
Editorial

As psychotherapists we are very familiar with the close, private, transference oriented settings in which we carry out most of our work with individuals, couples and groups. We provide a place where painful experience, long held secrets and inadequate relationships can be uncovered, unravelled and redeemed. It is a privileged place that must be guarded from intrusion and violation.

It is not surprising, therefore, that as psychotherapists we are not prominent in the wider cultural, social and political arena. For many, the prospect of this sort of visibility is personally daunting. Quite apart from issues of professional boundaries and the sanctity of the therapeutic dyad, many would feel temperamentally disinclined to have a more recognisable social profile. There may also be issues of professional identity and confidence. What is the rightful place of psychotherapy in the fabric of our culture? We are notably more inward looking than outward looking in our professional demeanour, with some obvious and prominent exceptions.

Therefore, to have Andrew Samuels as keynote speaker at our 1997 Christchurch Conference was a refreshing reminder that psychotherapy has the potential for a very political edge. It was also a challenge to us that as a profession we go largely unconscious to the expression of this edge. It was a reminder as well that the Conference topic of *Difference and Integration* applied as much to our professional relationship with the cultural and political milieu of which we are a part, as to how we as an Association manage difference and integration among ourselves. I hope that the impetus given this is not lost.

I consider it very important that as we celebrate this 50th year of NZAP as an organisation, we be reminded of the social and crusading spirit that seemed so much a part of the founding of the organisation. For these reasons it is most appropriate that Andrew's keynote address be the first article in this edition of the NZAP *Forum*. As psychotherapists we consider ourselves one of the barometers of pain and distress in the culture. We are also I would suggest, one of the witnesses to the indomitability of the human spirit. We have a number of psychotherapeutic lenses and methodologies from which we can

make meaning of our cultural and political milieu and of the actions of individuals and groups within it. We should not be shy in offering our interpretations, our caveats and our suggestions publicly.

In this 50th year also Ruth and Brian Manchester produced for us *Notes towards a History* of the Association. We appreciate the effort and intensity that this required. We need to know where we have come from, and what has inspired us on the way. Equally, we need to recognise that we are making our history right now. How do we want that to look to future historians of the Association? It is in our hands.

Peter Hubbard
Editor