

**Dangerous Journey: *Memories of Containment in Cuba***

Tim Smith

*Introduction: Why Cuba?*

Nearing the end of my ten-year, personal training analysis, I booked a two-week holiday to Cuba, to depart the day after my last session. My analyst and I had agreed on a date to end over a year before, yet I booked my holiday on impulse. A Google Photos *memory*, from early on in my training, had popped up on my phone: a picture of a friend from my training cohort and I smoking imitation Cuban cigars whilst on holiday. And, after Googling ‘Cuba’, I’d read an online instruction to ‘go before it changes’ — seemingly referring to a presumed, impending North Americanisation of Cuba in the current post-Castro era.

I think I told myself as I rushed to book my holiday flights that ‘sometimes a cigar is just a cigar’ (att. Freud), i.e., that my holiday booking was just a much-needed holiday. (I discovered whilst writing this essay that nothing in Freud’s significant writing oeuvre indicates he ever actually said this.) Though, really, behind my mimicry of Freud’s penchant for cigar smoking, lay the inherent emotional struggles that I was experiencing in my training, with its significant upheavals. I imagine I sought some respite/flight from these things on that trip, at a point on my training journey where there was still a long way to go and much to learn.

Furthermore, and perhaps counter to the values of psychic development and improved psychic functioning associated with analysis but hidden within the ‘go before it changes’ instruction, lay, I think, the ‘no change’ situation of the repetition cycle (Birksted-Breen 2016: 235). With its eternal attempts to undo progress, to psychically freeze time, I view this as an, at times, inevitable retreat from the dangers of PS and D (Klein 1946) but one that, problematically, seeks to ‘instil interminability’ (Birksted-Breen 2016: 232).

Later, I recalled how I had taken flight to Colombia some twenty years earlier, at another painful juncture in my life; intermitting my undergraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music, to go on a student exchange programme. This had involved staying with a host family in Bogotá, where, very fortunately, my host mother had provided me with the consistency, intuitive ‘mind-mindedness’ (Meins 1997), patience and stability I did not know I had long been lacking. Latin America seems to be my default ‘go to’ place at times of crisis(!)

My first week on my Cuban trip bewildered me. Diary entries that I kept on my phone after I landed record my struggle to explore the city before I was taken ill. Ultimately, the promise of an idyllic beach in Varadero, where I shelled out on an expensive hotel for a few days, converted into more of an extemporary sick bay but one where I was moved to dream my first post-analysis dreams. My initial reflections on

these helped me to begin to recover my state of mind before my body also began to recuperate.

In the second week of my holiday, I was fortunate to encounter considerable generosity as well as the return of my good health: first in Trinidad, then notably in Viñales, whilst staying with two families in humbler '*casa particulares*' (homestays where tourists get to live with locals close to the sites of interest). I found enormous relief in these experiences and began to enjoy my holiday.

In this essay, I reflect on why I became so confused and affected by a country that I fled to; where, paradoxically, I became aware of the significant number of Cubans actively attempting to leave, to make the dangerous journey across the Mexican border to Miami (see Augustin 2022). This, paralleled with my choice to remove myself utterly from the situation of my ended analysis to experience it—the location of my essay, Cuba, being almost as far removed as you can get from my local psychoanalytic institutions in London. I wish to emphasise that my intention is to explore my own subjective states regarding the emotional challenges I imagine may face all psychoanalytic clinicians at this point in their developments (rather than come from a place of knowing about Cuba — which would of course be an impossible and flawed conjecture).

### ***What is the journey after a personal training analysis?***

Qualification in the psychoanalytic professions requires extensive experience of what it is like to be on the receiving end of intensive psychoanalytic treatment. The trainee must learn to reflect on what belongs to themselves and to their patient, including under the weight of sustained and disturbing projections; to considerably further their self-awareness; to have a 'better psychic functioning (less rigid defences, increased symbolic capacity and ability to reflect rather than act, ability to hold a more complex view)' (Birksted-Breen 2016: 232).

Of course, there is fluctuation following an ended analysis (N.B., Bion's notation of  $PS \leftrightarrow D$  has a two-directional emphasis (1962/2014)). There is no paradisiacal arrival through the gates of a place where representation has fully and permanently replaced repetition. But I think the trainee might hope by the point of qualification, they might recognise if they've fallen into problematic states of mind. To know when to seek help from a colleague, supervisor, or past tutor; to attempt to self-reflect using the inner resources internalised during their analysis, i.e., self-analysis (Freud 1900-1901).

