THE MAGIC OF LANGUAGE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

MINDSCAPES: PSICHE EL PAESAGGIO (MINDSCAPES: PSYCHE IN THE LANDSCAPE). By *Vittorio Lingiardi*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2017, 261 pp., €13,60 paperback.

DOI: 10.1177/0003065119898206

Mindscapes: Psiche nel paesaggio, the most recent book by Vittorio Lingiardi—an Italian psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, poet, and professor of psychology at Rome's La Sapienza University—is an exploration of unmapped territories, internal and external. Lingiardi reflects upon the aesthetic and environmental aspects of our object choices, excavating and exploring the role of places and landscapes in our psychic world. I found the experience of reviewing *Mindscapes* fascinating and unexpectedly inspiring. I had approached the book with hesitation, wondering how a book on landscapes could inform my analytic thinking and practice. I soon discovered that Lingiardi was taking me to stunning panoramic highlands and exposing unexpected views to consider how our internal worlds are inextricably made with and from our physical environment. Organized around literary, philosophical, neuro-aesthetic, and psychoanalytic themes, this book urges us to imaginatively uncover the landscapes that inhabit our souls.

Mindscapes is a neologism (the author uses English for it) that locates us in a transitional space "where our psyche is in the landscape and the landscape is in our psyche" (p. 32; all translations mine). Each chapter evokes a sense of progressive expansion from and communication between an inner space and the colors, shapes, and forms of the outer world. Lingiardi explains that "the places we love are a discovery and at the same time a creation. We can find them because they are already in ourselves" (p. 8). The depth and complexity of this experience are immediate. In his introduction, the author elucidates his starting point by

quoting J.-B. Pontalis: "Several locations are necessary inside to preserve any hope of being oneself" (p. 15).

Lingiardi recalls "Names, Things, and Cities," a game (p. 7) with paper and pencil that he enjoyed playing as a child. The game consisted of finding names of boys, girls, things, and places that start with the same letter. This old childhood game reminds him of the inextricable links between the inner psychic world and the outer external space. Lingiardi believes that mindscapes and landscapes have psychoanalytic, neuroaesthetic, and poetic ties: "Mountains, rivers, cities, oceans, and monuments inhabit our mind; they are psychic structures." Lingiardi suggests how we can look at a landscape as part of the real world but also "as a mirror of our emotions, as a space of sensorial immersion" (p. 17).

Mindscapes speaks of the inextricable relatedness between internal landscapes and the objectively nonhuman world. Lingiardi, quoting at length from Harold Searles's monograph on the nonhuman environment in normal development and in schizophrenia (1960), emphasizes our indissoluble tie with the nonhuman environment, which inevitably culminates with our return to the earth, in death. Landscapes populate our psyches; they are immersed in our history and resurface as memories, brought back by the interconnection between inner and outer worlds. Lingiardi suggests reading *Mindscapes* with a panoramic openness, ready to pause where the view catches our eyes. It is a book intended to generate internal states closely related to external landscapes (p. 21).

Lingiardi enables the reader to extract the essence of the environment and assemble vast internal landscapes. We can experience the seamless connections and assimilate the fundamental differences between inner and outer realities. External landscapes become a mirror, a reflection of an internal continuum between our mind and the environment. The author takes us through a journey across the world of nature that turns into a journey of discovery and creation within ourselves; he leads us through pathways of meaning and beauty that evoke reflection and build new internal horizons. I am reminded of Victor Segalen's journal description (1915) of his Tibetan expedition in 1912, as being "between what one dreams of and what one does, between what one desires and what one obtains; between the summit conquered by a metaphor and the altitude reached on foot by exertion" (p. 16).

