

NJI
SINCE 1972

N.J. Institute for Training In Psychoanalysis

viewpoints in psychoanalysis

published every fall and spring

Editor

Wilda Mesias, PhD

Design

Lucas Daniel Cuatrecasas

Contributors

Richard M. Alperin, PhD, LCSW

Anonymous

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD

Wilda Mesias, PhD

Inna Rozentsvit, MD

Leah Slivko, LICSW, MSW, PsychA

Tammy Smith, LCSW

R75/5

**FALL
2023**

viewpoints

Viewpoints in Psychoanalysis is a publication of
The New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis.

Viewpoints is a forum for sharing, debating, and
analyzing the historical, academic, political, aesthetic,
and experimental aspects of the psychoanalytic
experience.

The views and opinions expressed in *Viewpoints* do not
necessarily reflect those of The New Jersey Institute for
Training in Psychoanalysis or its faculty, staff, students,
or affiliates.

**Nor do the views and opinions expressed in any
contributor's article in *Viewpoints* necessarily
reflect the views or opinions of any other
contributor to *Viewpoints*.**

Viewpoints's content is aimed at sparking discussion
and reflection. It is committed to representing a
diversity of perspectives, along various dimensions.



121 Cedar Lane, Suite 3-A, Teaneck, NJ 07666

info@njinstitute.com

njinstitute.com

viewpointsnji.wordpress.com

Viewpoints is published twice a year, in the fall and in the spring.

for inquiries about submissions: viewpointsnji@protonmail.com

A note from the editor

Wilda Mesias, PhD

In the spring of 2021, Neil Wilson (1932—2023) asked me to help him finish what was going to be his last issue of *Viewpoints in Psychoanalysis*. I agreed to this request. As we put the issue together, Neil asked me if I would be willing to continue as the editor of this NJI publication. I let him know that if I did, *Viewpoints* would undergo some changes, one of them being that it would become a digital-only publication. Neil asked multiple questions in the way that only Neil could ask questions, and, satisfied with my answers, he wrote in his last issue: “This is my final turn as editor of *Viewpoints*. Len Strahl was the first editor and edited until his passing many years ago. Wilda Mesias will be our next editor. It will be in good hands.”

Neil entrusted me with *Viewpoints*’s future. From then on, he was the first one to receive each new issue. When I sent him the spring 2022 issue, he sent me the following email:

From: <[neil]@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 21, 2022 at 7:54 PM
Subject: You
To: <[wilda]@gmail.com>

Wow, thanks for taking over and doing a really, really great job. Neil

Sent from my iPad

Neil was pleased with the *Viewpoints* of the future and the way NJI was evolving. We spoke the Wednesday before his death. He was searching for an interview he had done with Erik Erikson’s sister.

He wanted me to see it and maybe reprint it. I hope we find this interview somewhere in his papers. We have lost Neil’s physical presence, but his spirit will always be a part of us. I was lucky to have known him as my supervisor, my colleague, and my friend, and I hope that the NJI community continues to preserve the vision that Neil and Joel had for the Institute.

This issue of *Viewpoints* is dedicated to Neil Wilson. Its cover bears a version of the *Viewpoints* logo that appeared on an issue of this publication from the 1990s, during Neil’s tenure as editor.

Thank you, Neil, for everything.

In this issue:

Trinity	2
Wilda Mesias, PhD	
Drifting Off	7
Anonymous	
Three Haikus	10
Tammy Smith, LCSW	
About Neil Wilson	11
Richard M. Alperin, PhD, LCSW	

In Memoriam: My Analyst Neil and our Shared Journey... 14

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD with
Inna Rozentsvit, MD

A Very Special Tribute to Neil Wilson..... 16

Leah Slivko, LICSW, MSW,
PsychA

A Note of Gratitude..... 20

Wilda Mesias, PhD



Nicolas Rapold, How the Mushroom Cloud Boomed and Bloomed Across American Pop Culture, N.Y. Times (July 31, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/31/movies/oppenheimer-asteroid-city-mushroom-cloud.html>

In 1931, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation invited Albert Einstein to have an intellectual exchange with a thinker of his selection. He selected Sigmund Freud. They corresponded, and Freud's essay *Why War?* (1933/1964) was his response to Einstein's questions on how to free humanity from the threat of war. Freud's letter to Einstein is a discourse on the relationship between Right (*Recht*) and Might (*Macht*),

between the two instincts, and between culture and human nature (p. 203). Freud states, "Such, then, was the original state of things: domination by whoever had the greater might—domination by brute violence or by violence supported by intellect (pp. 204-205).

The recent film *Oppenheimer* (2023), based on Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography *American*

Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer (2005) and brilliantly directed by Christopher Nolan, is the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the American physicist who was instrumental in developing the first atomic bomb.

