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‘Like kings in their kingdoms’: Conservatism in Brazilian Psychoanalysis during the Dictatorship¹

Conservatism and Psychoanalytic Institutions

It may seem surprising to broach the politics of psychoanalysis through an examination of its ‘conservative’ character. Conservatism is a political and social ideology characterised as resistance to, or reaction against, ‘utopian’ social transformations, whether they be political, economic, or a certain set of cultural, religious or moral values (Ryan, 1999). We would class as conservative all efforts to defend the current *status quo* in a society, notably through political attempts to maintain established power relations against pressure for change and to retain the position of dominant economic interests. Conservatism also operates on more ‘psychosocial’ levels, including the maintenance of ‘traditional’ social values (around, for example, familial ideologies and gender, sexuality and reproductive rights), a tendency towards individualism and nationalism, and opposition to cultural shifts that lead to the questioning of the habitual *modus vivendi*.

Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, has always had a strong radical tradition (Jacoby, 1975; Frosh, 1999; Zaretsky, 2015), defined in terms of an orientation towards the transformation of individuals and collectives (groups, institutions, society) that values more openness and, in general at least, less emotional constraint, and embodies an ethic that is critical of the repressive dimension of existing social orders. Psychoanalysis’ socially as well as individually transformational attitude and its critique of social institutions for their promotion of suffering – that is, its ‘anti-conservative’ orientation – was evident from the beginning. For example, Freud’s (1908) paper, *‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, with its argument that neurosis is in large part caused by the hypocritical relations governing sexuality in the Europe of the early twentieth century, can be understood as a progressive intervention in the social and political mores of his time. Nevertheless, a tension between conservatism and this more ‘critical’ aspect of psychoanalysis has dogged the discipline throughout its history. On

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the one hand, Freud's (1930) portrayal of how individuals might find themselves at odds with their society, particularly through the opposition between sexual drives and social repression, involves psychoanalysis with the question of human freedom in relation to a fundamentally constraining social world. On the other hand, this same perception of an individual-society clash can result in that question of human freedom being reduced to that of the degree of latitude that the individual is allowed in a regulated society. Under some circumstances, this can drift into a justification of constraint in the interests of social stability.

These political contradictions within psychoanalysis have at various points erupted in conflict and what might be understood as *institutional enactments* that have had some disastrous consequences. Indeed, the whole gamut of political positions is visible in the history of psychoanalytic institutions and practices, from the conservatism evident in some of their approaches to femininity and homosexuality (Frosh, 2006) through to social welfarism and radical, socialist or Marxist activism, and in more recent times to what might perhaps be unexpected engagements with queer and postcolonial critique (Giffney and Watson, 2017; Khanna, 2004; Davids, 2011). Although most of these tendencies have competed with one another throughout the history of psychoanalysis (Freud's reluctance to align himself with the radical socialist politics of some of his followers – especially Wilhelm Reich – in the early 1930s is an example; see Nitzschke, 1999), a loosely chronological 'broad brush' tracing of these different institutional attitudes is possible. Freud's 'social theory' and his commitment to social democratic practice was in considerable part the driver behind the free psychoanalytic clinics in Berlin, Vienna and elsewhere in the 1920s and 1930s, which were provoked by his speech to the 1918 International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest (Danto, 2005). The promise and limitations of the psychoanalytic radicalism of the time, which was embodied particularly creatively in the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute and which was wrecked by the onset of Nazism and the collapse of German psychoanalysis (Frosh, 2005), gave way after the Second World War to the more normative practices of ego-psychological and object relations work in the USA and Britain respectively. From the 1960s onwards, there has been a return to various politically active strands in psychoanalytic thought, for example in certain uses of Lacan and in the profound challenge to psychoanalysis that came from feminism, which have had a noticeable

impact on at least some psychoanalytic organisations. On the other hand, at times, as we will see, there has been collusion between psychoanalytic institutions and oppressive social regimes, oriented around a cult of 'neutrality' and a familial ideology that was easily appropriated by authoritarian rulers (Rubin et al, 2016).

