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ROUTLEDGE

Trauma and Pain Without a Subject

Disruptive Marks in the Psyche, Resignified

Juan-Eduardo Tesone

Series Editor: Silvia Flechner



"The author discusses the challenges facing a psychoanalysis that refuses to be a relic. Tesone re-thinks subjective production through the vicissitudes of the drives and their identification destiny, in a trajectory from indiscrimination to the acceptance of otherness and subjective evolution. How can we produce theoretical thinking anchored in clinical experience and capable of fighting dogmatism? How do we consider the complexity of the subject, which oscillates between the redundant and the unpredictable, between repetition and novelty? These questions permeate his book. It provokes enthusiasm because it dares to be open while also based on experience. A book that invites a dialogue. It has brought me to re-think notions I thought definitive. For this I am grateful and recommend it."

—**Dr. Luis Horstein**, *physician and psychoanalyst,
President of FUNDEP (Foundation for Psychoanalytic Studies)*

"The author highlights two poles that structure the traumatic: the existence of the other and the subject's own sexuality. He emphasizes the specific in what is Disruptive, the Traumatic, and Symbolization: a total lack of representation, a black hole of the psyche. He alerts us to the excess of binding as the antithesis of chaos, which is the basis of psychic change. In this sense, psychoanalysis is called upon to work through the tension between the sexes of the phallic order and the 'nothing' order, generating idiosyncratic representations and overcoming the cisgender product of thwarting binarism. In this set of psychoanalytic texts, Tesone gives us a creative, in-depth discussion of the vicissitudes of the body."

—**Moty Benyakar**, *physician, psychiatrist, and Full
Member of the Israeli Psychoanalytic Society; Professor
Emeritus of the USAL, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Contemporary
Psychoanalysis and the Disruptive Committee in the
doctoral program in Psychology of the USAL; Full Member
of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association and of the
International Psychoanalytical Association*



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Trauma and Pain Without a Subject

Trauma and Pain Without a Subject explores the necessity of the subject of trauma emerging, particularly when a victim has experienced but not worked through disruptive situations, in order for unconscious pain to finally be experienced.

The book is presented in three parts, with the first, “Transgression and Crime”, uncovering silence around the topic of incest and sexual violence within the clinic. The second part, “Between Completeness and Nothingness”, develops the topic of sexual violence and considers the construction of femininities and masculinities within the paradigm of a heteronormative patriarchal society, with reference to Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. The third part, “Yes, We See, But What? What We Hear”, explores the intimate relation between the visual and the auditory, especially in relation to hysteria.

Trauma and Pain Without a Subject will be of great interest to psychoanalysts in practice and in training, and to all psychoanalytic practitioners working with trauma.

Juan-Eduardo Tesone is Emeritus Professor of Psychoanalysis at the University of Salvador (USAL), Argentina, and Associate Professor of Psychology at Paris Nanterre University, France. He is a Member and Training Analyst of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association and Member of the International Psychoanalytical Association. He is the author of more than 100 articles in specialist journals, in Spanish, French, English, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Croatian, and author and co-author of several books.

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Trauma and Pain Without a Subject

Disruptive Marks in the Psyche,
Resignified

Juan-Eduardo Tesone

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About the author

Juan-Eduardo Tesone, MD, PhD, is Emeritus Professor of Psychoanalysis at the University of Salvador (USAL), Argentina, and Associate Professor of Psychology at Paris Nanterre University, France. He received his degree as a psychiatrist from Paris XII University. He did his analyst training and became Full Member of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society (1992–2019). He is a Full Member and Training Analyst of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association and a Member of the International Psychoanalytical Association. For eleven years he directed a center for psychotherapy (Centre-Médico-Psycho-Pédagogique Pichon-Rivière), in connection with Juvenile Justice in Paris, which specialized in the subject of physical and/or sexual violence towards minors. He also directed “SOS Family in Danger”, a telephone counseling center for potentially violent parents who wished to seek help. He is the author of more than 100 articles in specialist journals, in Spanish, French, English, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Croatian; co-author of 18 books in various languages; and author of *In the Traces of Our Name: The Influence of Given Names in Life*, which was given an award by the Ministry of Culture of the Argentine Nation (2011) and also, in 2019, by the IPA, which gave the book its most important award granted by it for a psychoanalytic work. He has been bestowed Chevalier de l’Ordre National du Mérite (2013) and Chevalier des Palmes Académiques (2021) by the French Government.