The film opens with the presentation of Robert Oppenheimer (played by Cillian Murphy) as a tortured and brilliant man. Nolan's use of fantastical imagery invites the viewer to experience the intrapsychic world of this man. The film portrays a complex character, depressed, ambitious, arrogant, charming, morose, reactive, unable to tolerate limits and perceived humiliations. In one scene, we see him poisoning the apple of his instructor in response to being prevented from attending an important lecture. It is believed that the incident actually took place while he was studying at Cambridge University and that to avoid being expelled from this institution he had to seek psychiatric treatment. In *American Prometheus*, we are told that, within the span of four months, he had three different analysts—in London, in Paris, and in Cambridge. He was diagnosed with dementia praecox in London and with a *crise moral*—a moral crisis associated with sexual issues—in Paris, and, by the time he began seeing his third analyst in Cambridge, he had read a good deal about psychoanalysis. He found his third analyst wiser and saw him for a few months. Oppenheimer's friend and teacher Herbert Smith said that Oppenheimer "gave the psychiatrist in Cambridge an outrageous song and dance . . . The trouble is, you've got to have a psychiatrist who is abler than the person who's being analyzed" (Bird & Sherwin, 2005, pp. 46–47, 49).

As the film progresses, we are given increasing insight into Oppenheimer's character. With

respect to his politics, he had an interest in communism, as did Jean Tatlock (played by Florence Pugh), an aspiring psychoanalyst with whom Oppenheimer became romantically involved (Bird & Sherwin, 2005, pp. 111–113). The relationship with Tatlock is marked by mixed intense emotions and fueled by existential questions, deep thinking, lust, and similar intellectual and political interests. The relationship culminates with her suicide. In a scene in which she and Oppenheimer are having sex and discussing Jungian and Freudian psychoanalysis, she asks him to read a line from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Oppenheimer, a student of Sanskrit and of the *Bhagavad Gita*, reads from the ancient text the iconic line, "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." The drives of sexuality and aggression intermingled, fused.

In *Why War?*, Freud writes:

According to our hypothesis human instincts are of only two kinds: those which seek to preserve and unite—which we call 'erotic', exactly in the sense in which Plato uses the word 'Eros' in his *Symposium*, or 'sexual', with a deliberate extension of the popular conception of 'sexuality'—and those which seek to destroy and kill and which we group together as the aggressive or destructive instinct. As you see, this is in fact no more than a theoretical clarification of the universally familiar opposition between Love and Hate which may perhaps have some fundamental relation to the polarity of attraction and repulsion that plays a part in your own field of knowledge. But we must not be too hasty in introducing ethical judgements of good and evil. (p. 209)

In Hinduism, the deity Krishna is not only

involved in creation but also in destruction. A more conventional translation of the thirty-second verse of the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is:

I [Krishna] am time, the destroyer of all;
I have come to consume the world. Even
without your [i.e., the prince Arjuna's]
participation, all the warriors gathered here
will die. (2007, p. 198)

In psychoanalysis, the unconscious is timeless. In Hinduism, Krishna is time, the destroyer of all. The film follows two timelines, identified by the words “fission” (splitting of a nucleus into two smaller nuclei) and “fusion” (two nuclei combining together, releasing an enormous amount of energy). Fission, which consists of scenes shown in color, follows Oppenheimer's early life, his education at Cambridge University and Göttingen University, his academic positions at Caltech and Berkeley, his marriage, his affair, his involvement in the Manhattan Project, and the creation of the atomic bomb. This timeline is presented from Oppenheimer's subjective view. Fusion, which consists of scenes shown in black and white, centers on the campaign by Lewis Strauss (played by Robert Downey Jr.), a member of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, to discredit Oppenheimer. Both timelines involve nonsequential flashbacks that continually cross over. However, fission and fusion are not only labels for two different timelines. They also seem to indicate the difference between a weapon of mass destruction and weapon of total extinction. Fission releases the energy used in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while fusion unleashes energy that can annihilate the world. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud used the terms fusion (*Mischung*) and defusion (*Entmischung*) to explain the mixing and separation of Eros and Thanatos

(1923/1961, p. 41; 1923/1998, p. 269-270). For Freud the expression of the fusion of the instincts was sadism, the turning of Thanatos toward the external world.

All the discrete details that the film presents—Oppenheimer's complex character, that specific time in history, the curiosity of the scientists involved in the Manhattan Project, and the process of the atomic bomb's creation—are what absorbs the viewer. One is disturbed in watching how individuals, governments, and societies make decisions fueled by fear, arrogance, and a search for knowledge and power without taking the time to thoroughly analyze the immediate and far-reaching consequences of those decisions.

There is no doubt that Oppenheimer understood what he was making, although he might have initially justified it as a necessary creation. He accepted the position of director of the Manhattan Project fully aware that the weapon would be used against Germany or Japan. Oppenheimer said that, after seeing the first test of the atomic bomb near Alamogordo, New Mexico on July 16, 1945, he thought of the line from the *Bhagavad Gita*, “Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds” (Bird & Sherwin, 2005, p. 309).