The conservative elements in psychoanalysis have roots in a variety of sources, including Freud's personal attitudes (especially towards women and bolshevism – e.g. Roudinesco, 2016; Makari, 2008); the strong, yet relatively unacknowledged influence on much early psychoanalytic thinking of colonial racial assumptions, as illustrated in the vision of the 'savage' and 'primitive' in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913; Brickman, 2003; Frosh, 2017); the metapsychological idea of the 'conservative' nature of the drives developed particularly with the invention of the 'death drive' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1920); the medicalisation of psychoanalysis under the influence of Ernest Jones and American psychoanalysis (itself driven by the search for professional respectability and fear of 'quackery' – see Makari, 2008; Zaretsky, 2015); the normalisation of psychoanalysis as it settled down, especially post-World War 2, into a middle-class profession never fully integrated into public health provision (Ryan, 2017) and never confident of its position as a legitimate discipline either in the mental health field or in the university; and a conceptual affiliation to psychology or psychologism, with its characteristic 'reduction' of complex social experiences to 'internal' psychological events (Frosh, 1989). Despite paying homage to Freud's (1927, 1930, 1939) late social texts, clinical psychoanalysis has largely focused on the struggles of individuals to survive their tumultuous inner world and often difficult early circumstances, without always attending directly to the social circumstances that might be provoking or perpetuating suffering of this kind. Of course, given its core concern with the workings of the unconscious, such a focus is not unwarranted and not in itself reactionary – dealing with the 'inner' consequences of suffering is, we could argue, simply what psychoanalysts do, and that does not mean they do not appreciate the 'external' forces that operate on people. Nevertheless, the consequence of all this has been that the 'normal' practice of psychoanalysis has often been politically cautious and quiescent; that psychoanalysts have generally seemed liberal in their personal politics but conservative in their institutions; and that the more progressive and radical elements of psychoanalytic thought have been advanced mainly outside the

psychoanalytic establishment, and seen as too risky to express within it (Jacoby, 1983). In this way, it is intriguing to see how a discipline committed to psychic change and founded on a critique of the subjective and social processes that block personal and social emancipation, was organized and developed inside institutions that both in their internal functioning and in their relations with the wider society often showed clear signs of conservatism, seeking to maintain the political, economic, social, moral and even psychoanalytic *status quo*.

There are several examples of what we are suggesting. The most obvious was the conforming of the German Psychoanalytical Society (DPG) of the 1930s with the demands of the Nazi regime, a conforming that led quickly to the removal of the Jewish analysts from the DPG and its incorporation into the 'Göring Institute' until the end of the Second World War. This sorry tale has now been extensively documented (see Frosh, 2005) but the key point is that the corruption of psychoanalysis constituted by these actions resulted in a stain on German psychoanalysis – and to some extent on the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) – that had effects on its institutional practices until the 1980s, and arguably for much longer than that (Frosh 2012).

Another example is the one we are concerned with in this paper. The context here is a research project that we are carrying out in Brazil focused on the experiences of psychoanalysts who lived through the civil-military dictatorship of the period 1964-1985. This dictatorship was a brutal one, particularly in the period 1968-1974, known as the 'years of lead'. There was a violent, murderous crackdown on leftists and others who opposed the government. Many people suffered greatly. The official, IPA-recognised psychoanalytic societies, however, did not do so badly; indeed, they seemed to blossom under the dictatorship, creating a situation in which the major urban centres of Brazil (especially São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) have become, since that period, amongst the most psychoanalytically 'saturated' areas of the world. The issue which intrigues and concerns us and is one source of our research interest is how this could happen – what were the dynamics of a situation in which psychoanalysis, then widely seen as a 'progressive' discourse and practice, could be appropriated to, and supported by, the authoritarian values of the government of the day? Russo (2012, p. 174), for example, noting the contrast between the psychoanalytic promise of individual

'liberation' and the conformism of the psychoanalytic societies, comments 'The silence or even the connivance of the "official" societies with regard to the military dictatorship was a hallmark of psychoanalysis in Brazil... "official" psychoanalysis (that of the societies linked to the IPA) became a symbol of political conservatism at a time when psychoanalysis – at its height – was regarded as an instrument of liberation by a good number of its clients.' This connivance was a kind of violence linked to denial and can be seen as a betrayal of psychoanalytic ethics, and it is possible to make the case that this 'institutional violence' continues to cast a shadow on contemporary psychoanalytic concerns. It is to an examination of the way in which 'conservatism' is implicated in these events that we now turn; our contention is that there were institutional processes at work within the Brazilian psychoanalytic societies that coalesced with the wider authoritarian situation and that might need to be guarded against if the more emancipatory potential of psychoanalysis is to be preserved.

