

Stolen seeds and dancing together through dark times: a DMT case presentation on child sexual abuse, trauma and psychosis

Semillas robadas. Danzando juntos en tiempos oscuros: DMT en un caso de abuso sexual, trauma y psicosis

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Martin-Txiki is a character from the Basque mythology, a young man living in the woods who managed to steal the precious seeds that were necessary to feed his tribe, by tricking the giant guardians of the forest.

Martin-Txiki is also the name of the protagonist of this case presentation, a young offender committed by a judicial measure to a penitentiary centre, where he experienced his first psychotic episode. The giants he had to fight with were the flashbacks from his early childhood when he was sexually abused by his stepfather, but also the rude reality of loss, separation, and abandonment. Dark times indeed.

The penitentiary centre, in the middle of the Basque woods, proposed regular dance movement therapy sessions building on embodied practices and using creativity and expression in order to form a positive bonding relationship with his therapist. Initially, for Martin-Txiki, the proposed embodied work seemed like an illusion, fitting into his fantasy of being “The Chosen One.” This allowed for a joint dance with an improvised choreography that aimed to find ways of connecting as well as setting appropriate limits.

Introducing an elastic fabric encouraged respect for his own personal space and, metaphorically speaking, waving a second skin. Slowly, Martin-Txiki started separating himself from a magical world that was both fascinating and terrifying.

The weekly DMT sessions aimed to be little seeds for change, offering some transformation of the dark surroundings:

The Martin-Txiki from the Basque mythology escapes, saving some precious seeds for himself and his community. The story of the young boy from Cameroon, who is still held in a centre for young offenders, continues.

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Martin Txiki es un personaje de la mitología vasca. Un joven que vivía en una comunidad entre montañas y que se las ingenió, en tiempos de hambruna, para robar las preciadas semillas de trigo, a los gigantes guardianes del bosque.

Martin Txiki también es el nombre del protagonista de esta presentación de caso, un joven que cumplía una medida judicial de internamiento en un centro de reforma, y que durante su estancia allí, tuvo su primer brote psicótico. Los gigantes con los que luchaba eran los flashback de los abusos sexuales sufridos en su infancia por parte de la pareja de la madre, mezclados con la dureza de una realidad marcada por la pérdida, la separación y el abandono. Tiempos oscuros.

El encuadre, dentro de un centro de reforma, en el interior de los montes vascos, consistió en sesiones de Danza Movimiento Terapia regulares, prácticas encarnadas que se valían de la creatividad y la expresión para la creación de un vínculo de relación positivo con su terapeuta. Inicialmente, la propuesta encajó en su fantasía de ser "El Elegido" y eso permitió un baile conjunto. A partir de ahí, la improvisación coreográfica se dirigió hacia la búsqueda de formas de conectar, estableciendo siempre los límites adecuados.

La introducción de una tela elástica hizo posible empezar a tejer su segunda piel, de nuevo respetando esos límites tan necesarios. Poco a poco, Martin Txiki comenzó a separarse de un mundo mágico tan fascinante como aterrador.

Las sesiones semanales de DMT pretendían convertirse en pequeñas semillas de cambio, abonadas por el proceso creativo y la relación encarnada, con el objetivo final de ofrecer alguna oportunidad de transformación, a pesar del entorno oscuro.

El Martín Txiki de la mitología vasca escapó, consiguiendo las preciadas semillas para su comunidad y para él mismo. La historia del joven de Camerún, todavía en el centro de reforma, continúa.

Biography

Maika Campo BA in Psychology from the University of the Basque Country (San Sebastian-Spain) in 2001. Masters in DMT from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Barcelona-Spain) in 2010. Registered member of the Spanish DMT Association. Community Worker in Ibaiondo Educational Center since 2006. From 2011 to 2015 DMT in workshops for women immersed in migration projects and within empowerment activities. Member of the educational team in the Autonomous University of Barcelona since 2014.

Dr. Heidrun Panhofer has directed the masters in Dance Movement Therapy at the Department for Clinical Psychology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain since 2003. She teaches and supervises on the same programme, as well as internationally.

Heidrun is one of the co-founders, former President and supervising member of the Spanish Association of Dance Movement Therapy (ADMTE). She has published extensively on embodied perceptual practices, DMT training, clinical supervision, different client populations, interculturality and movement observation and analysis.

Heidrun holds a PhD from the University of Hertfordshire, UK, a masters degree in Dance Movement Therapy from the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London, a diploma in dance from the Scoil Stiofan Naofa in Cork, Ireland, and a degree in Special Education from the Pädagogische Hochschule in Graz, Austria.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Panhofer, H. & Campo, M. (2023 in print). **Stolen seeds: A DMT case presentation on sexual abuse, trauma and psychosis.** In U. Herrmann, M. Hills de Zárata, H. Hunter, S.

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Panhofer, H. (2022) **Check- in, please! Exploring movement check-ins as a tool for embodied psychotherapeutic practice.** In C. Frizell & M. Rova (eds.) *Creative Bodies in Therapy, Performance and Community. Research and Practice that Brings Us Home*. Routledge, 12 – 23. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222484-2>.

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