After the first test, Oppenheimer knew—exactly as did everyone else involved in the project—what they had created and what they were going to unleash. On August 6, 1945, “Little Boy,” a uranium gun-type atomic bomb, was dropped in Hiroshima, killing between 90,000 and 166,000 people in the first four months after the explosion, with tens of thousands more dying in the years after. Three days later, a second atomic bomb known as “Fat Man” was dropped in Nagasaki, killing between 40,000 and 75,000 people immediately, with

deaths reaching as much as 80,000 by the end of 1945 (“Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” 2014).

Freud (1932) writes:

It is very rarely that an action is the work of a single instinctual impulse In order to make an action possible there must be as a rule a combination of such compounded motives. This was perceived long ago by a specialist in your own subject, a Professor G. C. Lichtenberg who taught physics at Göttingen during our classical age He invented a Compass of Motives, for he wrote: ‘The motives that lead us to do anything might be arranged like the thirty-two winds and might be given names in a similar way: for instance, “bread-bread-fame” or “fame-fame-bread”.’ . . . A lust for aggression and destruction is certainly among them: the countless cruelties in history and in our everyday lives vouch for its existence and its strength. (p. 210)

Oppenheimer was a student of languages, literature, art, philosophy. He stated that he was transformed after reading Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Perhaps because after reading it he did not feel so singular. Oppenheimer had a history of depression and intense anxiety. He suffered severe humiliation when he attended a camp during his adolescence. He was doted on by his parents, perhaps too much. He craved recognition and adulation. He loved the New Mexico desert and, for that reason, selected it as the site of the first test of the bomb. He named this test “Trinity,” ostensibly due to his love for the poems of John Donne, a love that arose out of his relationship with Jean Tatlock (Bird & Sherwin, 2005, pp. 15–16, 21–22, 25–28, 51, 111, 304). The poem in question is Holy Sonnet

XIV:

Batter my heart, three-person’d God; for,
you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke
to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee,
,and bend
Your force, to break, blowe, burn and make
me new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to’another due,
Labour to’admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason, your viceroy in mee, mee should
defend,
But is captiv’d, and proves weake or untrue,
Yet dearly’I love you, and would be lov’d
faine,
But am betroth’d unto your enemye,
Divorce mee, ’untie, or break that knot
again,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you’enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.
(Gardner, 1985, p. 85–86)

This is a plea to God as holy trinity, asking God to break the ties of sin. It speaks of a willingness to submit to God’s will to find freedom. It’s a poem that speaks of judgment and salvation. It’s desperate, sexual, and violent.

In a 1947 lecture at MIT, Oppenheimer said, “In some sort of crude sense which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose” (1948, p. 65). After the war, he lobbied for arms control, and, along with Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, and Joseph Rotblat, he founded the World Academy of Art and Science in 1960. He was given the Enrico Fermi Award (an award given to scientists for achievements

in the field of nuclear energy) in 1963. He died of throat cancer in 1967.

In *Why War?*, Freud (1932) says:

For incalculable ages mankind has been passing through a process of evolution of culture. (Some people, I know, prefer to use the term 'civilization'.) We owe to that process the best of what we have become, as well as a good part of what we suffer from. (p. 214)

At the end of this essay, he adds, "But one thing we *can* say: whatever fosters the growth of civilization works at the same time against war" (p. 215).

At any given moment in time, I hope we can remember that, together with our instinctual nature, our drives that can fuse and defuse, we were also given the power to reflect on ourselves, to grow, to learn, and to choose.

references

The Bhagavad Gita (E. Easwaran, Trans.; 2nd ed.). (2007). The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation.

Bird, K., & Sherwin, M. J. (2005). *American Prometheus: The triumph and tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*. Vintage.

"Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – 1945." (2014, June 5). *Atomic Heritage Foundation*. <https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/history/bombings-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-1945/>

Freud, S. (1961). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 19, pp. 12-59). Hogarth

Press. (Original work published 1923)

Freud, S. (1964). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 22, pp. 203-215). Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1933)

Freud, S. (1998). *Gesammelte Werke: chronologisch geordnet* (Vol. 13, pp. 237-289). Imago Publishing. (Original work published 1923)

Gardner, H. (Ed.). (1985). *The metaphysical poets*. Penguin.

Oppenheimer, J. R. (1948). Physics in the contemporary world. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 40(3), 65-68.

Drifting Off

Anonymous

Taking advantage of the fact that several psychoanalytical institutes in my home state had gone virtual, I decided to start both my psychoanalytical training and my psychoanalysis during the pandemic. I intentionally looked for an analyst within a ten-minute distance of my home in Massachusetts. That way, it would be easier to attend in-person sessions once the pandemic restrictions were lifted. At first, we met via Zoom, and then we switched to the phone with the idea that I might be less inhibited. After a few months of phone sessions, I had not developed a feeling of connection to my chosen analyst. I noticed myself thinking “Is this all there is?” or “I’m fulfilling an obligation, but it’s not what I thought this work would feel like.” I was going through the motions without feeling invested.

As Covid-19 cases decreased, we were finally able to start in-person sessions. After a few sessions, I began to miss my analyst between sessions. I imagined conversations between us, had small fantasies, and even had a dream about us. I shared these with my analyst, and, like a reward, I was quickly transitioned to the couch. Being in person made all the difference for me. I felt connected, and our relationship felt alive.