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Series editor's foreword

The Publications Committee of the International Psychoanalytical Association presents a new volume in the series "Psychoanalytic Ideas and Applications".

The aim of this series is to focus on the scientific production of significant authors whose works are outstanding contributions to the psychoanalytic field and to set out relevant ideas and themes generated during the history of psychoanalysis, that deserve to be known and discussed by psychoanalysts of our Association.

Our goal is to share these ideas with the psychoanalytic community and professionals of related disciplines, to expand their knowledge and generate a productive interchange between the text and the reader. The IPA Publications Committee is pleased to publish Juan-Eduardo Tessone's book *A pain without a subject*.

Dr. Juan-Eduardo Tesone is a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association, Full Member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association (APA), and former Member of the Paris Psychoanalytical Society (SPP)

This book is composed of three parts. The first, titled "Transgression and Crime", concerns a relatively taboo problem: incest. Dr. Tesone argues that hearing about Oedipus in psychoanalysis is much more frequent, but one rarely hears about consummated incest. He states that incest is not more intense than Oedipus. On the contrary, it is the denial of incest. Oedipus builds subjectivity by enabling acceptance of lack, whereas incest destroys any otherness and, consequently, the child's subjectivity.

Dr. Tesone tries to deepen transdisciplinary dialogue with Law, Philosophy, Linguistics, Semiology, and Anthropology through his theorization. In this endeavor, he takes psychoanalytic practice out of the abbey of the consulting room and into a position in community mental health.

The second part is titled "Between Completeness and Nothingness". The subject of completeness is futilely sought by all human beings when confronted with nothingness, but it is historically attributed to women by a hetero-normative patriarchal perspective. For the author, nothingness in the form of symbolic castration concerns every human being, independent

of sex or gender. William Shakespeare contributes to his proposal through *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In chapter 16, "Cumulative Trauma and 'troumatique'", he interrogates the field of traumatic questions in a paradigmatic way: the unrepresentable, putting in tension the classic analytic device of making the unconscious conscious, revealing that in this clinic, the lifting of repression is not enough to trace something unconsciously to become a mnemonic trace. On the contrary, on certain occasions the traumatic experience generates a vacuum of figuration that aspires to every possible form of representation.

Finally, the author cites Borges, the great clinician of the human soul who has left, in *The Aleph* (1949), a particularly hope-inspiring sentence for our clinical work: "To change the past is not to change a mere single event; it is to annul all its consequences, which tend to infinity." Likewise, the French poet Paul Valéry summarizes: "The past has a future." The author agrees with both writers and allows himself to add that when the past is no longer mere repetition, something new and creative may emerge.

For the author, "the red thread that runs through this book is the disruptive marks, in filigree in any disruptive condition, that, to the extent that they can be resignified, will allow the elaboration of the traumatic feeling.

Silvia Flechner
Series Editor
Chair, IPA Publications Committee

Preface

In order to write the introduction to a book, it is necessary to generate interest and enthusiasm. It also needs to have a connection with the text in order to show that it does not necessarily imply theoretical agreement with the author. Even so, it also needs to generate excitement that spontaneously creates desire to discuss ideas. Having been given all three circumstances, I think Juan treasured his invitation to write this short text, which honors me. From the introduction, Juan's book generates a state of expectation by beginning to explain the reason for his writing. Juan refers to this as an aid to process the experiences that occurred in the analytic sessions from the past until what happened in the moment. It also refers to the self-therapeutic value for psychoanalysts, who write by allowing themselves to process both the patient's suffering as their own. There he thinks that instead of transference and countertransference, he prefers to call it a reciprocal transference. It is very striking when Juan refers to this double condition as a sedentary lifestyle in relation to the recurring themes; the different cultures he has inhabited throughout his life and with some nomadism in the geographical sense. It is during this time period that we have shared some special moments of our lives.