The Brazilian Case

In Brazil, psychoanalysis flourished during the civil-military dictatorship, mainly during the 1960s and 1970s, as a form of individual clinical therapy in private clinics and as a marker of social prestige (Filho, 1982). The number of psychoanalytic societies and of psychoanalytic practitioners (both those recognised by the IPA and others) increased substantially in that period. Russo (2012, p. 167) comments,

The psychoanalytic boom of the 1970s coincided with the darkest and most repressive period of the Brazilian military dictatorship — the so-called *anos de chumbo* (years of lead)... This coexistence has often been interpreted by drawing a direct link between the rule of 'subjectivism' and political repression. It is argued that when people were confronted with the impossibility of influencing the public arena, they turned to the private world, and from there to the analyst's couch.

Note that in this passage Russo does not read psychoanalysis as culpable in collaboration with the dictatorship, but rather as responding to the subjective despair of a population that could not express its political hopes in the public arena. She writes (p.173): 'The search for one's "real" self and for one's true place in the world should not

be regarded as a mere smokescreen, a kind of deceit, hiding the “real” problem (the impossibility of social engagement). In other words, if the lack of access to political action cannot be denied, the same may be said of the subjective malaise that led so many to the couch.’ Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence that the social permeation of psychoanalytic ideas was of service to the regime, and that the approach of psychoanalytic institutions and of many psychoanalysts, was ‘conservative’ in the way we have defined it above. The slogan ‘Freud explains!’, widespread at that time among the middle and upper classes of the main cities (Oliveira, 2006, p.63), invited the reduction of psychic and social suffering in that moment of Brazilian history to personal psychic conflicts theorised by psychoanalysis. It was a time in which individualising ideologies – a ‘reign of the Self’, heavily influenced by psychoanalytic ideas– were shared by media, literature and everyday exchanges (Coimbra, 1995; Costa, 1989; Russo, 2012). From the point of view that takes psychoanalysis to be an inherently progressive or even ‘subversive’ discipline, there was a strikingly limited opposition from organised psychoanalysis to a conservative political regime that made use of violence and repression to maintain the social order. This does not mean there was no opposition; in fact, there were several examples of this, including from Eduardo Mascarenhas and Helio Pellegrino in Rio, both of whom were eventually expelled from the Society there (Rubin et al, 2016), and in the formation of the Sedes Sapiendes Institute in São Paulo in 1979, explicitly to counter the conservatism of the official São Paulo Society (Warchavik, 2016). But the IPA-recognised Societies took no stand against the political repression, and the widening inequalities of the Brazilian ‘economic miracle’ in that period led to rising patterns of middle class consumption in big cities, with directly beneficial results for private psychoanalytic practice (Coimbra, 1995; Russo, 2012).

It is this set of issues that our research project into psychoanalysis in Brazil during and after the 1964-1985 civil-military dictatorship aims to explore. The project, *Psicanálise e Contexto Social no Brasil: Fluxos Transnacionais, Impacto Cultural e Regime Autoritário* (*Psychoanalysis and Social Context in Brazil: Transnational Fluxes, Cultural Impact and*

Authoritarian Regime),² has several components, including archival research in the São Paulo and Rio psychoanalytic societies and examination of the psychoanalytic publications of the relevant period. Our main data source, however, is a series of long interviews with Brazilian psychoanalysts who were working in Brazil at the time, who returned to Brazil during or soon after the period of the dictatorship, or who through their current work (for example connected with Truth Commissions) have knowledge of what went on then, and of how the Brazilian Psychoanalytic Societies have developed since.³ To date (January 2017), we have focused mainly on São Paulo and have carried out intensive interviews with twelve psychoanalysts there. Our interviews are aimed at gaining understanding of the psychoanalysts' views on the standing of psychoanalysis and the experiences of psychoanalysts in their city during and after the period of the dictatorship. We are especially interested in their memories of, and views on, the relationship between the institutions of psychoanalysis and government; the impact of the dictatorship on the life of the psychoanalytic societies, on theoretical work and on clinical practice; areas of resistance and conformity to the government; the specific contribution of psychoanalysis to understanding the dynamics of the dictatorship and of the response to it; personal political engagements of, and influences on, the psychoanalysts; and the legacy of the dictatorship for psychoanalysis in Brazil. Interviews are carried out in English when the psychoanalyst is fluent in that language, or in Portuguese; interviews are recorded and transcribed and translated if necessary, and then subjected to a process that involves a descriptive account of themes and an intensive analysis of specific narratives presented by our respondents.

