. Indeed, this is no surprise since biodynamic massage was intentionally developed by Gerda Boyesen to help clients to develop healthy self-expression through the release of tension and muscular armouring. "We need healthy muscle tone to allow or contain our feelings and to be able to act and express ourselves, but when muscle tension solidifies, we build up muscle armouring. In such cases, breathing will be restricted, because the diaphragm will be a crucial part of the armouring pattern." (Van Heel, 2015, p.2) While any of our skeletal muscles may be involved in the regulation of emotions, our diaphragm is a crucial zone in our muscular armouring, because of its connection with the breath. Van Heel describes that where the diaphragm is lacking healthy muscle tone, the client is likely to have difficulty managing their emotions and may easily become overwhelmed. I would add to this statement that the client is, almost certainly, also going to struggle to express - or even name - their emotions and bodily sensations, as the energy is constricted by the obstruction of the breath. Where breathing is restricted in the diaphragm, the individual is likely to be managing their disease by limiting (in a protective gesture) the life force which can flow freely and be expressed through the body. This can give rise to particular character traits, strategies and amouring. Where the individual has repeatedly stifled or restricted the arising of overwhelming or unwelcomed feelings, the stress, strain or shock associated with

those moments may become 'stuck in the body' (Van Heel, p.3) and create restrictive patterns which can later be read through physical and psychological analysis, and which can govern intra- and inter-personal relationships. Through biodynamic massage, we can help to support a renewed healthy flow of energy which is no longer restricted in the same way. Boyesen refers to the natural expression of emotions as being in 'dynamic updrift' (1985a): an energetic flow, up from the pelvis, through the abdomen, through the chest and then expressed through the head (and hands) (Boyesen, 2001). As described by Van Heel below, Boysen taught that by following through with the complete process of emotional expression, from where it arises in the abdomen, to its final expression through the head or hands, we can liberate historical emotions which are stuck; and thus open pathways of expression which were previously closed. She described the first hollow, the abdomen, as the place where an emotion starts. We will sense the emotion first as a variety of sensations, such as a tightening, fluttery movements, or even nausea. These are mainly physical sensations, as we are still unaware of the emotional content. If the diaphragm is flexible enough, the emotion will rise up into the second hollow, the chest. Boyesen saw this as the place where the physical sensations become clearer to us as a feeling: 'I am feeling anxious', '[...], etc. If we are able to express these feelings and the emotion passes through the throat and reaches into the third hollow of the head and brain, then we may get relevant images, memories and insights. For example, we may remember an incident when we were young which gave us a huge shock. The emotional charge or 'dynamic updrift', which at first was just an uncomfortable sensation, now makes sense. If at the time we held back the scream or crying that would have released the shock, and we were never helped to process the frightful event, the shock will have become stuck in our body. (Van Heel, p.3) By closely monitoring the arising of emotion in the abdomen (which, in biodynamic massage, is commonly done with the aid of a stethoscope), the practitioner can help the client to follow an emerging emotion through all stages of expression. The fulfilment of such an expression has acute therapeutic significance in that it (re)establishes a healthy pathway and framework for self-expression which is not constrained by the restrictive patterns which developed over time. In other words, such a therapeutic experience in biodynamic massage can provide an opportunity for people to allow the free flow of primary energy and thus overcome the restrictions of their developed character structure. A caveat to this is that, in order to fully express an emotion, the individual must have the capacity to hold the charge. Indeed, it is likely that the majority of biodynamic massage clients will need support to build this capacity before they can begin to work with the 'dynamic updrift' of energy in earnest. The work to build capacity, to hold the charge can begin by preparing the physical body. In biodynamic massage, we can work on loosening the pelvis, neck and jaw, and developing healthy tone in the diaphragm and all of the muscles of the body (all of which are essential for providing the space through which emotional charge can flow freely). In her teachings, Boyesen placed special significance on the diaphragm, as she referred to it as the 'gateway to the unconscious' (Boyesen, 1985b), indicating that greater transformative understanding of the self could be achieved through biodynamic massage's practice of working with the diaphragm. This is because, as Green (2012) explains, when the diaphragm 'swings' freely, it allows a wider range feelings to be felt and expressed. While Van Heel's account of

Boysen in the above quotation has implied that the healing power of full emotional expression in biodynamic massage lies in the fact that it can induce 'relevant images, memories and insights' and thus '[make] sense' of past experiences, Boysen argued that this cognitization of the process is not necessary (Eliashar & Shahar). Receiving biodynamic massage as a client during my training sessions has put me in touch with deep feelings which have not always necessarily associated with particular memories nor led to intellectual understanding, yet have had a poignantly beneficial impact. Indeed, during one particularly memorable biodynamic massage session, I was able to explore a greater connection to my primary energy through sounding during the massage for the first time. I was supported and encouraged to 'let the sound come', which led to a liberation of growling sounds which grew in intensity and then subsided, leaving me with an strong sense of fulfilment and freedom. When I began my studies in biodynamic massage, I was extremely uncomfortable about making any sounds, let alone verbalising requests regarding pressure or relating to my comfort in massage. However, half way through the second year of the training I noticed that I was already much more able to speak up for myself. This greater self-awareness, assertiveness and openness about what I need from the physical touch provided in a biodynamic massage context has been really helpful in other areas of my life too. It is helping me to explore how I can communicate of my needs within my relationships with others in all contexts (familial, work, etc).