Lingiardi's writing encourages the reader's deep involvement with the ideas he is sharing. As you proceed through each chapter, you feel the

expansion of meaning, the widening of associations and reverie, and you inevitably arrive at the analytic field. Reading this work made me think of Ogden (2005): "psychoanalytic writing necessarily involves the making of a work of art as the writer must use language in an artful way if he is to create for the reader, in the experience of reading, a sense not only of the critical elements of an analytic experience that the writer has had with a patient, but also 'the music of what happen[ed]' in that experience (that is, what it felt like to be there in the experience)" (p. 15). *Mindscapes* has deep relevance in our consulting room as we listen to our patients. It teaches us to enter imaginatively into a creative practice of reverie, and to take excursions on which our inner psychic worlds can complement and interconnect with our patients.' Lingiardi guides us through an aesthetic experience that, in Ogden's words (1997), "has much in common with the way in which we use ourselves as listeners, speakers, observers, and participants in the analytic encounter" (p. 10).

Mindscapes consists of brief chapters that elicit curiosity and, starting from their titles, immediately invite further inquiry. Chapter 0 (yes, zero), "Evocation," is a profoundly moving quote from Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* which Lingiardi finds "the most beautiful description of the human journey" (p. 14):

> One should wait, and gather meaning and sweetness a whole life long . . . and then at the very end, one might perhaps be able to write ten good lines. . . . In order to write a single line, one must see a great many cities, people and things . . . and know the manner in which the little flowers open every morning. One must have memories of many nights of love, no two alike; of the screams of women in labour; and of pale, white sleeping women in childbed, closing again. . . . And it is not yet enough to have memories. One has to be able to forget them . . . and one must have great patience, to wait for their return. Only when they have become the very blood within us . . . only then . . . can the first word of a poem arise . . . [Rilke 1910, pp.13–14].

The chapter "Fioritura Umana" (Human Flourishing) flowingly illustrates the peaks of creativity to which one can climb through the aesthetic paths of art, poetry, and psychoanalysis. Lingiardi then reflects on child development, quoting the Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto (2006), who describes "the inextricable tangle of ghosts that haunt the human mind . . . from early childhood and force the infant, through endless sensorial (tactile, visual, olfactory, etc.) attempts, to ultimately differentiate the inner

from the outer reality" (Lingiardi, p. 27). Our psychic development is marked by an unceasing interchange with our surroundings, reaching the perception of an encompassing horizon. It is an internal process, but it is fostered by the environment, and it happens in the environment. The psychic horizon is established from within the embodying outer world, which always extends beyond the horizon of human capability. Lingiardi speculates that the aesthetic experience of the infant not only is crucial in forming an identity, but also enables further psychic growth, the "human flourishing":

> The gap between sensorial stimulation and aesthetic experience, cognitive acquisition and emotional receptivity, creates a circular path of reciprocal exchange. The dynamic fluctuation between presence and absence underlines how separation is necessary for the process of individuation. The perceptive experience of the child takes form in a relational environment, shaped by an aesthetic synchronization with the world of landscapes [pp. 28–29].

The author recalls the numerous postcards of landscapes he has collected through the years, which have become "silent images hidden in the pages of a book or in a box" (p. 16). These images establish a link between each landscape and himself. A photograph or painting of a landscape represents a whole series of transformations—and "informations"—of our psyche and our experience of the world. Rivers, mountains, ruins, and sandy beaches are pictographic presentations that, through sensorial transformations, etch our mind, structure our psyche with their own universe of emotions and sensorial perceptions.

Lingiardi is inspired by Bion's aesthetic paradigm of psychoanalysis (1965). The emotions stimulated by a landscape resemble the feelings stirred up in an analytic session, as the field of poppies is transformed into the pigment disposed on the canvas by the painter. The landscape takes the form of a picture under the artist's brush; likewise, the psychoanalytic encounter becomes transformative for the analysand, as well as for the analyst. Lingiardi emphasizes that "one's relationship with the landscape doesn't cease with the observation or contemplation. It involves the body and the sensorial perception; it is loaded with affects, emotions, and memories and is a key element of one's own identity" (p. 23).