But what is the journey after a personal training analysis has ended? I noticed a distinct void in the literature here, which I found perplexing given that all qualified clinicians have faced this difficult juncture at some point in their careers, as if it were the death in the family that nobody is supposed to talk about. (Indeed, writing in my professional body's journal, Lasvergnas-Garcia and Avdi (2020) note how, curiously, there is virtually no existing empirical research on the entire topic of personal training analysis, despite its central place in the training.) I found myself wanting to establish a space for thinking through writing about my own experience, to ask why there isn't more debate on this vital aspect of our analyses. Especially if clinicians truly want to

acknowledge the importance of owning their own individual (and culturally situated) perspectives on their clinical encounters (Rementeria et al 2021: 166).

### **Autoethnography**

I have taken the experimental approach of writing my lived experiences from the period immediately after my own analysis ended. (In my case, this occurred some years after I qualified.) Using my diary entries and dreams as my research material—originally written in short, note-form on my phone, elaborated here with recalled detail—I attempt to capture the immediacy of these states, record experiences that might otherwise be lost. I exercise alpha function (Bion 1962/2014) to this data, to further my understanding of my states of mind at this very particular time-point.

There are obviously elements of my autobiographical material that the reader will understand I have chosen not to expand on in my section ‘Reverie’, more than is necessary to convey my findings; and various ways one could think about things. The reader here is presented with what my interpretations are for the time being, following a specific period of work on my essay. Furthermore, I do not intend the immediate, challenging period that followed the end of my own personal training analysis, what I discuss and theorise in this essay as a time of ‘catastrophic change’ (Bion 1965/2014), to be misinterpreted as a poorly managed ending. Rather, I have deliberately sought to present events in their rawness in an attempt to dispel what I feel is an unhelpful idea amongst clinicians that there isn’t fluctuation (PS↔D) following the end of our analyses.

Trower (2023) advocates diary’s special usefulness in helping us locate a sense of community and in finding recognition or others who may have similar experiences that we connect with (p386)—which is perhaps especially relevant in situations where stories go underreported such as our endings. And I imagine I do not want to be afraid that my analysis has ended. I view reflecting on my writing at this very particular time-point as my way of embarking on the “working-through” (Freud 1914), my attempt to prevent any ‘transient ghosts’ (Fraiberg et al 1975:387) from intruding, more than may be inevitable, into my future. Moreover, writing the pages of my ended personal training analysis enables me to place a lekythos at the grave stela of my analysis. It is my personal attempt to shed light on this non-theorised yet universal professional juncture in the lives of psychoanalytic clinicians, an effort, in solidarity, to put this important experience more firmly on the professional map.

### ***Ethical considerations***

All names in this essay, except that of the author and well-known place names, have been changed. And in the interests of my own privacy, I have avoided providing personal background details and information on my social circumstances which are usual features of the traditional case study methodology (other than those I deem essential for the essay to make sense to the reader).

Heathrow, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

*I'm sat on my hotel bed trying to take things in.*

*Early this morning I finished my ten-year analysis. In a generous gesture, my older analyst took his mask off so that I could see his face to say goodbye. I thanked him and said: "Your good is strong".*

*Early tomorrow I leave for Cuba, a holiday I've booked on impulse to mark the occasion, telling myself and others: "I'm going to process my ending".*

*Earlier this evening I'd got lost in the bus terminal at the back of Heathrow airport, looking for the entrance to my hotel. So, I stopped to ask a security guard if he knew the way—an unimposing man amidst the crowds, not wearing a mask. He'd stepped towards me, closer than I felt comfortable with. But I'd got the help I needed and soon found my hotel's entrance, hidden away at the back of a nearby carpark.*

...

La Habana, 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022

*My hotel's chaotic, Gatsbyesque lobby lies in the dissonant, decaying neighbourhood of La Habana Vieja.*

*I check in, drop my bags in my room, then head up to the rooftop and wander over to the edge—an attempt to find a moment's reflection within the drama, to take in the complex view.*

*At once, the humidity hits me for six, though my eyes are drawn, unavoidably, to the lustrous lines of near-fluorescent pink and yellow Chevrolets down below, parked up in front of the hotel.*

...