Juan was born in Buenos Aires, but grew up in Mar del Plata, a city 400 km south of the capital. After high school, he went to study Medicine at the University of Buenos Aires, and that was where we met for the first time in our fourth year, in the hospital, where we both attended from Monday to Saturday. The hospital unit was a melting pot of knowledge about ailments, both physical and psychical. During this period, our sensitivity was tested. They were three years of great awareness and in contact with the suffering of human beings. We were very young, and we enjoyed it very much. It was medicine up close and real, which we had not observed before and which left its mark. I remember the reaction when I told my group of friends at the end of my studies that I had decided to dedicate myself to psychoanalysis. They appeared to be sad as they rested their hands on my shoulder. It seemed that maybe I had forgotten about the body and real medicine. It felt that they had lost someone. I never asked Juan how his process was, but I suspect it was similar. Afterwards

we were companions for a brief time on a course in psychotherapy for children. Shortly after that, Juan left for Paris. At this moment in time, 1978, I had two very young children, so I stayed and began analytic training. Many years later, Juan and I would meet again in various congresses throughout Europe. We found ourselves among the climate of nomadism of psychoanalysts which does not only include those who have lived for many years outside their country.

On Juan's return to Argentina, we got in touch again and so we continue our friendship. We both know that the thread "invisible to the eye" that unites and sustains us is always there.

I will now return to Juan's introduction. There the author poses a question that opens new paths to think about language: Your experience of living in two cultures with two different languages?

This has led Juan to consider the way in which language and subjectivities undoubtedly impact our way of thinking when shifting from one language to another, in his case Spanish and French. This has multiplied the senses and also has the freedom of movement between different psychoanalytic theories. Jacques Derrida goes so far as to say that a psychoanalyst should speak at least two different languages.

This book is divided into three parts that bring together and, in turn, develop three themes: In the first, entitled "Transgression and Crime", it addresses a theme of hot news, such as sexual abuse with implied violence. Juan cites that fact and also the question of incest. He also draws our attention to how little psychoanalytic literature there is in relation to consummated incest. He proposes that this issue has been condemned in the psychoanalytic clinic to the same silence as that of the victim of consummated incest. This observation, together with the development he makes on the subject in dialogue with other disciplines, opens a path that exhorts us to continue thinking. He also gives voice to what happens to ourselves when we are confronted with these stories in our consultation rooms.

In the second part, "Between Completeness and Nothingness", Juan continues developing the issue of sexual violence, which he prefers to "sexual abuse". He then ventures into current topics of debate, which also imply the construction of femininities and masculinities within the paradigm of patriarchal society. This part also includes a very interesting chapter on tattooing which is illustrated by clinical material. In addition, it shows us that the clinical psychoanalyst has great experience in the analysis of children and adolescents.

In the third part, which bears as its title a phrase of the French poet, Jacques Ancet: "Yes, We See, But What? What We Hear." This studies the relationship between what one sees and what is heard starting from hysteria. The developments of this part of the volume are particularly interesting and contribute to dissolving a debate on the importance of observation over listening or vice versa, a discussion at this point, as well as the author, I consider it obsolete. It is known that for the British School of

Psychoanalysis, the notion of unconscious fantasy is tinged with a strong accent on the perceptual–visual. The tradition of French psychoanalysis, moreover, coherent with the notion of structure and the Lacanian concept of the unconscious structured as a language, gets along better with the analyst’s focus located in listening. Even so, it is true that as soon as we approach the clinic, this polarization will be difficult to sustain: An analyst who “listens” to his patient does not register music, tone of voice, or body language, nor noises from outside the office, or their own bodily thoughts and sensations?

Lastly, and to let readers begin their own journey in this exciting volume, I found its title to be a discovery. From the reading of the different chapters, it emerges in a kind of *après-coup*, the notion that violence, in this case sexual, is desubjective, destroys the possibility of going through the necessary processes of subjectivation, and much more in childhood, puberty, and adolescence. The processes have been disruptive, I would say lacerating of the tissue necessary for the Self, even to experience pain. Hence, the great value and the great commitment of the psychoanalyst are to offer a space for historicism and also for the opportunity of subjectivation. Only then, when there is a subject, will he or she be able to feel the pain.

This is a book that is just as important and necessary in a world like the one we have today. We are now living after a pandemic, which has forced us to live with uncertainty and also with violence in its various forms. Even the horror of a war compels us to think and talk, to give voice to all those who do not have it. Finally, even Freud, so criticized for his position in relation to women, gave them a voice when he invited his first patients to associate freely on his couch, in what he called the “Talking Cure.”