Landscapes, through metaphors, patterns, and images, establish a continuity of meanings that ensure representability. Internalization of the landscape/object transforms the raw unconscious experiences into

representations. "It was Freud's genius," writes Howard Levine (2012), "to have understood that, in order to create an inner world, a *psychic* reality that points, reflects and stands in for concrete internal (somatic) and external (perceptual) reality, the mind uses 'manifestations' and signifiers, which are connected to and reflective of past experiences, especially object relations, invested with emotional quality and significance" (p. 610). The landscape becomes the dynamic force powerfully involved in the encounter with the psyche and involves the body as much as the mind.

In the chapter "Invisible Landscape," the author splendidly depicts nostalgia, the invisible dialogue with evocative objects from the past. "The landscape is a dynamic encounter with our lost past, a past hidden with longing of what cannot be found. It is a memory of a time that always was, and the landscape meets the past in the here and now" (p. 219). Lingiardi touches upon the theme of nostalgia, the longing to return to an idealized place of origin, the fantasy of a lost paradise. "Nostalgia is deeply rooted with the theme of landscape, as a way in which the memory inhabits the time in the space. Nostalgia manifests as that fraction of time in which the recollection of the past becomes present, establishing itself in the moment as already past" (p. 220). I am reminded of Salman Akhtar's description of the immigrant (1999), who—when confronted with loss and separation—resorts to the landscape as the encompassing space "in which all the vicissitudes of human interactions can be expressed, experienced, and worked through in relative psychic privacy" (p. 199). With a blend of pain, joy, and longing, the immigrant clings to the memories of his or her native land.

In his final remarks, Lingiardi observes that the landscape is a window of the psyche into the world. Dialectics between mindscapes and landscapes, imagination and perception, internal and external reality, structure the psyche. "Our mind enters the landscape with attentiveness and respect, to experience a spectacle that suggests beauty, grace, and even danger" (p. 225). It is not a coincidence that in his final sentence, Lingiardi, quoting from the *Interpretation of Dreams,* suggests that the landscape, like the dream and poetry, "has at least one spot . . . at which it is unplumbable. . . . This is the dream's [or landscape's] navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown" (Freud 1900, pp. 111 n. 1, 525). To the point, Lingiardi adds, "that the farewell also marks the advent" (p. 225).

This book does require the reader to be somewhat intrepid. Each chapter is a collage of intriguing literary, philosophical, and psychoanalytic

topics that risks being unfocused and repetitive. The prolific assortment of ideas and loose nature of the synthesizing themes may leave the reader without a compass. *Mindscapes*' condensed chapters are incomparably abundant with psychoanalytic themes, but they require of the reader a capacity to wander through this rich and evocative landscape without needing a specific path or destination. Such wandering will be rewarded with the eloquence and vibrancy of a writer at the peak of his creativity, one who enlivens psychoanalytic thinking with poetry and vivid imagery.

REFERENCES

Akhtar, S. (1999). The immigrant, the exile, and the experience of nostalgia. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 1:123–130.

Bion, W.R. (1965). *Transformations*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Freud, S. (1900). The interpretation of dreams. *Standard Edition* 4/5.

Levine, H.B. (2012). The colourless canvas: Representation, therapeutic action and the creation of mind. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 93:607–629.

Ogden, T.H. (1997). Some thoughts on the use of language in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 7:1–21.

Ogden, T.H. (2005). On psychoanalytic writing. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 86:15–29.

Rilke, R.M. (1910). *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* transl. M. Hulse. London: Penguin Classics, 2009.

Searles, H.F. (1960). *The Nonhuman Environment in Normal Development and in Schizophrenia*. New York: International Universities Press.

Segalen, V. (1915). *Journey to the Land of the Real*. London: Atlas Press, 2017.

Zanzotto, A. (2006). Il paesaggio come eros della terra. In *Luoghi e paesaggi*. Milan: Bompiani, 2013, pp. 29–38.

Angela Cappiello
1090 Ridge Road
Hamden, CT 06517
E-mail: angela.cappiello@yale.edu