Editorial

“Liaisons Dangereuses” in the Gestalt Field: Anger, Self-Assertion, Aggression, Hostility, Relational Cocreation, Play, Groupwork

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The title here is unabashedly a collage of key words and concepts gleaned from the articles, responses, and book reviews contained in this third number of Volume 19 of Gestalt Review. It reflects not so much a reference to Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’s epistolary novel of perverse comportment in matters of love—Les liaisons dangereuses (1782)—as the difficult task of making connections amongst the thought-provoking, yet disparate, contributions included in this issue; the challenge of searching for points of contact amongst emergent figures that may not always cohere or stand on firm ground when seen other than in their own terms.

Therefore, please take part in a dialogue with the authors, past and present, and with their respondents—Fritz Perls, Laura Perls, Ruth Skovgaard, Lise Winther-Jensen, Barbara Staemmler, Frank-M. Staemmler, Gary Yontef, Susan L. Fischer, PhD, is editor of Gestalt Review and professor emerita of Spanish and Comparative Literature at Bucknell University (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania). She graduated from the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland’s Intensive PostGraduate Program in Gestalt Methods in 1982; and in 2011, she completed the Cape Cod Training Program at the Gestalt International Study Center, where she is a Professional Associate. She offers writers’ workshops, coaches individuals in writing for publication, translates articles on Gestalt topics from Spanish to English, and works as a simultaneous interpreter with the Spanish language at Gestalt conferences (e.g., Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy in Puebla, Mexico in 2012 and in Monterey, California in 2014). Fluent in French as well as Spanish, she divides her time between Brookline (Boston), Massachusetts and Tours, France.

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and Gaie Houston—who seek, each in her or his way, to tease apart the kinds of phenomena subsumed under the terms anger (and its “merry” kind), self-assertion, aggression, rage, irritation, resentment, hostility, and so forth; theorists and practitioners who, on occasion, wish for greater clarity with regard to terms and definitions (“Gestalt therapy theory would improve with the support of better semantics,” states Yontef).

Next, do engage with Mercurio Albino Macaluso, as he draws on the innovative contributions of Gordon Wheeler and Margherita Spagnuolo Lobb to identify “the premises of a relational Gestalt approach which would permit a detailed analysis of how patient and therapist create together the experience of their meeting moment by moment.”

Then play along with Peter Mortola, as he analyzes the work of Violet Oaklander to provide a much-needed model of how play helps therapy become real for both adults and children.

And do explore, along with Jack Aylward, Seán Gaffney’s book, Groups, Teams, and Groupwork Revisited: A Theory, Methodology and Practice for the 21st Century; and do appreciate, along with Sharona Halpern, Patricia L. Papernow’s account of Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships, and share in their experiences of What Works and What Doesn’t.

Finally, indulge in the Gestalt-inspired poetry of Karen Liu (“Some Notion of Therapy”) and Seán Gaffney (“FIGURE/GROUND”). Be energized and create on your own!

Savor this feast of articles, responses, reviews, and poems. While they are not exactly a reiteration of Babette’s culinary feast of French delicacies offered to a Danish village in the film by Gabriel Axel (Babette Gaestebud, 1987), they do make up a Gestalt banquet of critical thought, passionate feeling, and practical experience—and, moreover, constitute a prelude to remembering and celebrating Gestalt Review’s twentieth year in 2016. We entreat you to read, write, subscribe, and share!

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