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Invitations to a Balint Group: Let me count the ways...

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(Variations on the reminder to attend the next meeting of the Wembley Balint Group)¹

The Wembley chapter of the distinguished physician, mental philosopher and scholar, the late Dr Michael B, who hath instructed us to assemble in small groups by means of which our patients and clients will prosper in the emotional and spiritual spheres (indirectly) and ourselves (directly) through the limited tho' considerable transformation which was promised us if only we will sit in a closed circle, bespeak our narratives and hearken diligently to the wisdom of our comrades allowing meanwhile the process of free association to cross-fertilise our cerebral apparatus (and especially the *Amygdala*, widely agreed to be the seat of the Emotions, or if it be not actually *There*, 'tis is doubtless somewhere Nearby (I cannot be bothered with too many neuro-anatomical niceties) politely and respectfully request your presence in the Chalkhill Foot Locker at 8 o'clock on Wednesday 27 February 2019 where you will be most welcome.

Dear All

Wembley Balint group will be convening, conjoining, communicating, cogitating, confessing, comforting, counselling, connecting, conniving, confederating, contemplating, collaborating, conspiring, continuing, co-facilitating, conglomerating and coagulating
once more on

Wednesday 13 March at 8 p.m in the Olde Shoe Boxe at the Welfordde Centre
Contrive to Come if you Can!

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Dear All

The Wembley Balint group will resume, rezoom, revive, reappear, regenerate, reconfigure, reshape, reposition, renew, resist, relax, relate, respond, reveal, restore, realise, resolve, review and return on Wednesday 18 November at 8 p.m.

Rejoice!

ReJohn

July 1st, it being, as I believed, a Wednesday, I had engaged, as usual, a coach and two horses to take me to Wembley, there to attend the Balint Society of Physicians and Philosophers at the Foot-doctors Antechamber. But my wife did remind me, in time, that the place remains unsafe on account of the plague still raging, The coachman arriving at my door, I did tell him that I should not be needing him. To my annoyance, the surly fellow protested and would only be appeased on receipt of a five groat peece. He having gone at last, I addressed myself to the little glass plate kindly installed by my friend, Sir T Berners-Lee, of The Royal Society who hath devized an ingenious method that he calls the *Inter Nett* whereby an imprint of my image and the sound of my voice will be carried, (by what means I know not but it is exceeding clever) through the *aether* where it may be seen and heard by my friends, attending similar 'screens' so that we all may hear and see these *apparitions* of each other.

I did need only the secret code of admission, provided by My Lady Joan, our ingenious hostess. It was writ on a paper delivered this afternoon. I being unable to find it, however, and in much distress, my wife called in our servant girl who, like many of the youth of this town, was able to produce it on my 'screen' by a few taps on the machine's letter board whose inner workings are, I confess, beyond my wit to decipher. My wife, did then kindly point out that, it being only Monday, there remained yet two daies until the Meeting. So, resolved to possess my soul in patience, and instead conjur up on my screen the latest play being streamered from Drury Lane...

(With apologies to Fred Astaire)

You just got an invitation through e mails:

'Your presence requested, Wednesday evening,

It's Balint! Wear your top-hat, white tie and tails.'

Nothing now could take the wind out of your sails;

Because you're invited - to step out We'n'sday evening

And listen to your colleagues' tales.

'It's a-bout this patient-who

Is driving me

Out-of my mind.

Everything I've- tried has failed -

No sol-ution can-I find.'

So we listen carefully

Weigh up every word

Analyse the feelings

They will leave us stirr'd

And so:

We're steppin' out, my dear,

To breathe an atmosphere

That simply reeks of Freud!

And when the evening's over

We'll feel so much better

Maybe even overjoyed.

So come along on Wednesday

Never mind the Autumn gales

And don't forget to wear your top-hat,

white tie and tails.