Virginia Ungar
Past President of the IPA and Full Member of APdeBA
(Buenos Aires Psychoanalytical Associations)
 Buenos Aires, November 2022



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Introduction

As psychoanalysts, we may feel the need to write for more than one reason. First: we need to consider our working through of the clinical relation with our patients; second: it is a medium for thinking outside the urgency of the session and reflecting on what was said. Third, and at the same time, it is a way to be close to our patients while also preserving the distance we need to think about their complex problems. No less important: a way to find adequate proximity and distance between the other's conflicts and our own, given that writing is an effort to work through the anxieties of clinical practice whose obstacles stimulated Freudian theorization.

Writing may calm anxieties and make it possible for clinical work, confronted with suffering, to work through, digest, and return it to our patients, metabolized, whether by pointing out, interpreting, or constructing something that brings relief to the suffering, both the patient's and the analyst's. "Transference" and "countertransference" are the terms commonly used, but I prefer the idea of reciprocal transference.

I was encouraged to gather my earlier writings for this book, whereby I discovered internal cohesion in lectures I had given in different places and articles I had published in journals in different languages. This quiescence, so to speak, of themes I found to recur in diverse cultures, and it contrasts with the geographical nomadism that has enriched my adult life.

I lived in Argentina in Mar del Plata during my childhood and adolescence, a city by the sea whose perpetual movement defined my perception of the real; the maritime horizon inspiring a wish to reach beyond that imaginary line. I studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires and specialized in psychopathology at the "Ricardo Gutierrez" Children's Hospital, also in Buenos Aires. Formative years were, I would say, followed by a lifetime of "days of ongoing training." A scholarship and a local *coup d'état* sent me to France in 1976, where I lived for 22 years.

I worked in Paris as a psychiatrist at the "La Salpêtrière" Hospital; I trained as a psychoanalyst at the Paris Psychoanalytical Society and "L'École Freudienne"; I was the director of a center for ambulatory psychotherapy for children and adolescents, which, at my suggestion, is named after the great Franco-Argentine professor, Enrique Pichon-Rivière. I held

2 Introduction

a post as Associate Professor at the University of Paris-Nanterre, where I received my doctorate in psychology. Later, on my return to Buenos Aires in 1998, I became a Member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association, and I continue to teach at several Argentine and foreign universities, in particular as Professor Emeritus in the doctoral program, "The Disruptive and Psychoanalysis" at Salvador University, chaired by Professor Moty Benyakar. I work and study in both my languages.

My confrontation with a different culture, but especially with a different language, led me to be doubly aware of language: on the one hand, the way it determines our way of thinking. Some of these texts were written in Spanish; others were written in French and later translated into Spanish. It is striking to note how the passage from one language to another multiplies meanings, semantics, and also perceptions of the real world. This duality generates enough stimuli for me to feel I am not inscribed in any one place or language or to any one theory as a reference. On the other hand, I have found a red thread that runs through cultures, languages, theories, and disciplines, stringing together my texts through years and geographies.

I propose the reading of this book in its three parts.

Part I is entitled "Transgression and Crime." Its major themes concern a problem that is relatively taboo: that of incest. In psychoanalysis, we frequently hear about the Oedipus, but rarely about consummated incest. Incest is not a more intense Oedipus. On the contrary, it is the denial of incest. The Oedipus builds subjectivity by enabling acceptance of lack, whereas incest destroys any kind of otherness and consequently the child's subjectivity.

Through my theorization I aim to deepen transdisciplinary dialogue with Law, Philosophy, Linguistics, Semiology, and Anthropology. In this endeavor, I take psychoanalytic practice out of the cloister of the consulting room and into a position in community mental health.

Especially concerning the latter, I describe the contributions of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Françoise Héritier regarding the characteristics of the taboo against incest. I draw a distinction between what is different and what is identical, and also examine ways to ontologically clarify issues of gender, sex, parentality, and alliance, revealing the pact of restriction and the system of regulation in culture. Steering the course into disruptive scars, some ancestral myths about incest are dismantled, and, to exemplify, I conjugate aspects of clinical practice relating to the abject in the family scene and its sinister implications.

Part II, "Between Completeness and Nothingness," covers the subject of completeness futilely sought by all human beings when confronted with nothingness but historically attributed to women by a hetero-normative patriarchal perspective. Nothingness in the form of symbolic castration concerns every human being, independent of sex and/or gender. William Shakespeare contributes to my concept through *Much Ado About Nothing*. When Shakespeare wrote this play, in 1600, in the form of a comedy, a Renaissance conception of women was placed in tension. His text distills