In addition to the physical work of the biodynamic massage therapist, I also feel that there is a great benefit for the client in both the therapist's own verbalisations and the verbalisations the therapist elicits from the client. Indeed, the ability to name sensation and emotion is a skill, like any other, that can be learned as an adult, if it was not learned properly as a child. Where this has not been learned properly, the client may be vague and non-specific about what they are experiencing; they may name something which seems, to a tuned-in therapist, to be incongruous with what you are observing in the body and energy field; or they may be unable to put anything about their experience into words beyond: for example, 'It's fine' or 'It feels nice'. From personal experience, I have noticed how the therapist's gentle encouragement, gentle probing for further elucidation of the quality of the feeling or sensation can be effective in getting the client to access deeper levels of body and emotional awareness. This can be done, as is described in Westland's Non-verbal Communication in Psychotherapy (2015), through both speaking words and sounding (the different qualities of response elicited by different tonal and intentional qualities of speaking and sounding will be discussed under the subsequent subheading). Being encouraged to respond verbally to the verbal and non-verbal stimulation of the biodynamic massage has helped me personally to develop my ability to name out loud what I am feeling in a given moment. The emphasis on speaking in biodynamic massage always being one of gentle curiosity and non-judgmental observation; and having had these experiences with biodynamic massage during the training has allowed me to learn an improved way of contacting and verbalising my feelings, which I have been able to take out into my wider life. Over time, I have become more able to maintain this non-judgmental, observational position and name how I am feeling, without over-identifying with the feeling and becoming distressed, even when in Stressful situations (such as fraught moments with loved ones or in difficult work situations).

I do not wish to give the impression that the work I have done in biodynamic message has been used to communicate in a

dissonantly diplomatic manner (the egoic 'observer', cut off from the genuine force of feeling). Rather, it has helped me to verbalise - not from a cognitive position - but from a more intuitive, instinctual and primary position. For instance, during one session of biodynamic massage, I got in touch with a deep feeling of 'back off', a feeling which I have previously stifled and not allowed to be expressed verbally. Due to the work of the massage and the verbalised encouragement and sounded support of the therapist, I was able to verbalise the 'back off' and felt an intense feeling of liberation and joy as a result, indicating that the experience had freed up the expression of some of my primary energy. The role therapist In biodynamic massage is involved in more than just the manipulation of the corporeal body. Highly significant to the role of therapist in this modality of massage is to listen and observe for moments of genuine self-expression, and to encourage them into fullness. As referred to earlier, the language and sounds made by the therapist are of vital importance during a biodynamic massage session. As put forward by Westland, the tone, energetic quality and intention of the therapist's words are as, if not more, important than the words themselves. The more that the therapist's words can be in tune with the client's process, the more therapeutically valuable the client's own self-expression will be. I have experienced this directly when working as therapist during biodynamic massage training sessions, where my voiced words or sounds have either helped the client to feel and express themselves more freely, or have drawn them back to a more cognitive 'head' space. It is worth stating that, while the therapist is facilitating and often prompting the client, the therapist holds the responsibility of holding, rather than controlling the session. While, at times, the therapist may speak in a directional tone to the client, their directions can be likened to (and often are the same as) the midwife's instruction to the birthing mother to breathe and make sounds. In biodynamic massage, 'the therapist [is, indeed,] perceived as a midwife who focuse[s] solely on the client, allowing the client's process to organically unfold' (Shlomit Eliashar & Yael Shahar, 2016). Eliashar and Shahar here describe how Boyesen emphasised the wisdom of the individual and their body's energy: the energy knows its own way, and its natural propensity is towards health and integration. Of course, the reason that many clients will be drawn to biodynamic massage is because they will be experiencing (and may be aware of) restrictions or chronic tensions (armouring) in their body and will feel (albeit unconsciously) painfully cut off from this innate healthy and integrated state. As discussed earlier, when we have particularly strong muscular armouring, the tendency can be towards holding or inhibiting the flow of breath in the body, and consequently, clients can (initially, at least) find it difficult to be with the breath independently and can often be prone to express themselves through movement, with the breath held. Although movement in itself can be a form of self-expression, the significance of the breath and energy flow through the body means that the biodynamic massage therapist will encourage sound to accompany movement. The movement of the body, without the breath, does not have the therapeutic quality which is held as an intention by the therapist during biodynamic massage. In biodynamic massage, the client is encouraged to allow any sounds or words that wish to be expressed to come up and to be brought into full expression. The client may feel these as involuntary impulses and they may be expressed in a number of ways: through movement, words, externalising sounds through the mouth, or the deeper (internal) sounds of from the gut due to peristaltic stimulation triggered by the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system.

