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Type of Presentation: Workshop

Reading together as a way of enveloping suffering

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Learning Goal:

introducing a literature (Shared Reading) *atelier* in a psychiatric setting, as a way of being together and of contact

Abstract Text:

About reading aloud and together literature (a short story, a poem, chosen by me), in a Shared Reading *atelier* in an open psychiatric unit in Ghent, with a little group of (long term) psychotic (and autistic, or melancholic) people.

Shared Reading : “These sessions bring people together through weekly read aloud groups where members are invited to read and give personal responses in a relaxed and inclusive environment.” What is said about Shared Reading: *it is not psychotherapy, but it is therapeutic.*

Context: **Psychiatric Unit** in Ghent: inspired by the ideas of (*Psychoanalytical*) *Psychothérapie Institutionnel* : a huge portion of energies of the staff goes to: “thinking about the state of health of the hospital”; the antropopsychiatrical “state” of each patient as the starting point for “interventions”; *work* around this states can be: “the club”, “the transferential constellations”, an array of “ateliers” to choose from.

One of this “ateliers” is the “Shared Reading” atelier. I am the reader, and facilitator of Shared Reading dynamics and I present my choice of a short story, of a chapter or part of a work of literature, followed by a poem. Last week I read two chapters of Dostojewski’s *Notes from the Underground*, followed by a story of Toon Tellegen about a whale, by way of a poem. The psychic state of the protagonist of Dostojewski was very appealing to the patients. The contrast with the story of Tellegen couldn’t be bigger, but was very emotional to some of them. The aloneness very recognizable. One patient continued to read the whole book, and talked about it with me in her individual psychotherapy. Some weeks later, she wrote a story by herself.

Shared Reading, individual reading, identification with literary personages, talking about the recognized other, writing ones history... it can contribute to make life more bearable.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**