*I take a stroll down the Paseo del Prado to the craggy seafront.*

*Various jinateros approach me. One by one they ask me where I'm from. All just so happen to have family members in England that they tell me about—a local scam.*

*One man, more affable than the others, walks me to a nearby bar. But I realise quickly on the approach that it's a brothel, so I walk on and head back to my hotel to reassess, feeling disquieted by my first venture out.*

...

*Night-time and I'm looking for my restaurant down a narrow street that runs off the main square in front of the hotel.*

*Quick as a flash, a scar-faced man starts walking beside me and attempts to convince me that the restaurant I've booked online doesn't exist. He irritates me and sets me on alert as I realise he's not going to leave me alone.*

*Perhaps due to the distractions he creates, I can't find the place I'm looking for.*

*Cautiously, I allow him to take me to another venue where it's clear he'll get some commission. I sit down and he asks me for a drink, so I buy him a mojito but ask the waiter to ensure that he leaves me be after one round.*

*Then after my tasteless meal, I make my way back to my hotel feeling relentlessly disillusioned.*

*Nothing seems to be what I'd had in mind and I'm back in my hotel bed trying to think.*

*How to manage this city, that pounces on my plans? Both times I've ventured outside I've not been left alone.*

*The colourful lines of Chevrolets I'd seen from the hotel's rooftop come to my mind. I have a thought to go down and ask the doorman to recommend a guide to take me on a tour of the city undisturbed.*

...

*At 8am, Guajiro follows the doorman into the hotel lobby.*

*We agree a three-hour tour there and then, and walk across the square over to his red, soft-topped Chevrolet.*

*His younger cousin Benny is sat at the wheel.*

*In just a few moments I've learned that Guajiro is serving a ban for drink-driving, handed to him only a month ago.*

*First, a whistlestop tour of the main tourist sites—the ugly concrete edifices of the Plaza de la Revolución (with their gigantic plaques of Ché and Fidel) and the Bosque de la Habana (an oasis of greenery and fresh air juxtaposed with the polluted Río Almendares).*

*Then, we drive back along the Malecón and up to the top of a lookout point on Cabaña Hill, stopping at the defunct, mean-looking, cold war-era ballistic missiles on display.*

*I feel decidedly uncomfortable when Guajiro insists on placing me next to each one for a photo. But it gets us touching briefly on the politics of the island, past and present, and indeed of the wider world: the Russian exodus from Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet regime in the nineties; today's bloody war in Ukraine, including the immediate effects it's had on the availability of petrol on the island; the steady, more recent influx of Chinese immigrants; and, briefly, the current wave of Cubans attempting to leave their country for good, making the dangerous journey to Miami across the Mexican border.*

*After the three hours is up, Guajiro invites me on a 'free' walking tour of the area, and though unsure, I decide to take up the offer.*

*We take in the more impressive buildings that surround the Plaza de Catedral and the Plaza Vieja, pausing intermittently as he gives advice to other tourists.*

*Then, a brief (and unexpected) stop at his ex-wife's house! I'm left in a dimly lit room with his elderly ex-father-in-law whilst Guajiro goes to ask his ex- about charging his phone. He's out of battery and has promised to call his son in the countryside, who's struggling to find petrol. On his return, I'm taken by surprise when an adolescent girl, steps out from the adjacent room. Recently orphaned, Guajiro tells me how the family have taken her in.*

*We walk on through the crowded streets in the manner as before, though my mind has become preoccupied with the appearance of the orphaned girl which had felt uncomfortable. With my limited grasp of Spanish, I had thought that Guajiro had mentioned, then tried to brush off, that she was dating a young man several years older than her.*

*I decide to express my concern; but Guajiro rebukes me, denies this was said or that anything untoward is going on. He can't quite hide his annoyance.*

*Was this a simple misunderstanding though? I'm not so sure and it makes for an uncomfortable ending as he points me in the direction of my hotel.*

...

*I'm walking back towards the Plaza Vieja, this time with my own map to guide me. On route, I stop at a restaurant I've been recommended for lunch, though again it's disappointing.*

*It turns out I've picked the blazing heat of the afternoon to wander about in and I need to get out of the sun. I hear some live music emanating from a nearby bar, so walk in to take a closer look.*

*I notice the waitress serves my beer with ice. I'm not sure why, but it's sweltering indoors and out and I discard the observation without giving it any thought.*

*A few drinks later, I'm happily heady and have fended off a half-baked attempt by the band's bassist to steal my phone.*

*I tell myself that I'll walk to this evening's dinner reservation even though it's a fair trek across the city.*

...

