

I participated in an Eatga Study Day in Aix-en-Provence in March 2009. It was my fifth Eatga event. I had originally come across Eatga at the Efp congress in Lisbon a few years ago, where I attended a transcultural session run by Mary Spreng and Ruth Waldvogel. They informed me about Eatga and I immediately felt that I had found something I had been looking for. I am interested to know what Europe really is about and would very much like to know what one means by transcultural phenomena. After Lisbon I kept in contact with Mary and Ruth and eventually I was able to start my Eatga life in Trieste.

Through Eatga I have visited some important European cities and seen many airports (Munich is my favourite). Travelling is interesting as such. In Europe there are 20-30 languages spoken, I speak four; luckily one of them is English and with English you can manage almost everywhere. In Eatga official languages are English and French, I think reflecting the languages of the founding fathers. In Eatga meetings you can hear at the moment four languages spoken, because there are many Italian and German speakers involved. In the Eatga events that I have attended there have been very few French speaking participants, so I was happy to attend an Eatga event in France. Maybe there we could get more understanding of this disappearing French phenomenon in Aix-en-Provence?

Before Aix I had had difficulties in understanding the purpose of our meetings in Eatga discussing transculturality in Europe. Was it about doing therapy with immigrants, was it about cultural changes in Europe, and was it about difficulties in understanding outsiders or non-members and members of other groups? To me, the Aix Study Day opened new windows through which to look at transculturality and at the whole Eatga project. How did it happen? It all started by the board asking me if I could be a silent observer in a small group in Aix. I answered yes of course. They didn't know that men like me from South-West Finland are famous for being silent and few in words, so being a silent observer was a character role for me. What helped me to get into the role even more was that in Aix my room number in my hotel was 007. So when every morning at the breakfast table I was asked my room number, I could answer: "007 just like James Bond".

Before Aix I read René Kaës' book: *Linking, Alliances, and Shared Space-groups and the Psychoanalyst*. I was very impressed by the new thoughts he offered me. I got more new ideas by the paper (How to approach transculturality today?) read to us at the beginning of our Study Day. The discussion of the paper took place mostly in French, so I didn't understand it, but I saw René Kaës in person, so I was happy.

On the Saturday I was, as mentioned, a silent observer in one of the three small groups. During the group sessions I tried to keep in my mind the idea from René Kaës' book, namely that a human being necessarily has to face three facts in life: the existence of two sexes, difference between generations and differences between cultures. During the first small group session I was able to sort the material of the group process according to my plan to these three categories, and it made great sense to me. During the second small group session a fight about the language appeared and much of the discussion after that was in French so I couldn't follow

it, I could understand some words and felt the feelings and saw peoples expressions while they spoke. It continued like this through the second and third session, so I couldn't use my three hard facts of life to understand what was going on. Actually I was maybe partly responsible myself for this fight about language in our group. In the beginning of the first session our conductor said that in this group we should speak in English because I, the silent observer, didn't understand French. I took my role as a silent observer seriously and said nothing, when actually I thought, that I didn't mind group members speaking in any language they choose. It might be that I don't understand a thing, but I am used as a Finn, that when abroad, you are surrounded by many languages and some you understand and some you don't.

So in the second and third small group sessions I had to stick to my feelings and images that were raised while listening to the group mostly speaking in a language I didn't understand. The biggest revelation while doing that was the thought from René Kaës that when cultures meet, very primitive defence mechanisms are raised. Behind these primitive defences you can find those sides of your own culture, which are normally kept hidden, but are always brought up because of the stranger.

During the third small group session my mind flowed to films. First to the film by Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, which is about primitive regression, meeting of cultures and also has an episode about the French settlement. This episode, is cut out of the normal movie version ( and is only seen in the director's cut version)? At the very end of the third session another film comes to my mind, namely a film by the daughter of Francis Ford Coppola, Sofia Coppola and the film is *Lost in Translation*. In this film there are present all the hard facts of life mentioned by René Kaës. The relationship between sexes, difference between generations and differences of cultures are the background to the personal processes that the characters in the film are going through.

On Sunday after my feedback about my observations in the small group there followed some comments in English. There followed also quite a long lively discussion in French. I was very curious about the content of that discussion, because it could have added something important to my thinking about transculturality.

After Aix I have had a new confidence in our work in Eatga, I think I have a personal understanding of transculturality. What Europe is and means I don't know if anybody can have a full picture of it. My being a silent observer was a very important process and experience for me. I recommend that we in the future offer our new members these useful roles in conducting and observing our groups. Without new influences we are not truly European and transcultural. Eatga must be a museion, a place for muses, not a museum.

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