However, as time passed, the incidences of Covid-19 began to climb again. Fortunately, we continued to meet in-person. I appreciated this and believed the air purifier in their office protected both of us from possible virus transmission. Even as winter came, we were safely getting through the latest wave of Covid-19 and continued to meet in person. But, even though we were managing in-office visits well, my analyst announced that we would need to return to phone sessions. Since the latest wave was waning, going virtual felt unnecessary to me. I objected, but my analyst shared that they suffered from a health condition that made this necessary. I had no choice but to comply, although I still questioned the timing of going back to phone sessions. Weeks went on, and cases of Covid-19 significantly dropped. Several times, I asked about returning to the office. My analyst would put me off only to say they were thinking about it. During this period, I began noticing what sounded like snoring during our phone sessions. I’d confront them, but they would deny my concerns. I did not have proof, but I felt sure I could hear snoring. It felt terrible. Sleeping during a session seemed akin to a mortal sin. I felt that it was my job to

keep them awake. I began asking more direct questions and avoided long reflections that could trigger snoring. I tracked what seemed to induce sleep and increased any stimulating topic.

As our on-the-phone sessions lingered on, I got angrier. I then decided that, if my analyst couldn't give me a definite date for returning to the office, I'd protest by cutting the frequency of my sessions back to once a week. Miraculously, I didn't have to bargain. They finally set a date to return to in-person sessions.

During that long period of being virtual, I also began noticing feelings of ambivalence with my patients. Letting some sessions get more chatty and less deep. It felt like I was taking a break. Focusing was difficult, and I began questioning my responsibility to be a better therapist. Then, while online one day with a twice-a-week patient I'll call Ben, I noticed that I was incredibly sleepy. I shifted in my chair and reached for my tea cup, which was empty. This session was our first at a late afternoon time slot, 3:45 PM. For two months, Ben had asked for a later hour. When we explored the change to the new time slot, he shared that he often felt too drained by the end of our sessions to return to his job. Because I start at nine in the morning, a 3:45 session is a late session for me. My morning caffeine has worn off by this hour, and my blood sugar tends to drop. On this particular day, whatever Ben was talking about stopped registering, and I drifted off into a light sleep. Then I sensed my head begin to fall. I am unsure, but I'd estimate I was asleep for about ten seconds. I looked up at the screen to check Ben's reaction.

He was still talking but then stopped. He asked me if I was okay. I said I'd fallen asleep. The

term "fallen" had taken on a new meaning. Falling could be the result of an accident when someone is not careful or when something is treacherous. I apologized to Ben, and, realizing we were several minutes over time, I ended the session quickly. I had to reflect on what happened.

I thought about why I fell asleep. I felt a lot of shame and even took weeks to tell this to my supervisor. Even though I was suffering, discussing this with my analyst felt impossible. I had trouble understanding why I had drifted off when I always had managed to stay awake.

My admission to Ben in regard to my falling asleep felt necessary. My analyst's denials had left me feeling confused and distrustful of reality. I knew I couldn't do that to Ben. Ben's initial concern for me mimicked my concern for and desire to protect my analyst. I remember wondering if my analyst worked too many hours, if I was boring them. Even though I had initially apologized to Ben, I waited for the material to emerge again. In a later session, we explored what my falling asleep had meant for him. He shared that he had experienced me as "less available" or "less present" during the 3:45 pm session. He had wondered if I had enough energy to manage his depression. We decided that we could both monitor my energy going forward.

Another parallel that was taking place around the same time I had asked my analyst to go back to being in person was that I was asking Ben to consider coming to our sessions in person. I often brought it up with him, explaining that I thought it could impact our treatment. He repeatedly deflected the idea, saying he'd think about it. His dismissal felt similar to my analyst's refusal to have sessions in person. I wanted Ben to be in person since

I felt this could facilitate our therapeutic relationship. I struggled to feel connected to Ben as I struggled to feel connected to my analyst. Practicing virtually felt detached, remote, less alive. I knew these were themes for me, yet discussing them in my treatment was not facilitated. It had taken a lot of effort for me to confront my analyst about the snoring and my belief that they were falling asleep. However, these issues were not explored. After struggling for months with these unresolved issues—thinking, processing, consulting—I decided to end my treatment and consider other training options.

Three Haikus

Tammy Smith, LCSW

In The Consulting Room

Between grunt and sigh,
Analysts keeping the frame
Await what emerges

During the Month of August

When therapists leave,
seeking solace and respite,
they return refreshed.

Torn Underneath

The couch feels lumpy.
In sagging places, I cry.
Hoping to find change.

About Neil Wilson

Richard M. Alperin, PhD, LCSW

The following article was submitted for publication in Viewpoints in Psychoanalysis before Neil Wilson's death.

I had my first formal contact with the New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis in the summer of 1990, when I wrote to NJI's executive codirector Neil Wilson to introduce myself and inquire about a teaching position. Neil replied by inviting me to join the Membership Organization of the New Jersey Institute (MONJI). After its members became acquainted with me, he wrote, I might be offered a teaching position. Slightly disappointed, I let his invitation go unanswered.

