

1. Greetings to you all at the ARAT conference of 2018, I really wish I was with you and hope you all have a terrific time together celebrating TA and the ongoing development of our lovely community here in Romania. I am proud to be a member of ARAT and to have been involved in the development of the TA community. Bucharest is now my home away from home as one of the most significant decisions I made over the years was to rent my own apartment in downtown Bucharest which is also a beautiful training and therapy space.
2. I first came to Timisoara in 2004 when I was involved in running a TEW = a Training Endorsement Workshop for EATA – the European Association of TA. I remember my colleagues getting frustrated with the taxi drivers who seemed to delight in driving round us in circles till we finally realised that the restaurant we were looking for was only a short walk away.
3. In 2006 I was invited to run workshops for ICTA in Timisoara and Bucharest and to be a leader in several ARAT summer and winter schools, all of which were great training, supervision and therapy experiences. I remember the huge numbers of participants in the training workshops and remember wondering just how on earth was I going to teach the 80 people in Bucharest about rededication therapy or the 60 people in Timisoara about transference, which was a very special experience. Before introducing myself, I invited the participants to form into several groups, asking them to write my life story based only on what they had seen of me up to that point. It was really shocking to many as it became obvious just how many details in their fantasised stories were accurate. Transference as an unconscious process of communication became alive to us all, sadly for myself it was also in that group that I was first named as a as a transferential grandfather figure – something that 14 years later I am still struggling to come to terms with!
4. There were many terrific moments in these groups, some of which have become legends - In one of the summer schools I watched each morning as a local man walked his cow past the hotel only to return later in the day with the same cow, how very strange I thought, he is taking his cow for a walk. During the therapeutic work one of the participants described her fear of bears. My assumption of course was that this was a phobia and I wondered what kind of bear monsters may be lurking behind her presentation and so I started to explore her story during which I think I became more confused than the client. I decided it was time to involve the group. So, in the time-honoured way I asked the group for a reality check... How many of you are afraid of bears? Expecting no-one to say yes, but to my consternation several people said, “oh yes, it is normal to be afraid of bears they are very dangerous”. I naturally asked the obvious question... So just how many of you have seen bears? And of course, nearly everyone said yes, some of the group then told very scary stories of close encounters. At which point the man walking the cow back to his home made far more sense to me, and I decided not to go for a long walk though the woods that evening. I hope that the clients fear of bears was at least normalised!
5. It soon became clear that Romania was to become the focus of my life’s work and practice. I began to be very attached to various members of the group, loving their resilience, passion, and their enthusiasm, as our mutual attachments developed I also became increasingly concerned that I and other trainers were visiting for intensive, often exciting but short encounters, after which we would leave and not return for many months or even not at all.
6. Many in the groups had been severely disturbed by the common experience of removing children from their parents after only a few weeks for several years until the child started school, when they were returned to often near strangers, their parents. Many participants had suffered severe

neglect, physical and sexual abuse, while some had been left for long periods of time while caretakers had been working. I was also increasingly aware of the harm caused by a profound lack of trust and openness, during the communist era it was not safe to talk to others about family secrets and often people did not know what was true or false. I did not believe that these brief intense experiences were insufficient and so I proposed to form a psychotherapy group which could meet regularly in Bucharest. Immediately, there were too many people wanting to join the proposed group and so two groups were formed, today in Bucharest I run 3 therapy groups and continue to run an open 4-day YTCi summer psychotherapy intensive each year.

7. I think it was in 2008 or was it 2009? I had been booked to run a training workshop in Bucharest, however, for unknown reasons was cancelled and the training programme that had been running in Romania also came to an end. A short time later, while discussing with a supervisee our mutual disappointment regarding my cancelled trip the idea of offering a workshop independently was suggested. What started one Friday afternoon as a tentative idea developed rapidly over the weekend, and so by Monday morning I had agreed to start a new TA training programme which over time has become established as the YTCi training programme, with two ongoing monthly training groups in Bucharest and one group in Timisoara which meets every 2 months for 3 days, in fact I will be running another 101 in Timisoara next month. YTCi also runs TA workshops in the TA field of Education and in Coaching and leadership skills.
8. There is no doubt in my mind that forming the YTCi programme would not have been possible without the support of many who are still active in the TA community. I should of course mention Diana Deaconu who as the first YTCi administrator was essential to the successful formation and running of the YTCi programme and Ioana Duma without whom I could not have developed the YTCi Timisoara training programme. I and all who have attended the various YTCi programmes owe them a great deal of thanks! Others from those early days who should also be mentioned with suitable praise and thanks are Amalia, Nicoleta and Marina who spent hours looking after me.
9. Over the years there have been some difficult times, however they are far outweighed by the many individual successes, triumphs and celebrations including but not limited to those who have gone on to pass their CTA exams and their TEW's and to become TA therapists and trainers in their own programmes.
10. So finally, I am profoundly thankful for the development of the Romanian TA community, with all its potential for bringing an OK – OK healing attitude to our interactions with each other as well as to those we encounter. I celebrate that there are now TA practitioners in many different areas of life, and especially that there are new TA trainers and CTA's and I am feeling very privileged to be a part of this ongoing journey --- long may this continue! Enjoy the conference and Go well and hopefully I will be with you next year!

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