Consequently, the role of the therapist can be seen as one of keeping a safe space, as well

as witnessing and hearing the client's process (their, verbal and non-verbal, organic expression of what is happening to them during the session), so it can be experienced in therapeutic relationship with another. If the ultimate intention of biodynamic massage is for it to be in some way healing for the client, the primary way that Boyesen perceived this taking place was through psycho-peristalsis. Boyesen believed that healing occurs primarily at the involuntary unconscious level, and that psycho-peristalsis, which is inextricably linked to the parasympathetic nervous system, plays a pivotal role in that healing process and can allow the therapist to track when an emotion is ripe for expression and integration. Boysen "believed [that psycho-peristalsis] was an actual healing mechanism [which took place] in the gastrointestinal track [which links] the psyche and the soma" (Eliashar & Shahar). In Boyesen's view, psycho-peristalsis offers an indication of emotional digestion, and the discharge of energetic or emotional accumulation through the sounds of the gut (which are typically amplified by a stethoscope to assist the therapist in tracking the client's process during the massage). These unconscious sounds are, in Boyesen's view, far more deeply significant than the conscious expressions of sounding or verbalisation which might be made by the client during the session. Therefore, if the biodynamic massage therapist allows themselves to be guided by the psycho-peristaltic sounds, above all else, they will surely be on the right track in terms of assisting their client's self-expression.

Conclusion:

There are many different approaches which can be taken in biodynamic massage, and the direction of a session will be guided primarily by the energy of the client and of the therapist (which will always be a factor in the authentic therapeutic relationship) on that particular day, as well as in the relationship in general. The anecdotes which I have used, which are purely personal, come from my own process. There are a myriad of different ways in which biodynamic massage may help people to cultivate their capacity for self-expression. However, what I have endeavoured to offer in this article are the key aspects of how biodynamic massage might be a powerful tool to help people to know and express themselves.

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KATE CODRINGTON
OUR NEWEST HONORARY MEMBER
REBECCA WARNER-HODGKIN

In September 2020, my colleague and fellow therapist Kate Codrington announced on Instagram that she would not be returning to massage work and was planning new ventures. Kate has been a stalwart of the Biodynamic community. Beginning her training in Acton in 1994, she was one of the last cohorts to be taught by Gerda, before leaving for Chiron, and studying there for 2 yrs, graduating in 2020. This month she celebrates 29 years of working in the healing/therapy world.

Kate is a mentor, writer and facilitator and has been a therapist for nearly 30 years working with people in menopause and complementary therapists in groups and 1-2-1. Now in her Second Spring, she studied Biodynamic Psychotherapy with Gerda Boyesen, working both in private practice and with women affected by HIV and AIDS. She trained in Body Psychotherapy, Pregnancy Massage with Shiatsu and Fertility Massage but no longer practices. More recently she trained in Womb Yoga and Yoga Nidra with Uma Dinsmore-Tuli and in Menstruality with Red School. In partnership with Leora Leboff she runs Woman Kind retreats, has written for many wellbeing publications and is currently working on her first book. Her mission is to change the way we regard menopause and show how we can relax into our own, inner authority through our cyclical nature and menopause process.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of working with Kate as a case study for her Menstrual Medicine work and still benefit from that work today. As one of my IG buddies I have been able to see her work flourish and grow as she moved more definitively into developing supportive practices, workshops and tools for people going through both the perimenopause and the menopause.

Kate says.... *"I've been fascinated how Gerda's cyclical, feminine way of working has been both integrated into the mainstream, while she herself is hardly acknowledged. The healing and vibrancy I've witnessed in Biodynamic work is echoed in the popularity of the menstrual and life seasons which are now making a dent in menstrual and menopause shame"*

This year alone Kate launched a podcast and has a book coming out, as well as continuing to speak up on the lack of support that menopausal and menstruating people experience as part of their daily lives. As a committee we wanted to honour Kate's long term commitment to Biodynamic work and the community by making her an Honorary Member of the Association of Biodynamic Massage Therapists. I am personally very grateful for Kate's work and hope you will join me in wishing her well on the next part of her journey!

https://www.katecodrington.co.uk

Image - Rebecca Warner-Hodgkin