Later that summer, I went to the island of Saint Kitts to teach at International University, which had a doctoral program in psychoanalysis. To my surprise, Neil was also teaching there. As was the case with many of our early encounters, my meeting with him was short, as he was flying back to New Jersey the following day.

Then, shortly before the start of that year's fall semester, Neil called to ask if I could teach a course on the borderline, which I had taught

that summer at International University. As some of my students at International University—such as Marcy Rosen, Harriet Diamond, and Rhoda Ritter—were also faculty members at NJI, I had the fantasy that they had favorably reviewed my course and that, on that basis, Neil had extended his offer. Given the late date, however, he may just have been desperate to fill a teaching spot.

To be accepted to teach, I would first have to meet with Joel Bernstein, NJI's other codirector. We arranged to meet at a diner on Cedar Lane, which was around the corner from NJI, then located on Catalpa Avenue.

There I sat at a table with Neil, Joel, and their trusted secretary, Nancy. Going in, I had been slightly nervous, but now my anxiety was heightened by a tension I perceived between Neil and Joel, and the feeling that Joel was reluctant to have me teach, perhaps because I was not a classical Freudian. When he began pressing me for my theoretical orientation, I told him it was object relations. He then looked at me inquisitively and said that some object relations theorists believe that aggression is a drive and others did not and paused for a response. But what acceptable yet authentic

answer could I give that would allow me to teach?

Psychoanalysts then were in heated debates about whether aggression is inborn (a drive) or secondary to frustration. Although I knew aggression was of primary importance in psychoanalysis and psychopathology, whether it formally or biologically qualified as a drive was unclear to me at that time.

So how did I answer his inquiry? I simply told him that he was correct in his assertion that some object relations theorists believed that aggression was a drive while others did not. Surprisingly, my answer seemed to suffice, as I soon began teaching at NJI.

That interview formed the basis for my split perception of the NJI codirectors, with Neil as the “good” object and Joel the “bad.” That each leader was strong and opinionated led, I think, some other members of the Institute as well to split, perceiving one as “good” and the other as “bad.”

As I was fresh out of analytic training, some of my initial feelings toward Neil were transference, based on positive feelings I had toward Don Milman, then director of the Adelphi University postdoctoral program in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, where I had trained. Besides being directors of psychoanalytic training institutes, Neil and Don bore numerous other similarities:

- Each was classically Freudian in theoretical orientation.
- Each was a PhD psychologist who underwent psychoanalytic training at the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP).

- Each had a gruff exterior, which often made it difficult to ascertain where one stood, but beneath this exterior was sensitivity and compassion toward candidates and faculty. My analyst once shared with me that, when candidates gave a faculty member a poor evaluation, rather than act punitively, Don instead asked how the instructor could best be helped to improve their teaching. And while I was chair of the Curriculum Committee at NJI, I was once required by the Training Board to send a letter to inform an inappropriately behaving instructor that his services were no longer needed. Hearing of this, Neil called me to express his concern about the instructor’s feelings and suggested that the termination letter be written kindly and gently, with a paintbrush rather than a chisel.

- Each incurred the wrath of powerful professional organizations. In 1964, the Nassau County Psychiatric Society, infuriated that Don’s program was training psychologists to do psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, sued Adelphi for practicing medicine and running a medical clinic without a license (at the time, psychiatrists considered psychotherapy a medical specialty). At NJI, Neil was never sued but repeatedly was threatened and condemned by psychologist colleagues for training social workers and “lay” professionals to practice psychoanalysis.

- Each had a hostile sense of humor.

Neil, having had numerous trainees and psychoanalysts as analysands, gained a

reputation as an “analyst’s analyst.” However, few members of our community know how courageous an analyst he is. Years ago, he referred one of his patients to me for group therapy. If not for this patient’s being in individual analysis with Neil, I, like most clinicians, would have been reluctant to work with this patient, who had been hospitalized several times for suicide attempts. I am pleased to report that throughout the course of the analysis, Neil’s optimistic attitude toward the patient never wavered and strongly contributed to the patient’s return to his previous level of effective functioning.

As some of you may know, in 1964, Neil participated in a civil rights demonstration against a segregated movie theater in Indianola, Mississippi. He was arrested and jailed, and then for decades the FBI maintained a file on him. Perhaps it is this commitment to egalitarianism that accounts for Neil’s ongoing opposition to restricting psychoanalytic training to practitioners in certain mental health professions.

I am glad to have known Neil all these years. If not for him, I might never have joined the faculty at NJI. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Neil and Joel for establishing NJI as the first psychoanalytic training institute in New Jersey and to Neil for serving for several years as NJI’s sole executive director after Joel’s departure.

In Memoriam: My Analyst Neil and Our Shared Journey

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD with Inna Rozentsvit, MD

I gravitated toward Neil's gentle warmth and
keen ear,

In '73, he and a colleague, with wisdom sincere,

Interviewed me, as I ventured psychoanalytic
training to pursue,

But beneath my aspirations, therapy's need
also grew.

