

OBITUARY – REMEMBERING ANN LEVETT, 1936-2006

Ann Levett died at her home in Cape Town in June 2006, aged 70 years. In a life well lived through a variety of different contexts and performances as intellectual, lecturer, supervisor, colleague, therapist, gender activist and human being, she indelibly inscribed the lives of many others. She had a 20-year association with the University of Cape Town, from which she retired as Associate Professor in 1996, honoured for her contribution to women and to feminist scholarship. She was Director of the Child Guidance Clinic at UCT between 1990-1992, where she oversaw the professional training of clinical psychologists. She also served on various committees as member of the Professional Board for Psychology (HPCSA) between 1994-1999. From 1996, she had worked in fulltime psychotherapeutic practice, with a powerful presence in the Cape Town psychoanalytic community as supervisor and mentor.

Ann's scholarly writing – and her impersonations of it at conferences - was focused on clinical and ethical issues, psychotherapeutic practice, and aspects of psychological trauma. Her feminist research on rape, and how women who have had that experience “work through it”, inscribed her co-foundation of Rape Crisis in Cape Town. Her therapeutic work with adult women-survivors led to an abiding interest in the discourses in which the experiences of child sexual abuse are embedded; and this became her monograph. The three articles Ann wrote for **PINS** – *Childhood sexual abuse: Event, fact or structure* (Issue 8, 1987); *Psychological trauma and childhood* (Issue 12, 1989); and *Stigmatic factors in sexual abuse and the violence of representation* (Issue 20, 1995) – drew attention to the power inherent in the language of trauma to victimize, stigmatize and pathologize sexually abusive experience.

Ann's positing of “the social construction of trauma” was intellectually and politically courageous work in the 1980s in (apartheid) South Africa, leading the way through her exposure to post-structuralist ideas about discourse and ideology-critique. These ideas infused her scholarly and value-driven positions within Marxist and feminist debate. From within these critical cutting-edges, margins and interfaces, Ann organized a pioneering working conference on discourse analysis at UCT in 1994, which culminated in an important book of the edited papers in 1997, **Culture, power, difference: Discourse analysis in South Africa** (ed. Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker). This work powerfully prefaced the march of critical psychology into mainstream scholarship in South Africa. We honour Ann's life, and her work, values and contributions.

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