*Early evening and everyone seems to be out on the streets; playing football, talking, or drinking in the warm evening air.*

*I'm crudely alerted that I've crossed the border from the main tourist area into one of the poorer municipalities that surround La Habana Vieja when two young drunk men stop to urinate a few yards ahead of me.*

*I look around and suddenly I feel lost. I'm in an area of near-ruined, collapsing buildings. My Dutch courage is gone, and I'm worried I may get robbed, so I flag down a young lad on his bicycle rickshaw and jump in double-quick.*

*We agree a fare straight off and I continue my way up the pothole-strewn road feeling marginally more secure.*

*I arrive at my destination at sunset where an atmospheric rooftop bar greets me. An over-sized picture frame has been fixed inventively to the roof's edge.*

*It captures the at once utopian yet faintly hellscape view of the local neighbourhood.*

*I'm reminded of a scene from Baz Luhrmann's 'Romeo + Juliet' (1996), a film I saw in the cinema as a 16-year-old: Shakespeare's Verona transposed onto Los Angeles's Venice Beach in the nineties where a large hole in a crumbling seafront edifice frames the stormy Pacific Ocean, encapsulating the turbulent emotional atmosphere.*

*Hipster barmen pour their mixtures of rum, lime, and soda water over neat heaps of finely crushed ice.*

*The young, cool clientele (tourists and more affluent locals) sip their drinks, probe branded cigars then relieve themselves in the stylish bathrooms.*

*I order a caipirinha then head downstairs to dine under the stars in the outdoor restaurant area.*

*I fancy something fresh, so I ask the waitress for a green salad to accompany my meal (— an infinitely more appetizing fare than last night’s dismal setback).*

*Then at the end of the night, I take a taxi safely back to my hotel.*

...

*I’m rudely awoken from my sleep with a bad, upset stomach that lasts for a week. Was it the ice in my beer, or the cocktails?*

*Guajiro’s foul restaurant recommendation?*

*The salad?*

*Or, something else?*

...

*Varadero, 25<sup>th</sup> to 28th July 2022*

*I feel out of sorts and vulnerable.*

*Jorge’s small blue Chevrolet threatens to conk out several times, as we drive past the various police checks on the transfer to Varadero, along the dull, neglected highway, flecked with rusting industrial plants.*

*The police don’t give us any trouble, but Jorge, my driver, tells me he was held up on his way into La Habana to collect me.*

*He’s pieced together that something’s not right as we stop at a roadside grill where he wants to buy a sandwich.*

*He notices me asking about if there’s a toilet and tells me gently, back in the car, that even he must be careful with the water in La Habana.*

...

*My all-inclusive hotel complex is beautiful but soulless.*

*A day into my stay, though I’m still feeling ropey, I chance a trip away from the confines of the resort’s fenced-off beach to explore the area downtown.*

*The tourist establishments aimed at foreigners are overpriced and over-airconditioned. Curiously, sat in a café a bit further down the road, frequented only by holidaying Cubans, I start to feel a bit better such that I begin to wonder how much my physical state is amplified by my current psychological one.*

...

*Overnight, from my 5-star, sea view, hotel sick-bed, I dream two dreams.*

*I wake up and it feels suddenly poignant—I realise these are the first dreams I’ve dreamt in ten years that I won’t get to discuss with my analyst.*

*Dream 1:*

*I get pulled over by the police whilst driving a white van down a narrow, triangular-shaped street in Central London. I am unsure why, as it doesn’t seem to me that I’m doing anything wrong. The police don’t cause me any problems but tell me to be careful as the model of adapter that I charge my work phone with has been found to be a fire*

*hazard—recently there was an incident where one blew up. I make an agreement with the policemen to inform my employer of the issue given that other members of the team carry the same model and are potentially at risk. I arrive at my workplace; however, I am unsure which of my managers, who are in an unhelpful conflict with one another, to tell before deciding to inform the one with overall responsibility for these things.*