Neil guided me through the labyrinth of my
past,

Unearthing Elovitz family myths, revealing
shadows cast,

Together, we delved into the depths of the
unconscious sea,

I emerged with clearer vision, a truer sense of
me.

As the foundations of my life began to crack
and sway,

My marriage, my dream job, all seemed to slip
away,

Neil stood beside me, steadfast in my turbulent
storm,

Helping me find solid ground, rebirthing in

life's reform.

We wrestled with guilt, a burden too immense
to bear,

For merely existing, as an unwanted child and
heir,

We shattered my writer's block, let creativity
flow free,

Over four hundred publications now bear
witness to me.

Envy, once a monstrous specter, a character
flaw untamed,

With Neil's guidance, it evolved, no longer to
be blamed.

Together, we faced my suppressed, seething
ire,

The path to healing, a journey we'd both
admire.

In time, Neil's memory dimmed, his recall less
clear,

Yet his spirit shone brightly, despite ailments
severe.

Heart problems and a liver growth, challenges

he'd face,

Through it all, unwavering optimism, his
saving grace.

Accepting myself, I cherish the analyst's art
and his skill.

Neil, you remain etched in my grateful heart.

With appreciation and love, your memory I
revere,

For the profound journey we shared, through
joy and fear.

A Very Special Tribute to Neil Wilson

Leah Slivko, LICSW, MSW, PsychA

The following tribute was presented at NJI's annual all-Institute brunch on May 4, 2008 and published in the spring 2010 issue of Viewpoints in Psychoanalysis. With the author's permission, it is reprinted here as it appeared in that issue.

It is an honor to be able to openly share, reflect, and rejuvenate our Institute's spirit of community and love for enriching and embracing the psychoanalytic thought and practice here in New Jersey. This institute would not be here today if it were not for our co-founder, Dr. Neil Wilson.

So who, really, is Dr. Neil Wilson?

So who, really, is Dr. Neil Wilson? I can share my projection of the man I met many years ago. After completing my final paper at the Institute, I thought I would let out all this excess energy by fictionalizing some parts of the Institute. So I wrote a book, yet unpublished, and developed a character, Dr. Noel Willis. I described him as follows:

A nice older man with a full head of white hair. Kind of Einstein-like. He was dressed very casually, I noticed; just a plaid shirt, button-down, gray unbuttoned tattered sweater, and tweed pants. His waiting room had a boring beige, worn-out woolen carpet and there were lots of plants—they looked like

they needed some watering.

There were wooden chairs, sturdy enough, and there were magazines in the wicker basket next to the window—the New Yorker, Newsweek, Vogue, The Psychoanalytic Review. And what? Lo and behold! I found a copy of Playboy! What was it doing there?

Dr. Willis called me, just as I was shuffling the magazines back into their basket. Guiltily, and probably red-faced, I stood up and tried to act innocent.

“Yes?”

In those days I could. I was young and eight months pregnant with my second child.

Dr. Willis beckoned me to follow him into a cozy-looking room with a brown leather couch, two chairs, a rocking chair, and a swivel chair. There were soft lamps, a large antique desk, and freshly cut daisies in a vase on the fireplace mantle. He also had quite a library and a lot of interesting art and sculpture.

Dr. Willis just smiled at me and asked, “So tell me, what do you want to talk about?”

I looked at him blankly. Where does one start? How do I talk to a stranger?

Today, I can say, that Neil Wilson is not a stranger. We all may have many projections of who the real Neil Wilson is, and some may be true and others may be myths, wishes, and fears, carried with us as we grow and try to make some sense of our interactions and dynamics with him.

“It’s my FBI file . . .”

In early March of this year, Neil and I met for dinner at an Indian restaurant near my office in the city. We ordered food with names we couldn’t quite pronounce and then Neil handed me Xeroxed black and white papers—eight in all—with FBI and serial numbers written all over them.

Some lines were blacked out. I was quite puzzled.

He was amused. “You can’t make sense of it, can you?”

“No,” I answered.

“It’s my FBI file. It’s probably something I am most proud of in my life.”

Hey, now he really got me. All these years and I was with a criminal? Who was this man I was sitting with?

Well, according to the FBI, he was Neil Wilson, File Number 173-82, United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. It was all there in black and white, his name, date of birth, place of birth, height, weight, hair color, eye color, race, sex, nationality, complexion—dark?—occupation (Mental Health Unit, State of New York, Syracuse, NY, and student at the University of Syracuse),

residence.

Synopsis: It was the summer of 1964 in Jackson, Mississippi. On September 6, 1964, about 20 blacks and whites were refused the sale of tickets for admission *and* admission to the Honey Theater, Indianola, Miss., because blacks were in the ticket line for whites and whites were in the ticket line for blacks. Established policy of the Honey Theater was to sell tickets to black customers from one side of the ticket booth and to sell tickets to white customers from the other side of the same ticket booth, with one person selling tickets to both sides.

