



**Abstract Nr:** 264

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**Sint-Joris, psychotherapeutic unit for young adults with psychosis.** How to contain wildness and strangeness, without taming it into alienating adaptation?

Sint-Joris is a psychotherapeutic unit for young adults (18 to 35) with psychosis and 'at risk state' (stage 1 –some- and 2 –most- Mc Gorry) , in a large academic psychiatric hospital (KULeuven, Belgium). People are admitted during a psychotic crisis (without needing a closed ward) or in post crisis state. They can stay anything between 2 months and a year. We offer full admission, daycare and part-time care and post-cure (a package of 2 psychotherapy sessions a week, a visit to the psychiatrist and community moments on the ward). Our work and thinking is inspired by psychoanalysis and milieu-therapy, particularly by the work of W Bion and, more recently, by the rich work of Francoise Davoine. Working as a psychotherapeutic community in a large hospital, we function a bit like a stranger in a city.

The psychotic person carries around undigested facts, thoughts that cannot be thought or symbolized and therefore are shown both in action (aggressive, suicidal, fugitive etc) and in hallucinations and delusions. These undigested facts are like alien bodies, incorporated rather than introjected. The psychotic person feels inhabited by alien forces, by strangers in the night. We focus on group therapy, both verbal and non-verbal (music therapy, art therapy and bodily oriented therapy) to enhance transferences to circulate, and to contain the split off and fragmented parts of raw mental material. We work intensively with the families and have recently started up a multi-family group. The psychotic patient carries around split off contents, strange parts of a family history or undigested traumatic events. With both our therapeutic work and our milieu-therapeutic attitude we aim to create a holding environment, an in between space, in which transformations can become possible. This means a careful balance between respecting and containing the strangeness and the stranger, to tolerate the otherness which always resists integration, and transforming alien parts of the psychotic world into something more habitable and lived through. 'The stranger in the city' is a welcome metaphor to think through the frictions: how can we offer the stranger a hospitable place where something of the wildness and strangeness can be domesticated and contained, without it being tamed into alienating adaptation?

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**ON THE HEALING POWER  
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**