*Dream 2:*

*A song I've composed is being performed by a male singer over by some white cliffs near to where a group of people has begun to accumulate. It seems I'd like everyone who's gathered there to be involved in the performance, and it feels disillusioning when I realise that's not possible. The drama moves from above the cliff-edge and down to the pebbled beach below. The singer begins to say that he can't go on; the next verses of my composition are too difficult for him to perform. It's at this point that I receive some shocking news: a former adolescent patient of mine has completed suicide. My heart sinks, and I feel terrified, as I struggle to take in the gravity of what's just happened. Though, I think to invite his single parent mother to join in with my team's staff debrief; who, whilst I imagine I must fear their accusations, also accepts the invitation.*

*I'm turning over some initial thoughts in my mind and link the anxious feeling that I've woken up with to a dynamic I recognise in my internal world. In this instance, my need to ask for help.*

...

*I've plucked up the courage to go and ask if there's a hotel doctor.*

*I'm still unwell and have begun to feel anxious how I'll manage my next transfer. The doctor gives me some anti-motility medicine but asks me, and reasonably, why I didn't bring some with me given that Cuba is known for being short on medical supplies and, in most guidebooks, tourists are requested to bring their travel medicines with them.*

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Whilst space does not permit me to include all of my diary entries here, I shall briefly summarise the following few days:

The next stop on my trip was Trinidad where I finally passed an enjoyable few days with a band of three gentle, unintrusive brothers employed (by its arm's length owner) to run a beautiful *casa particular*, with flourishing gardens and inner courtyard. The youngest two helped me organise a hike up to the forested hills that surround the town, to swim by an impressive waterfall. And I spent a sunny afternoon horse riding with two other tourists, a young couple from Italy—coincidentally, Lacanian psychologists. They took particularly fondly to the picture of Freud I showed them that I carry about with me in my wallet (and, it turns out, they were experts at getting ice out of drinks very quickly).

A taxi driver suggested I might prefer to extend my stay in Viñales, my last stop before my return home, rather than overnight in La Habana again on the way. So, I went online and booked a night's stay at Casa Osbaldo y Leora.



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Viñales, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022

*Leora is stood waving at me from the terracotta-paved porch of her sun-drenched casa as I pull up in my taxi.*

*A petite, red-haired, terrifically warm woman with a freckle beneath her left eyelid; she's welcoming and endlessly patient with my broken Spanish. Yet, there's a quiet, almost uncomfortable urgency to her manner, as if any way I try to respond to her risks leaving her feel that I've not quite taken her seriously enough.*

*Alongside this, there's the sense that something does indeed need to be taken in very sombrely.*

*Her husband Osbaldo soon joins us; a handsome, well-built, and practical man whose jet-black hair sits aside his pale white skin. The immaculate green privet hedges that he tends team with colourful lizards.*

*In contrast to his wife, he appears youthful, effortlessly meticulous, without blemish. Nevertheless, he too conveys an air of preoccupation, with something I'm not privy to. He gets out the rum—Havana Especial—and now Leora's mother, who lives next door, drops by. She clutches a large, ripe avocado, picked from their orchard, in her arms. Everyone laughs when I make a daft joke that she cradles it as though it were her baby.*

*An hour or two passes happily before Leora begins to lament that I'll have to leave tomorrow to stay at the casa particular I had booked originally—as do I. Other tourists who've booked the room I'm in tonight are due to arrive.*

*Though, I'm invited to dine with the family this evening; and as night begins to fall, we gather around their outdoor table to share details of our respective lives over an impressive meal, home-cooked by Leora.*

*We climb up onto the roof terrace after dinner just as the electricity cuts out for the night, which, I learn, is an increasingly common occurrence due to Cuba's crumbling infrastructure.*

*When it starts to rain as well, I take my cue to say goodnight and retire to my room. But with no air conditioning, it will be an uncomfortable night's sleep.*

...

