

Song and Dance in the Shadows: Attachment, Group Dynamics, and the Therapist's Blind Spot

In this paper, I explore our professional vulnerability to emotional contagion and distorted thinking triggered by attachment dynamics. I draw on Freud, Bion, clinical vignettes, and film to examine the hidden 'song and dance' shaping our work in the shadows of therapy, groups, and society at large.

Holding the patient to be changed or cured can draw out unconscious enactments. Our own unexamined desires may seep into emotional communication, within or beneath words, shaping our mutual "song and dance".

Likewise, the patient's emotional communication can position the therapist as parent, healer or guru. The therapeutic couple may then come under the sway of unconscious group dynamics, echoing Bion's basic assumption groups.

Shadowy dynamics play out in current political authoritarianism and in digital tribes. Shared reality is replaced with propaganda and collective fantasy.

Lynne Holdem practices in Ngamotu, Taranaki. She was President of NZAP from 2020-2022. Lynne first studied psychotherapy with Institute of Psychosynthesis, Auckland and has continued learning by reading in Psychoanalysis and Object Relations. She has long been interested in trying to understand political and social change.

