

Katya Orrell reflects on the IAFP 26th Annual Conference Review held in Catania in May 2017

Catania, the beautiful heart of Sicily, an ancient city linked inseparably to Mount Etna whose glowering presence seems to frame every vista whichever direction you face, a constant reminder of the past within the present. This seemed apt therefore, and symbolic as the destination for the IAFP's 26th conference on the subject 'Rage and Mourning'. After a year of unsettling world events, Brexit, Trump, terrorism, to name a few, where better to explore this theme than the hot, cobbled city where cool granita bars and Baroque architecture sit cheek-by-jowl with Greek remains? As a setting, Catania in late May was the bride ready for her groom. The city gleamed, we later learned this was due to a huge local clean-up operation, although perhaps it was more of an arranged marriage as the G7 meeting was also taking place nearby. Its presence was both shadowy - we never saw them, but was also impossible to ignore, like the past carried within our patients' present. The internal became externalised and a somewhat concrete experience when, at the last minute, G7 sequestered our conference venue, a hilltop Benedictine Monastery. As forensic psychotherapists, our work reflects the ability to adapt to different settings, and so a space at the university was efficiently found by our host, Francesco Spadaro and his fantastic team. The IAFP 2017 conference opened with our guest speaker, Konstantin Nemerovsky whose paper 'Silence is Violence' on the unprocessed, contorted rage and lack of mourning of two men (Hitler and Stalin) had filled the 20th century.

The first night we watched the sun set over the city sipping Prosecco from the rooftop terrace of the Dionysian Museum next to the cathedral. Our President, Reena Kapoor reminded us that although there was another president in town whose presence might provoke rage as well as mourning, we had a full programme of presentations and parallel sessions ahead of us, including a trip to the Syracuse Greek Tragedy, the large group and a Gala dinner which was held in the opulent Palazzo Biscari.

Sitting in the shady gardens of Villa Bellini after the conference, a Marian grotto opposite built entirely out of the black lava of Etna, every so often passers-by stopped and prayed or gathered together singing in front of it. Somehow this felt like a continuum, the lava, like the life blood of the island was all around us. The rage of the volcano and its ability to erupt at any time, like our patients had also settled into the black tears of mourning, its presence in the stones, the very foundations of the city. Part of the conference was inevitably about our patients finding their way to mourning but it was also a way of finding this for ourselves. Coming together in the big group perhaps there was both rage and mourning. Both the Gill MacGauley award and the Dr Alan Corbett Lecture were another reminder of our own grief and how it can be transformed.

The ending of the conference, a beautiful Gala dinner after the final large group, and a trip up Mount Etna were both reminders of the ethos of our founder Estela Welldon; that forensic psychotherapy as a discipline needs constant care and attention, but above all it is the result of teamwork. As she is so renowned for saying; 'there is a need to work hard and play hard' and this the IAFP was able to do in Catania.

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