*I spend the next two days contentedly; motorbiking around the mogotes (the lush, steep-sided and isolated limestone hills famed in the area) with the local cowboys, smoking artesian cigars, and dodging the advances of Leora's recently divorced cousin(!)*

*In spite of now staying a few blocks away, in a comparatively characterless casa, each night I'm invited back to Casa Leora y Osbaldo.*

*I talk especially with Osbaldo, into the small hours. I watch as he seems to perform for me; running around on the roof terrace, trying to, and successfully, catch fireflies—an accident waiting to happen. As he calls back his dog Buster, his loyal companion, when he hears him barking at the neighbours' dogs fifty yards away, who comes panting back at his proud owner's command.*

*At one point, I notice Osbaldo's drinking less than me (he's suffering a bit with a cold) for which he apologises.*

*It is Leora who reveals that her husband's brother recently made the dangerous journey to Miami via the Mexican border, the two of them had been inseparable: Osbaldo deeply misses his brother.*

*I learn that Osbaldo's sold his much-loved car, an orange Lada (a source of pride for its Cuban owner) and plans to take his family on the same journey.*

*They still lack several thousand US dollars to secure the trip and tell me they don't know how they'll find the rest. Though Leora states plainly that there's no future for them in Cuba.*

*I feel consumed by the gravity of what I've just been told.*

*The couple are conscious that their young adult sons do not really grasp the seriousness of the situation, nor the dangers associated with their upcoming journey, including that they'll be hiring a coyote to smuggle them across the Mexican-US border.*

*I start to Google the journey, to find out as much as I can about it myself, as if this pathetic act might somehow make them less vulnerable, protect them in some small way. Is it possible that when I'd joked about the avocado, I had an unconscious sense of the couple's far-reaching plans and their grandmother's impending loss?*

...

### **Reverie**

I imagine my thought to find a tour guide rests in the context of having just said goodbye to my analyst-guide, the guide who helped me navigate my inner world for ten years. Within this context, I'm sympathetic to the fact that the guide I encountered in Cuba was, unfortunately, a complicated one: I'd tried hard to sit down and think how best to approach the city's street hustlers. It had disturbed me not to have found a more familiar analyst-like figure there to guide me. However, I was in need of finding a way to begin the exigent task of mourning my loss. And, despite my stated pretext—that I was 'going to process my ending'—I think there was a risk of evading that painful undertaking.

There is as well the account of the orphaned adolescent which so unsettled me, who I seem identified with, propelled too soon into a world without her parents. I worried she may have been vulnerable, at risk of becoming or already entangled in something deceitful. Perhaps my preoccupation with her welfare echoed my own worries, finding the right sort of people to look after me and establishing looking after myself post-analysis? Small wonder that I woke up from my sleep in such a troubled state, having just finished my analysis and in a situation that required wising up to the realities of the arguably treacherous location I found myself in.

I think my autoethnographical writing speaks directly to one of my main preoccupations at this first stage in my journey, post-analysis. Specifically, the disturbance that I felt in my inner world around the disarmed ballistic missiles makes sense to me this way. It reverberates with something my analysis taught me; an uncomfortable awareness of my 'human basics' (Mercer 2008:64) —how emotions can cause us to overvalue or deny some of our thoughts; how anxiety, guilt and mental pain

can lead to defences (p64); as well as the existence of a destructive agent (or negative links) in all of us.

I think the experience of standing next to the defunct Soviet missiles still felt threatening, despite my lengthy analysis, because destructiveness does not simply go away in intensive work. As psychoanalytic clinicians, we live with an awareness of its presence. Thus, my attempts to find my way around the ‘ruins of Havana’ (Díaz-Infante 2014: 527, trans. García 2022:21) become a useful metaphor for navigating the remnants of my own internal history. But I notice I felt more vulnerable in the immediate après coup of my analysis, now without my analyst, and anxious as to whether my ‘good’ would prevail. The reader will recall how I said “Your good is strong” to my analyst in my final session, perhaps seeming to suggest that I felt my own good did not feel enough?

My dreams help me to make sense of my experiences. ‘Dream 1’ contains, I think, my realisation that post-analysis, as I began to go it alone, I would have to assume further responsibility for my psychic life, that I had an internal world to continue to look after. (N.B., crossing the border from trainee to qualified clinician also involves taking fuller responsibility for our clinical decision-making.) Indeed, my feuding managers seem to represent the contrapuntal opposite of a less destructively conflictual internal parental/authority function that my mind was frantically trying to locate. I recall I had an association upon waking from this dream; how when I arrived in Varadero I’d become anxious I might run out of charge on my phone. The sockets in the hotel were the North American type, not the Cuban, flat, two-pin sockets I had come prepared for. I stressed myself out before, eventually, going down to my hotel’s reception to ask if they might be able to help. They had, of course, been only too happy to do so. A further association I have now is that in London there is a common stereotype that a white van driver is a notoriously bad driver. Thus, it seems my mind was especially preoccupied with how I would find the right sort of charge (a more passionate link), how safely I would be able to get behind the wheel, continue the ongoing work I’d begun with my analyst, now on my own.