One theme that has emerged strongly from our interviews is the hegemony of conservative ideologies inside Brazilian psychoanalytic institutions affiliated to the IPA during the dictatorship. In particular, 'conservatism' emerges as a recurrent and privileged term for describing the institutional functioning of the Brazilian

² We are grateful for the support of the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo in carrying out this research.

³ We have sought to interview all psychoanalysts who had direct experience of the period of the dictatorship, identifying them either through personal knowledge or recommendation from other psychoanalysts. Interviews were carried out by the authors with assistance from Aline Rubin and Renata Conde.

Psychoanalytic Society of São Paulo (henceforth 'the Society'), related to its internal and external politics, and to its reproduction of social class hierarchies, economic interests, and gender, race and age inequalities. In what follows, we briefly present some of the material from our interviews that discusses this set of issues, arguing that it reveals a parallelism between processes and 'dynamics' within the psychoanalytic institution and the relations of power existent in Brazilian society in that period. This material helps in understanding how the conservative strand of thought and practice in psychoanalysis reproduced itself in the Society and also in identifying where there were countervailing tendencies betokening forms of political resistance.⁴ In this presentation, we focus on material from long interviews with two senior São Paulo psychoanalysts who were especially interested in this history, along with a small amount of material from some of our other interviews. For the purposes of this paper, we present their comments relevant to three related themes dealing with the relationship between the 'ideology' and practices of the Society and the wider political situation: 'Psychoanalysts of the Left and Right', 'Fear and Denunciations' and 'Colonising Bion'.

Psychoanalysts of the Left and Right

Through the interviews we learnt that, during the dictatorship, some prominent psychoanalysts in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro were seen as being 'right wing' politically, and that this contributed to an institutional environment of silence, political 'neutrality' and fear. The surrounding political culture and the presence of these conservative elements within the Society meant that there could be little debate concerning the social and political events of that time. It also meant that the position of several other psychoanalysts who had been leftist political activists, some of them

⁴ Although we have omitted the names of our respondents, we have included the real names of several analysts mentioned by them. This is partly because what is being discussed here is the history of the Society, and identification of the reported facts are not difficult for those who are familiar with the institution. We are also concerned to protect others who might be mistakenly identified as the people being discussed. In addition, we note the continuing secrecy that surrounds the history we are describing, reflected in the very slow and partial engagement of Brazil with its recent violent history, and believe that part of our contribution is to breach this secrecy. We also align ourselves with the efforts of several researchers who, legitimised by the establishment of the National Truth Commission (2012) and several Truth Commissions in states, cities and Brazilian universities, are seeking to document the events that occurred between 1964 and 1985, when Brazil was under the dictatorial government.

linked to the Brazilian Communist Party or to participation in left-wing student movements, was precarious both at the time and later. Some of these activists were arrested, tortured or exiled during the dictatorial period. For example, Participant 1 told us,

I entered the Society and did not have the courage to say I was a leftist, nor what I did outside of it, no way! This was in 1978... I hid my past, I used to go to protests but nobody knew that. It was 'the soul', 'the psyche', dematerialized from the social part. ... There is in the Society one psychoanalyst, he was in prison for 5 years, very tortured, the Society did not know him and he never got the courage to speak about this in public at the Society. And he was a guy who at 20 or so years of age ended up in the military [barracks] after almost being killed and made a speech against the dictatorship.

The point being made here is that the previously imprisoned psychoanalyst had been brave enough to speak out against the dictatorship whilst in the military, but was intimidated into silence in the psychoanalytic Society. Intriguingly, Participant 1 links this lack of openness about past political experiences with a persecutory, authoritarian approach to training and decision-making.

The Society for me and for all those who entered it was very persecutory. Because at that time you underwent analysis with a training analyst and he or she decided if you could take the course or not, if you were adequate, which also spoiled the analysis. It was progress when this was taken out of the hands of the training analyst, the power of referring you to the course, enormous institutional progress.

