

## On the 25th Anniversary of the *ANZJFT* (Brisbane 2004)

Coming to Brisbane for this conference,  
visiting the home I'd left four years ago:  
'Are you going to get rid  
of all this stuff, Mum?'  
My son sweeps his arm —  
my office now his.  
'Sure! Old tax papers, that sort of thing —  
five years is the limit, isn't it?'  
'How about starting here?'  
A line of slender white spines,  
some feet of shelving.  
He doesn't know that's twenty years  
of twenty-five four-volume golden glossies:  
four *AJFT* — (maybe I was out of the country  
for the first of that five) — Michael's five;  
twelve of Max's vintage *ANZJFT*;  
the first of Maureen's and Hugh's, distilled  
in a broom-cupboard under the stairs  
(the rest in Darwin);  
their eighth, Volume 25, my travelling companion.

Twenty-five years we've co-evolved  
as resistance faded into homeostasis  
which swirled into hypothesising circularity  
paradoxically neutral.

'Debbie's Slurping Stomach',  
then five rounds of 'Blackmail is Against the Law',  
Lang, Stagoll, Cornwell, Sanders,  
Cade and Crawley, Epston;  
Churven, Robinson and Martin behind the scenes —  
Who knows who else — any other women?  
The early names recur.

Then comes second order change, cybernetics  
with Gibney and Co., synthesising,  
journalling their growth and ours.  
Epistemology was all the go, theory and paradigm.  
'Epistobabble' was the charge: some said 'wanking.'

Women met separately.  
Margaret T, Mother of FT,  
picked up her knitting and left.  
Carolyn Quadrio named the fracturing  
of early groupings,  
Kerrie James rattled the chains of gender.  
Deborah, Laurie and others continued the rattling:  
We got non-sexist language, in amongst  
systemic, strategic, structural, brief, and —  
yes — feminist family therapy.

We affirmed our earlier decision  
*not* to form a national association:  
the Journal was our core.  
Did we see it as some central neurone  
(bi-nuclear after '97),  
dendrites stretching to the States,  
regular two-way transmissions  
peaking each year at conference-time?

*The Dulwich Review* takes off,  
and after a while, we notice a different split:  
Narrative Therapy holds itself separate from us.  
Do we do the same? Do we need to do the same?  
Carmel asks the question.

Ever-recursive questions float to the surface.  
(Did our circular swirls, like bathwater,  
take an Antipodean turn, I wonder,  
puzzling our northern visitors (sometimes  
'keynote') who came to teach?  
They didn't say, though one, Barry Mason, then  
wrote a book  
(*Exploring the Unsaid*), and we did  
keep the bathwater's baby.

Recursive questions, spliced by new ones of  
postmodernism, constructivism, constructionism,  
diversity, hierarchies —  
a rediscovery of context.  
Violence, spirituality.  
Research rears its head: Alistair encourages, entices us.

*PsychOz* thins our numbers.  
We become boutique.  
PACFA sharpens old questions:  
affiliation, accreditation.

And then we bite the bullet lying  
in the dust between our circled wagons.  
It's not a rubber one:  
at twenty-five, having asked ourselves  
at five, then ten and twenty-one  
whether family therapy has come of age, the dendritic  
central neurone —  
if there ever was one — becomes redundant:  
we will form a national association  
and the Journal will be a journal  
with Editors who just edit.

**Helen Pavlin**