I’m interested that the road I’m travelling on in ‘dream 1’ is triangular. In my immediate post-analysis epoch, I seem to have found myself driving around the Oedipal triangle, or psychic space at the core of my being, worried that either my internal struggles or difficult external circumstances I encountered would blow it up, cause the space to collapse. And anxious as to whether I would be able to (re)locate a good-enough authority inside and out that could help prevent things from going that way. I seem somewhat fearful and confused by the authority figures in my dream, the police and my feuding managers. Had I been expelled or requisitely excluded at the end of my analysis? Though I note that (not in the dream) I was eventually able to exercise some thinking and access the help that I needed to attend to my state from the hotel’s doctor.

About ‘dream 2’, it occurs to me now that there are, famously, no pebbles in Varadero, rather a pristine, sandy, white beach. I recall how I once had a manager who was known for asking new members of staff what they felt to be ‘the pebbles in their shoes’, by which I think they meant the aspects of themselves they struggled with. I had been finding my own immediate walk post-analysis profoundly uncomfortable. However,

the reality is that such pebbles (on my Cuban trip, the difficulties I experienced navigating the touts in Havana and its unsanitary water system) continue, inevitably, to get in our shoes from time to time, and we have to deal with them.

Furthermore, I think ‘dream 2’ shows how I tried to manage the immediate situation of my ended analysis—the loss of my external object—with an attempt to flee to a somewhat illusory location: Varadero (or, internally a phantasised, idealised place with no difficulties) (see also Steiner 2020). It seems I want everyone to be involved in the performance in my dream, something which isn’t possible; and I’ve composed a piece too difficult for the singer to perform, which disillusions me. My sense is that my powerful illusory state precludes me from knowing that I’m being pulled towards a more ‘cliff-edge’ place, where potential risks not being born, where parts of the self are in danger of being more extremely ‘split-off-and-projected’ (Sodré 2015). Bion refers to the ‘escape from self-knowledge’, a place where the whole self does not get known, as a kind of ‘self-murder (1976/2014:122), which I imagine is the suicidal figure in my dream. Unless I could tolerate the disillusionment, start thinking, it appears my inner state risked preventing me access the help I needed to face things.

‘Dream 2’ also seems to be at work to break down my unhelpful, imagined inner-escape, to bring my state of mind back home, back down to Earth (see Smith 2023:264, for a comment on coming back down to Earth from a psychoanalytic perspective). Indeed, white cliffs are usually associated with my home country, England. Initial self-analysis of my dream also enabled me to start to recover my state of mind, to access my inner resources, my newly established home, that I built up during my long analysis. I note too that in this dream the parental/authority figure seems more understanding than in my initial dream’s distinctly persecutory version. There is a mother who it seems might be able to tolerate destructiveness. The staff meeting that she joins has the potential for (self-)analysis or (self-)reverie. It seems to be a place where alpha function could exist, and it is alpha function that’s capable of transforming destructive potential.

I also want to comment on one of the conditions that I now think considerably aids the working-through—namely, generosity. First, self- and interactive contingencies — the ‘predictability of the durations of vocalisations, pauses and switching pauses within each partner’ and the way the mother and infant adjust to ‘the other’s durations of sounds and silences’ (Beebe & Lachmann 2020:318) — are ‘recurrent and reciprocal, each affecting the other’ (p.314). Second, commenting on Winnicott’s famous statement ‘there is no such thing as an infant’ (1960), Akhter (2012) feels that ‘a more accurate rendition might be that “there is no such thing as an infant without a mother’s generosity”’. And third, Symington (2008) emphasises how,

“...the emotional attitude of one affects the emotional current in another. We flow into one another. This is what emotions are: the streams that flow between two human beings.”

Symington refers to generosity as an important source of sanity, a sentiment I agree with. Generosity has, I think, at heart, a marvellously reviving effect on our more passionate desires (see also Smith 2021:305).