All were advised that they would be sold tickets from the side other than the side they were on. Patrons left the theater without incident, but many were later arrested by the Indianola Police Department, four blocks from the theater, for refusing the order of police officers. Neil Wilson terminated his FBI interview and advised the police that he wanted to discuss the matter with SNCC attorneys.

Freedom Summer, 1964

Our Dr. Neil Wilson was a vital participant in the civil rights movement. That summer in 1964 was known as Freedom Summer, and Neil, along with over 1000 mostly white, college-aged student volunteers, went down on buses to Mississippi to help register black voters and staff freedom schools for their children. Social change and social justice is not easy. That summer, at least three volunteers were murdered, many disappeared, hundreds were harassed, beaten and arrested, and most often, lives were threatened.

Nonetheless, change did occur. It was a huge struggle and effort. It takes courage, integrity,

compassion, conviction, passion, tolerance and a solid belief in the cause to propel someone to endure those times.

“I now understand why Dr. Neil Wilson finds pride in those times”

I now understand why Dr. Neil Wilson finds pride in those times and I appreciated so greatly that eight years after his experience in Indianola, Mississippi, he brought his integrity, courage, conviction, passion, and belief in psychoanalysis to New Jersey and co-founded the N.J. Institute for Psychoanalysis, here in Teaneck, NJ.

Our Institute opened in 1972 in offices in a blue medical building on Teaneck Road. It then moved into a larger suite on Cedar Lane, and then in 1982 our Institute was firmly planted at 800 Catalpa Avenue, where it rooted, and sprouted, for 26 years. In those years, the Institute had grown from the dream of two men into the reality of training, learning, and practicing psychoanalysis in many forms. We were a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis.

We have a fine institute that has graduated 65+ analysts. We have training in psychoanalysis, child psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic psychotherapy, group therapy, supervision, and workshops open to the larger professional and lay community. We have held scientific conferences each year, attracting many prominent analytic thinkers of our time. We have worked hard to be recognized as a profession separate from psychiatry and psychology, and our community has not become elitist but has embraced members from all walks of life who are interested in the psychoanalytic process. The training

here is thorough and rich. It holds firmly to the original psychoanalytic concepts while it embraces new thoughts and ideas and techniques of practice.

Our Institute members, candidates, and Board of Trustees now play an active and creative role in shaping our future. Together, we can embrace creativity, involvement, critical thinking, and the search for truth that comes with the magic and wonder in the psychoanalytic process.

Remembrance of Things Past

I want to share a short vignette with you. It was a Friday morning full of fresh spring air and sun. As I headed out of the house, I noticed that a robin had completed weaving her nest on a wooden ledge just above our front door. I called to my then five-year-old son to come and see, and his eyes widened with curiosity.



“Mommy, where are her babies? Where is the Daddy bird? Where are the birds from last year?”

Last year we had kestrels on another ledge above the front porch. That nest lay empty

thus far. I told my son that maybe the Daddy bird was taking a shower like his daddy or that maybe he was out getting a breakfast for the mommy—he might find some delicious worms.

And my son added: “And maybe the mommy is sitting on eggs so her babies can be born!” Yeah, and we’ll keep checking every morning.

Spring colors revitalized the landscape. The air was crisp and soft at the same time. There was music everywhere as birds gracefully called to each other. I got to my office and as I nestled in my own stressfree, maroon swivel chair, I felt the soft breeze from an open window. I watched as two blue jays were negotiating about where on the rooftop they were going to build their home. They were chirping passionately away and pulling twigs from each other’s beak. I then turned inward and remembered a scene from Neil’s office. He had at least three windows that overlooked the garden at 800 Catalpa, and each spring the birds would perch on branches that were framed by the windows and I would be in awe of how a cardinal would often come to visit.

As I rested with my thought, I heard my patient’s footsteps nearing. He was a tall man in his early forties, with a full head of dark brown hair and brown eyes and a great smile. He had come into treatment in the late fall shortly after he had moved with his family to Massachusetts, and he had resigned from a high-paying, Wall Street position. He felt a bit lost as to how to proceed onward with his life. He loved spending time with his children and didn’t feel financially pressured to return to the financial world, though it was, as he said, “easy money.”

“A Blending of Internal and External Landscapes”

He relaxed on the couch and asked out loud where we had left off from our last session. Before I could say anything, he began, and I smiled to myself. His children had been off from school for the week, so his wife had taken the girls to her mother’s. He took his young son home to his mother in New Jersey. It was bonding time with his son, and he found himself playing baseball with his son in the same park he had played Little League in when his father was a coach.

He paused for a moment, looked out the window with a puzzled expression, and then lay back again. “I just thought I saw a pigeon on the rooftop.”

I nonchalantly responded. “Actually before you came in, I saw two blue jays out there.”

He winced. “Actually, it was a blue jay I saw, not a pigeon. It was a male blue jay. . . .”

He became silent, an intensity building. His eyes welled up with tears and he wiped them away with his sleeve.