The problem of 'authoritarian' control over selection of psychoanalytic candidates was by no means unique to São Paulo, but in the particular context of the dictatorship it had political as well as psychoanalytic significance, creating a persecutory atmosphere in which trainees had to be careful about what they said to whom. This difficulty was aggravated by the fact that some analysts had clear or assumed links with the governing authorities. Perhaps the most important of those in São Paulo was the psychiatrist Durval Marcondes, who in the late 1920s was a founder of the group that would become

the forerunner of the Brazilian Psychoanalytic Society of São Paulo. Marcondes came from the rural aristocracy of São Paulo and in 1922 participated in the Week of Modern Art, a movement led by an urban intellectual aristocracy that sought to integrate the modernising European culture with a Brazilian identity and its native themes. Freud's texts occupied a central place in the reflections of the artists and intellectuals who participated in the Week of Modern Art, and Marcondes saw himself as a pioneer in this process, following in the tradition of the *bandeirantes*, Portuguese colonisers who explored new lands in Brazil and with whom he identified (Sagawa, 2002). He considered himself to be modern and innovative, but some of our interviewees reported a much more complex situation, in which Marcondes acted to suppress dissent and also was willing to draw on his connections with the regime to manipulate the local situation. For example, Participant 2 told us that during the dictatorship he was a psychology student at the university where Marcondes and Virginia Bicudo, who was also from the first generation of São Paulo's psychoanalysts, were professors. Students complained that despite being employed as full time teachers by the university, Marcondes, Bicudo and other professors from the Department of Clinical Psychology spent a great deal of their time in their own private clinics, falsifying documents that would say they had given classes when in reality they had not. In the face of student protests, Marcondes and his colleagues threatened the students, including our Participant 2, who was well known to him.

They were from [the] right wing so they were, I would say that they were trying to provoke army intervention at the university, so they became very nasty to us, some people who went to negotiate with Durval Marcondes, he asked them to leave his house in a very nasty way. And then he did something that I feel very sad for. I don't like to talk about that although part of this is in the archives of the Society.

Durval wrote a letter to my father asking him to contain me and making some threats about bringing my name to the security people and to the army and so on, and my father answered Durval and this letter is in the archives of the Society.

Participant 2's father replied defending the actions of his son, which resulted in the rupture of an old friendship with Marcondes.⁵ According to this same participant, Marcondes was also connected to the right wing press and to the army, and although he was probably not someone who denounced people directly, his actions and attitudes were such as to lead to the belief, at least, that he could be dangerous.

He was very, very close to the army officers, but I don't think that he gave names to them, probably at the moment when he was angry about the Left and about people he would give all the coordinates for them to identify and locate the person.

Marcondes was also close to José Nabantino Ramos, director of the newspaper *Folha da Manhã*, and to the Mesquita family, which owned the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*. Thus, he was able to write an editorial in *Estado* in which he published the names of students from the university who were in conflict with professors of the Department of Clinical Psychology.⁶

Fear and Denunciations

Some other psychoanalysts were believed to be more actively involved in denunciations. For instance, Participant 2 mentioned Luiz de Almeida Prado Galvão as well known within the Society for his links with the authorities, and as spreading fear because of this. The context for this story is an interesting comparison between the Societies in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Some psychoanalysts in Rio had very strong links with the authorities. For example, Leon Cabernite, who was President of one of the

⁵ The interviewee told us that the letter written by his father is at the Memory and Documentation Centre of the Psychoanalytic Society of São Paulo as part of the archive collection of Durval Marcondes. Until now (January 2017), we have not been allowed access to any material in the Centre. We have been told that only documentation that has been organised and catalogued is open to researchers, and that the documents we are interested in have not been processed. About the inaccessibility of psychoanalytic archives and who holds power over them, it is worth reading the reflections of Derrida (1998).

⁶ The press access also suited Durval Marcondes and Virginia Bicudo as a way to disseminate psychoanalysis to the wider reading public, mainly a literate elite. Both maintained columns in the newspapers in which they addressed issues such as children's education and appropriate attitudes of parents and educators. The columns allow us to have a glimpse into the presentation of the traditional bourgeois family as an unquestionable ideal model for the development of children.