In psychoanalytic terms, perhaps the external generosity I received could be described as the catalyst that solidified a helpful modification of my phantasy constellation at this very particular juncture? I think Leora and Osbaldo helped me to recover my positivity with their generosity of spirit. Much like the mother's care sets the infant on the right path (Akhter 2012), at this stage in my journey (post-analysis) it seems I needed some good fortune and an external couple's kindness and generosity to facilitate the recovery of my own helpful internal(ised) capacities (my more passionate charge), to remind me of the possibility of continuity of my internalised good object, or analyst figure.

My diary entries also pick up on the contrast between my host couple's exterior presentations. A couple united by their conflicted inner states and in their decision to leave their home country. United too in the knowledge that the journey they faced would be a dangerous one, both for themselves and for their young adult children; and that they would live undocumented lives should they arrive safely in Miami. I think the new life in Miami my casa particular family were seeking, and my worries about their imminent journey, as I briefly became entangled with their emotional drama, also spoke to my own fears of loss and abandonment following the end of my analysis. The total external separation their feat would involve represented the ending I too had to face, having now said my last goodbye to my analyst.

### **Concluding discussion**

So, what of the rawness, disorientation, the alien that my diary entries capture in the immediate challenging period that followed the end of my personal training analysis? Waddell (2002) describes how each forward movement in development entails a degree of 'internal disruption and anxiety' that briefly 'throws the personality into disarray (p8). But that this kind of emotional turbulence is 'intrinsic to emotional growth' (p8), as alpha function transforms destructive potential. And in my reverie which aided my recovery, I began to recall how Bion uses the term catastrophic change to describe the stormy period that's not just prelude to emotional development but the very 'key' to it (Harris Williams 2019: 3).

Moreover, Levine (2009) posits that what can feel most catastrophic, and as I think I experienced, is the discontinuity of the object. All psychoanalytic clinicians must finish their analysis. But when they finish their analyses, their analysts are no longer there. Is it that the non-neurotic parts of the personality experience themselves after an analysis as not the same as how they experience themselves in an analysis, forgetting that the container (Bion 1967/2014) is the work of the analysis, not the external object on its own?

A capacity for self-analysis is one marker of our readiness for ending a personal training analysis. It relies directly upon a bank of experiences being helped to transform a perturbed state of mind into something 'manageable enough ... to be able to understand the nature of ... [the] experience' (Waddell 2002: 37). Feldman (2009) suggests, it is the phantasy versions of the Oedipal couple that are closely related to our capacities to use our minds (p20), i.e., what we feel we are doing to and what we see as being done to us by the phantasised Oedipal couple. Whilst there is no scope in this essay to fully explore

ambivalent feelings towards a personal training analysis, I note that with the suicide in my own ‘dream 2’, my anxiety seems to be that something deathly happens at the point of ending rather than a recovery and the working through—processes I found to be helped significantly, though not exclusively, by external generosity. Tolerating anxieties that result from linking thoughts and feelings, i.e., maintaining psychic space, is always going to be a stressful, hard-fought process (see also Feldman 2009: 18-19). I imagine the clinician is greatly helped if they have developed sufficient ‘tools for thinking’ and ‘a greater capacity and experience of a loving connection to others’ during their analysis (Birksted-Breen 2016: 232-233).

I have come to think during the reverie work of writing this essay that perhaps, as with more well-documented periods of development (for example, the emotional storms of infancy and adolescence so familiar to us in our work), my experiences, rather than being the regressive mess that perhaps I feared, may be characteristic of an inevitable, ordinary developmental turbulence at this juncture. Whilst the infant must espouse omnipotence to take the first step away from his mother, then becomes anxious and looks back towards her for reassurance (Mahler 1972; Steiner 2020: 61-64; Smith 2023), the clinician must draw on their apparatus for thinking, on memories of containment, on help and new friends, to get their bearings and to face unknown and challenging terrains post-analysis. Though I did not think so at the time, I wonder if from this vertex one of my final communications to my analyst—“Your good is strong”—could also somehow have been an attempt to evacuate my own developed capacities for resilience into him (i.e., to get as far away as I possibly could from experiencing my ending), to remain in the infantile position? An attempt to evade taking responsibility for my mind, not really cross over the border into post-analysis life? Perhaps as well as an expression of my profound appreciation?

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**Dr Tim Smith** is a member of the Association of Child Psychotherapists in the UK. He works in the National Health Service and in private practice in East London. His interest in Life Writing stems from his research on W.R. Bion's autobiographical writing about their youth, and from many years listening to the creative ways children find to tell their stories about what's happened to them and those around them.