



# The Southeast Florida Association for Psychoanalytic Psychology

Local Chapter—Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology:

Division 39 of the American Psychological Association

## When the Container Fails:

### Is Psychoanalytic Witnessing a Professional Obligation or a Moral Imperative?



Presented by: Ghislaine Boulanger, Ph.D.

Saturday, March 12, 2022

9:00AM—12:30PM

8:30 am Registration & Continental Breakfast

In-Person & Virtual Event

Venue TBD

\*COVID Restrictions

#### Presentation:

3 CE CREDITS AVAILABLE

This presentation begins with the account of an interview with a young woman who was seeking asylum in the United States; the interview was undertaken at the request of a human rights organization. Against the background of the asylee's painful story, Ghislaine Boulanger explores what it means to be a psychoanalytic witness. Is psychoanalytic witnessing a professional obligation or a moral imperative? Who is the witness? The person giving the account or the person listening? What are the psychological consequences for each of them? She argues that, as clinicians, we must distinguish between witnessing and recognition. Further, she suggests that the costs of being a witness are considerable and must be taken into account in undertaking this work.

This case offers us an example of massive psychic trauma, or Adult Onset Trauma as Dr. Boulanger describes it in her book, *Wounded by Reality: Understanding and Treating Adult Onset Trauma*. In the second part of her presentation, Dr. Boulanger will briefly review her theory of Adult Onset Trauma and address a number of questions and concerns that have been raised in connection with those ideas since then publication of her book.

Finally, we shall speculate about the increasing popularity of the term trauma in our everyday clinical work. Using examples from the audience and from Dr. Boulanger's practice, we shall attempt to understand what cultural and/or psychological factors may have led to this startling increase in the use of the word and whether we should be more discriminating in our choice of words. As the concept of trauma is diluted in this way, does it present new problems for our clinical work? So much psychodynamic work takes place in the quotidian, yet it has become too easy to fall into the trap of believing that trauma renders the quotidian insignificant. When this happens, are we psychodynamic clinicians dismissing so much that is crucial about our work, or does the advantage of being able to treat massive psychic trauma, something that Freud said should not be attempted, outweigh this concern?

#### Presenter:

Ghislaine Boulanger, Ph.D. is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City, a member of the Relational faculty at New York University's Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, and invited faculty in Adelphi University's specialization in Trauma. She is on the editorial board of the *Division/Review* and the *International Journal for Applied Psychoanalysis*. Topics of particular interest to her include working psychodynamically with immigrants, psychoanalytic politics, and massive psychic trauma. Since the publication of *Wounded by Reality: Understanding and Treating Adult Onset Trauma*, Dr. Boulanger has taught and published extensively on the psychodynamic dilemmas facing adults who have survived violent and life threatening events, and the clinicians who work with them.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. The participants will be able to distinguish between witnessing as a professional obligation and witnessing as a moral imperative.
2. The participants will identify ways to acknowledge and work with their own vicarious trauma.
3. The participants will be able to distinguish between adult onset trauma and childhood trauma.

#### EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS

3/02/2022

Membership Category	Early Bird Rate	Day of Event
Professional Member	\$65	\$80
Non-Member	\$95	\$110
Student Members	Free	\$15
Student Non-Member <i>(Student ID required)</i>	\$15	\$30

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#### \*COVID POLICY

Masks must be worn for the entirety of the presentation. Additionally, attendees must present either proof of being fully vaccinated defined as having two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine at least 14 days before the conference. Alternately, attendees can present documentation of a negative Covid-19 PCR test conducted within 72 hours prior to the conference, or a negative Covid-19 antigen test conducted within 24 hours of the conference.

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