Rio societies and of the Brazilian Psychoanalytic Association and was later implicated in a famous case of a trainee psychoanalyst, Amilcar Lobo, who was a torturer (Rubin et al, 2016), was the analyst of several politicians. São Paulo, by comparison, was less overtly political but possibly more conservative in its psychoanalytic and political attitudes. The story also involves the figure of Virginia Bicudo, who before becoming a psychoanalyst was a sociologist and professor at the Free School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo, where her Master's degree dissertation in 1945 was entitled *Estudo das atitudes raciais de pretos e mulatos em São Paulo* (*Study of racial attitudes of blacks and mulattos in São Paulo*). At this time, her work on racism in Brazil was pioneering; but once she left sociology to become a hygiene educator and after that a psychoanalyst – thanks to the influence of Durval Marcondes, who was her professor at the Institute of Hygiene – she abandoned her research on racial themes. Indeed, she seems to have hidden her own 'mixed' background. Psychoanalysts from the Memory Centre of the Brazilian Psychoanalytic Society of São Paulo who organized an exhibition in her honour in 2010, on the occasion of the centenary of her birth, told us that when they were examining her archives they found in her house a collection of hats that, according to them, served Bicudo as a way to hide her 'crispy' hair, evidence of her *mulata* condition. In other words, not only did Bicudo abandon her *studies* of racism but also, on entering the Psychoanalytic Society as one of its founders, she sought to hide her own ethnic identity. This may itself be a symptom of the limited Brazilian psychoanalytic work on racism, and indeed the relatively small number of black analysts (thought there are some in Rio) or, apparently, black patients.

There aren't black people in the couch in our country! Have you ever heard about a black psychoanalytic patient? Here, near my home, when I see a black person sitting in a restaurant I am sure he or she is speaking another language, is not Brazilian. (Participant 1)

In 1964, Bicudo participated in the 'March of Families for God and Freedom' in the city of São Paulo in opposition to the left-wing government of João Goulart, which later that year was overthrown in the coup d'état that marked the beginning of the military regime. Luiz de Almeida Prado Galvão, whose actions were more extreme than Bicudo's, marched in that same movement. Participant 2 pulls this together in trying to assess the

degree to which each of these individuals were responsible for spreading fear in the São Paulo Society.

[Galvão] was training people in his farm to take part in right wing commando groups, he was extremely right wing and an active right winger (Interviewer: at the same time as he was a psychoanalyst?) At the same time as he was a psychoanalyst ... It was not the same here as in Rio de Janeiro, in Rio de Janeiro they had a much closer connection with the dictatorship and with the army than in São Paulo. São Paulo was much less, they were very conservative but they were not politically connected people like in Rio, they were more, I would say, conservatives, much more right wing people, but it is true that specially because of Galvão, I would say mainly because of Galvão, they were very much afraid of being denounced as left wingers at that time in the Society. I did not hear anything about Virginia, I did not hear anything bad about her connections to the dictatorship, although Virginia was also the analyst of some politicians, because she went to start the Brasilia Society, but I did not hear anything negative about Virginia from that time, she was clearly a right winger but I don't think that she threatened or denounced anyone. (But do you think that Galvão did denounce?) I think so, you have to ask some of the people from that time, but I think so. (And other members of the Society knew that?) They knew that, they knew, it was a very small Society. (And they knew that Galvão denounced people?) They knew, it was impossible not to know. (But we didn't have any psychoanalysts arrested.) No, it was much more the feeling of fear. (And no one questioned that?) No, at the time nobody with good sense would question that.

Neither during the dictatorship nor afterwards was this supposedly common knowledge investigated by the São Paulo Society, which presented itself as having passed unharmed through the dictatorial regime years. Yet these interviews reveal not only a conservative institution, conniving with the political and social regime, but also the presence of some psychoanalysts who were directly involved in the power structures.

There was a person in São Paulo accused of collaborating with torture; nobody mentions that, you don't know most of it. Want to know? He wasn't a bad person, he was involved because he was an employee – a civil servant, a doctor at the police corporation, it would be worthwhile checking into this to be able to say 'he didn't do it or he did.' He disappeared. I can tell you his name, Emilio de Augustinis. I met him, he was a good person. Dumb, naïve, alienated. He didn't even know there was a dictatorship, or he knew, he had no critical sense about anything, and participated in a Society where negligence is put up against critical sense. Who do you find in the Society? Groups closed in on themselves, a remnant of what became anachronistic, that the group has the psychoanalytic truth. (Participant 1)

We found on the website *Brasil Nunca Mais* (Brazil Never Again), from the Federal Public Ministry (<http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br>), a copy of the Mental Health Examination of the 'political prisoner Ivan Axelrud Seixas, underage,' carried out in 1972 at the Institute of Criminal Biotopeology and signed by Emilio José de Augustinis, psychoanalyst and member of the Psychoanalytic Society, to whom the interviewee refers. We later interviewed Seixas and were told by him that Augustinis had seen him in prison and offered him a way out if he made a statement renouncing his beliefs and defending the government; Augustinis was therefore at a minimum 'collaborating' with the military at the time.