Molly eavesdrops on the Balint group

Yes because I never did a thing like that before so it was quite a shock I was just playing about on the computer and didn't I find I was watching one of those zoom things is it some kind of secret cult I dont know they were all sitting in little boxes with their names on having a hilarious time men and women well live and let live I say but it was a shock when I saw my doctor from the surgery was there and he was talking about some weird woman patient sounded a bit like me and then I thought blimey it is me I thought I shouldnt really be here but you cant help being

interested that doctor whats her name the woman I like her better because how can a man really understand what we have to go through but she never has any appointments left I call them appointments but its just a phone call these days unless they call you in and that I dont want because it might be serious so now another man is saying he wants to know more about me and they start on about what was my childhood like I could tell him a thing or two but they never ask and anyway it wasnt that I phoned about I expect theyll get it all wrong oh bugger its all gone but one of them said theyll be there again on wensday27th january so maybe ill look in again its a change from bloody netflix yes I will yes.

Ladies and Gents.

This is your captain speaking:

Wembley Balint takes to the airwaves again this Wednesday. Boarding will be at 8 p.m. Your individual seats have been assigned and well-spaced out to ensure comfort and safety. We shall be flying over the Relationship Islands with excellent views from our virtual windows. We will pass through thick clouds where visibility will be restricted and everyone will feel confused (including the pilot) but there will also be rays of bright sunshine illuminating the foothills of Realisation. Please bring a Case on board with you. This should be placed under the seat in front of you so that it can be easily accessed during the flight.

On behalf of Balint Airwaves, may I wish you a pleasant flight with intervals of creative Turbulence.

If you're blue
and you don't know
where to
go to,
why don't you go –
where the little group sits?
Down at Mike Balintz

Boom, boom, boom, we can go zoom, zoom
To that little virtual room
Where the gang all sits.

You can be a thoughtful Balint grouper
Tryin' hard to look like Gary Cooper (super duper)

So come let's talk and listen well
To the tales health workers tell
Of the sad yet well-to-do
Strolling down Park Avenue
and the mad and anxious too
Down at the Balintz

Mike and Enid showed the way
Now lets all Zoom in and play
Groupin'. at Balintz!

8 p.m.Wednesday, you know where
We shall meet up then and there
Puttin' on Balintz!

(Lyrics by John adapted from *Puttin' on the Ritz*, Music by Irving Berlin)

We can't Balint face-to-face
But we have a *virtual* space
Virtual Balint? Don't disparage
Leave your motor in the garage
You don't have to drive to Wembley
(That might make your knees go trembley)
Stay at home and join the team
Sitting in boxes on the screen.
And if you have a case that's sticky
Bring it on! We are not picky.

Our discussions disentangle
relationships that used to rankle

And

When all is done and said -

You can simply go to bed!

Soon shall arrive with earth's rotation black of night when we on winter
wednesdays have been wont to wander wembleywards in way of wisdom. Then
would fingers freeze and faltering footfalls fail. Balint's beneficence we besought
betimes! Yet rash to risk our softish selves and blundering bodys on slipperie
surfaces at stupydde speed!

But now with lockdowne loomyng, in own lodgings linger we, from covid
cringing. Staring at screens facsimiled faces find we of friends far flung! In virtual
view with vibrant voices, gladly gathers our gregarious group. Patients peculiar
with perplexing payns and personal trayts praeposterous we present and, in
melodious murmuration, our meditations merge. Solutions seldom surface yet,
when closure comes, gratitude, for good gains, we oft-times feel!

Just a group at twilight
when the light is low,
And the doctors gather
in the waiting-room we know.

Though we all be weary
and the day's been long;
we can share our stories
From the surg'ry's busy throng

Deep in our hearts,
these patients seem to dwell;
Our friends understand us,
they've been there as well.

So the talk continues
with some insights (and some fun!)

Time passes quickly,
Soon the group is done.

Just a group at twilight
now the sun has set.
Still we've learned a few things
that we shall not forget -
that we - shall - not - for-or-get!

(See YouTube: Love's Old Sweet song (Just a Song at Twilight) J L Molloy)
