

PRESIDENTS' PANEL

Maria Teresa Hooke

I became President in 2005, after Neville Symington and John Boots. Frances Salo was Vice president and Viv Elton Secretary; we worked as a team.

I was Scientific Secretary with Neville and Vice president with John. As John did not want to travel at the time, as Vice and President, I was part of the EPF Council, the European Presidents who met twice a year in Europe.

These were the times of David Tuckett, who revolutionized the EPF Culture.

This is just to say that a lot went into the mix, all very formative experiences for me, at a time of change for society.

Neville was part of this process of change, of the opening of the society, and to give us confidence - we were good enough after all - you all remember the public lectures.

John had a deep sensitivity for us humans and for how institutions work, he worked on consultation and consensus.

Frances as a child analyst coming from the British Society, was the outsider able to look in with fresh eyes, and Viv as a psychiatrist also brought her experience with another organization and of course, her personal qualities.

From the EPF we learned the culture of the working parties: SHARING AND COMPARING: colleagues from different societies working together on a task, sharing, and comparing experiences.

And of self-reflection and examination on how we function in groups.

The period was a mind opener but also of enthusiasm and when Frances- in discussing this paper- asked me: what do we mourn? Well, I mourn the teamwork.

And I think we all mourn John.

We worked on two main issues:

One was psychoanalytic education: the society had slow growth and an ageing membership: we reviewed the recruiting of candidates, the assessment and training, and the procedures for TAs. We had the benefit of learning what was going on in other European societies. Plus, there was Tuckett's belief that as psychoanalysts we had to define better what we are doing if we want to be credible, and that we needed criteria defining competent practice.

Ken Israelstam developed these ideas for the Australian context in his paper "On Assessing analytical applicants with an adapted version for Australia" which was published on the IJPA 2014.

I wonder what happened to all that work, talking about memory, so much get lost. Why?

The other issue was the engagement of the Society in a cultural discourse which was taking place in the country among historians, political writers, and social commentators about the silence on early history, the relationship with the First Nation people and past and recent migration; something that up to then had remained fragmented in the Australian psyche. In this we worked with our Jungian and Lacanian colleagues and with the mental health professions.

Some of the connections made then remained. Craig San Roque, who spoke in Uluru in the year 2000, will be here on Sunday. He was also part of the very successful series of talks that Rise Becker, Julie Meadows and Matt McArdle organized: TWO WAY SEMINARS/ BLACK KNOT WHITE KNOT.

The work with the Psychotherapy Organizations and what Margaret Berkovic and I did with PACFA morphed into the ACCP Australian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, Tim Keogh had been Vice President, Leoni Sullivan is now, and Rise Becker is on the Board.

Looking back at some of our initiatives, I understand now that we tried to create a narrative.

Sverre Varvin, in the paper he presented at the IPA Conference in Cartagena on collective trauma: "Psychoanalysis and the third position" mentioned that for us to be able to intervene on collective trauma, there is a precondition: traumatic events have to be inscribed in the collective memory and narratives

have to be produced first by writers, historians, sociologists etc. Then we can intervene as THE THIRD, as a reflective function.

David Malouf and Henry Reynold said something similar years before.

David Malouf - who understands like no one the Australian psyche - talking about the silence of history spoke about the need for a narrative that would create the PAIN of historical experiences: I quote:

“In an imaginative form that would allow societies to come to term with itself by taking what it has suffered deep into its consciousness and reliving it there – in the form of meaning, rather than a muddle shock.”

And the search for meaning is what we are trying to do.

The long road to our own identity.

I mentioned our slow growth and the need to open up the Society.

Perhaps it is easy to understand why, if we look back at our history, which started with the first Melbourne Institute in 1940, so more than 30 years before 1973, when we become Component, which we celebrate today. (Component meaning that we were qualified to train students according to the IPA Guidelines).

We came from a position of isolation, insularity, and conservatism; in a way we reflected what Australia was like in those years.

A number of factors marked our early history:

- Unprocessed traumas, and the different heritages of our founding fathers and mothers
- The umbilical cord with the British Society. The IPA – as an institution - was not on the scene yet, so the arrangements were made on a personal basis.
- The Hungarian heritage which disappeared from the radar.
- The conflicts between the three groups, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide. The geographical distance and the different training experiences facilitated projections which demonized one group or another.

The IPA sent two IPA Site Visits to try and sort out our troubles, the second in 1986 with Jo Sandler and Arnold Cooper was extremely helpful and set up the sharing of power and the structure of the society as it is now.

But we also went with it and Ian Waterhouse, President at the time, had the vision and courage to implement the changes, as not everybody was happy with it.

So yes, traumas and conflicts, but also resilience and courage.

And we also went with the innovation brought by Neville and now with teaching in China and the Asia Pacific Region.

Which is a message of hope.

I think there is something about psychoanalysis, Freud has been given for dead for years, psychoanalysis has been given for dead too and we have been talking about the crisis of psychoanalysis forever, but psychoanalysis is still here and expanding and so is the IPA.

Crisis seem to be our perpetual condition, but it also must have a strong survival value.