

Obituary

Phillida Salmon (1933-2005)

Phil Salmon was one of Don Bannister's earliest associates. She worked with him in Bexley Hospital from 1961, and was very much part of his project for a radical clinical psychology. She fondly remembered the Christmas pantomime they organised for women on two locked back wards, as well as the therapy they conducted with patients normally seen as beyond psychotherapeutic help. She was and remained concerned with the poor and underprivileged, and in later life worked as a psychotherapist for the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture, fighting for the rights of asylum-seekers in the face of growing intolerance and prejudice.

Phil was also passionately involved in education. After leaving the Institute of Education she carried on supervising and examining PhDs. She was not at all easy with contemporary changes in education. She rejected the more formulaic approaches to PhDs, preferring the notion of a personal quest on the part of the researcher. The supervisor was not so much an expert or role model; more a critical friend on the journey. And her way with the PhD summed up her approach to academic life in general. She could always be relied on for an honest and critical appraisal of a project, yet her critique was from the position of someone at your side, not confronting you. A critical distance was always balanced by warmth and affection. If she praised your work, the praise was well deserved. She never flattered and abhorred arrogance and hypocrisy in academia as elsewhere.

Since the formation of the *European Personal Construct Association* (EPCA), she had been a central figure at several of its events. She was a keynote speaker at York in 1992, and Reading 1996, as well as attending Florence in 2002. She also contributed to the international congresses in Berlin and Huddersfield (where once again, she was a plenary speaker). She was always an independent thinker; never an orthodox Kellian. Her

book *Living in Time* nicely captured the narrative turn as early as 1985. And on her 70th birthday, she chose the theme of *Living in Time* for a day conference held in her honour by the *Psychotherapy Section* of the *British Psychological Society*.

In her later years, Phil took up creative writing and wrote several short stories, but her autobiographical writing was a central project for her. Phil's concern for 'voice' as a crucial aspect of self was manifested here as she sought to explore how the voices of important others in her life had contributed to her own. She considered publication, but ultimately decided against this as it would have involved too many concessions to the publisher's ideas; it was vital to her that this work remained her story, told in the way she felt appropriate. Those who were given the opportunity to read her account of her childhood, teen years and young adulthood saw that Phil's early life was marked by family trauma and upheaval, giving us some insight into her later championing of those whose voices and needs are ignored or overridden. She accepted her approaching death with equanimity, save for a profound regret that she would not be able to complete her autobiographical project and would be parted from her friends and her beloved companion, George, an 'asylum seeker' of the canine variety.

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Phillida Salmon was born in June 1933 and died in May 2005.

Her publications include:

Salmon, P. (1985). *Living in time - A new look at personal development*. London: Dent.

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Salmon, P. (1995). *Psychology in the classroom - Reconstructing teachers and learners*. London: Cassell.

(Retrieved from <http://www.pcp-net.org/journal/pctp05/butt-burr-salmon05.pdf>)

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Butt, T., Burr, V. (2005). Tom Ravenette (1933-2005). *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 2, 13-14.

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