“After my father died, my mother went to visit his gravestone and the first time she went, she saw a blue jay perched on his stone, with a worm in its mouth. I went with my son this week to the cemetery to visit and looked for the blue jay but only saw pigeon droppings on the wrought-iron gates as I was leaving.”



My patient continued to shed tears and then whispered, “My father’s spirit is here, the blue jay flew here. I can feel him.”

And then he let me feel his father too. He began to share vibrant, colorful memories of childhood with his father, the crack of the baseball bat, the cheering, the laughter, the hammering together while they built the tree house that is still in the backyard, the arguments, the debates, the stories at the dinner table—they all entered the room with renewed life. At the end of the session, he got up, appeared softer and said, “Wow, I didn’t expect this today.”

I was left in awe of the psychoanalytic process and how the therapeutic space was a blending of internal and external landscapes that evolved between us in the analytic hour and beyond.

“A Wonderful Home for Psychoanalysis”

I say “beyond,” because for me, I was left with a gnawing wish to revisit with the cardinal I used to see from Neil’s office, and all week long I kept thinking about its regal beauty, and its flight of rich color streaming through the air, and its sounds in the open breeze.

And then last Thursday, I taught my last class of the semester at NYU and was ready to head out, when one of my quietest students stopped to thank me and handed me an envelope. When I got to my office, I opened it and inside I found a thank you card with my cardinal perched on a forsythia branch, looking out and beyond.

Neil, you planted and grounded a wonderful home for psychoanalysis here in Teaneck. You nurtured the Institute very well, and we are all spreading our wings and sharing the passion of

the profession that you opened up for us.

I want to assure you that no matter where our nest is from season to season, we all are committed to exploring, expanding, and encouraging NJI to be an open, warm, and alive place to gather and enjoy the life of psychoanalysis. I want to end with the words of a song that may have been popular back in Freedom Summer. Can everyone raise a glass as we toast Dr. Neil Wilson and the future of psychoanalysis at the New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis?

*The light that shines is the light of love
Lights the darkness from above
It shines on me and it shines on you
Shows what the power of love can do.*

*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine . . .*

A Note of Gratitude

In his will, Neil left his books, his art, and the contents of his office to NJI. He was very proud of his FBI file, which we found in his office and which now will become part of the NJI archives. Some of its pages follow. It was my pleasure to spend time with Nancy Wang Wilson (Neil’s wife) as we organized the contents of Neil’s office, and I am grateful to her. My gratitude as well to Michael DeNichilo, Steven DeNichilo, and Eric Williams, all of whom also helped with this process.

Wilda Mesias PhD

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Copy to: 1 - USA, Oxford, Mississippi

Report of: SA [REDACTED] b7C
Date: September 15, 1964

Office: JACKSON

Field Office File No.: 173-82

Bureau File No.:

Title:

[REDACTED] dba, Honey Theater, Indianola,
Mississippi, September 6, 1964. [REDACTED] b7C~~XXXXXX~~

NEIL WILSON - VICTIMS

~~XXXXXX~~Character: PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS
CIVIL RIGHTS ACT 1964

Synopsis: On 9/6/64 about 20 Negroes and whites, in a group [REDACTED] b7C b7D [REDACTED] Sunflower County Project, SNCC, were refused admission and sale of ticket of admission to the Honey Theater, Indianola, Miss., because the Negroes were in the ticket line of the whites; and the whites were in the ticket line of the Negroes. Established policy of the Honey Theater is to sell tickets to Negro customers from one side of ticket booth, and to sell tickets to white customers from another side of same ticket booth, with one person selling tickets to each race. Each victim was advised that each would be sold a ticket from the side other than the side each was on. Each left theater without incident, but many of group were later arrested by Indianola PD, four blocks from theater, for refusing order of policeman.

[REDACTED]
NEIL WILSON terminated interview and advised he desired to discuss matter with SNCC Attorneys. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

1

Date 9/14/64

Mr. NEIL WILSON was interviewed at the Sunflower County Jail, Indianola, Mississippi, where he was being held on a local charge. He was advised of the identity of the interviewing Agents, and of the nature of the investigation.

He advised he was refused admission to the Money Theater, Indianola, Mississippi, on Sunday, September 6, 1964, when he attempted to purchase a ticket of admission at the Negro window.

He advised at this point that he refused to provide any additional information in this matter at this time, and would consider providing information at a later time, after he discusses it with the SNCC attorneys.

The following information and description was obtained from WILSON:

Name	NEIL WILSON
Date of birth	1/11/32, New York City
Height	5'10"
Weight	160 lbs.
Color of hair	Brown
Color of eyes	Brown
Race	White
Sex	Male
Nationality	American
Complexion	Dark
Occupation	Mental Health Unit, State of New York, Syracuse, New York, and student at University of Syracuse
Residence	127 Cornstock Street, Syracuse, N.Y.

On 9/7/64 at Indianola, Mississippi File # JN 173-82

by SA [REDACTED] and SA [REDACTED] Date dictated 9/9/64 b7c

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

published every fall and
spring

fall
2023



stunions view