In all this, it is important to note how the external situation was such that fear was well-founded; and that this might have had an impact on how psychoanalysts practised. Participant 3 told us a story about this that still haunted her:

I remember one analyst who was called into a military headquarters because one of his patients had been imprisoned and he was released, nothing happened, but he had to go there and say that, it was a young man, that that young man was his patient. I know that people were frightened, very much so, you know, everybody was frightened, maids, gardeners, you know, the general people in the street were very scared and I think analysts were also cautious as to who they took as patients.

Another psychoanalyst, answering a direct question about the effect of the dictatorship on Brazilian psychoanalytic societies, told a similar story:

I was seeing a patient in the out-patient clinic of the hospital and she had been tortured, horribly, so every time she left, I left the office absolutely scared of being arrested because she had provoked the torturers and military and so on. This was the general atmosphere of that period, and in the society from what I can remember, there was an atmosphere of restraint, certain silence. I have a hypothesis, I do not know whether is correct or not, that the general atmosphere in some ways made it difficult to have a more open way of connecting. (Participant 4)

Colonising Bion

In the conservative wave that marked the Psychoanalytic Society of São Paulo during the dictatorship years, several of the interviewees included Frank Phillips, a senior analyst and figure of enormous prestige among the psychoanalysts themselves and with the bourgeoisie of the city. His father was an English engineer who had come to Brazil to work for *Light*, an energy company that was, as explained by Participant 2,

The conservatism centre, the domination centre, the centre of a kind of colonialism in Brazil. So the father was a very conservative person, he came from a very conservative environment.

Phillips was a cultured man who became interested in psychoanalysis in the forties and, after years of analysis with Adelheid Koch (the first 'official' psychoanalyst in São Paulo, who arrived from Germany in 1938), went to London in 1948 for analysis first with Melanie Klein and then with Wilfred Bion. Phillips returned to Brazil and in the 1970s invited Bion to give a series of seminars that became very significant in the history of Brazilian psychoanalysis. At that time, Bion was highly influential and had published texts that in some ways revolutionised psychoanalytic theory in the Kleinian tradition, especially in relation to thinking and to psychosis (e.g. Bion, 1962; 1970). Unfortunately, however, his impact in Brazil was not particularly progressive.

They decided to invite Bion for seminars in Brazil... Bion asked 50 dollars per lecture or per supervision to come to Brazil, that was a high fee but not terribly high, and then the Society said 'no', if Bion is coming they could not pay 50, 'we would pay 500.' It was a small Society, very few training analysts; after Bion came they had something to offer that was something absolutely new, absolutely based on intuition, based on personal qualities. So, the fees went from 25 dollars to 200 dollars next week. (Participant 2)

Frank Phillips was the person responsible for raising the price of the sessions to astronomical values from the 1970s onwards. To political conservatism was thus added the elitism of psychoanalysis, now only accessible to members of the traditional Brazilian aristocracy and to a bourgeoisie that was enriched during the years of the Brazilian 'economic miracle'. The psychoanalysts themselves seem to have acted very much in keeping with this economics of market elitism.

They were very conservative in terms of allowing people to teach at the Society, allowing people to become training analysts. They wanted to keep it very small, the Society, it was also, I think, something connected to control of the market, they used to monopolise... Psychoanalysis in Brazil, this is something positive as well, was very well received in Brazil so the elite, both intellectual and financial, they used to come to psychoanalysis at that time. It was a value to go to psychoanalysis, so the rich people, they were prone to pay high fees, there were no complaints about the high fees, also they gave them a feeling of 'something very special that I am doing.' So I think that the use they made of Bion and the conservatism in the Society was expressed in terms of closing the avenues to new people becoming analysts and new people becoming training analysts in a way that I think has much more to do with controlling of the market than anything to do with Bion's ideas. (Participant 2)

Matters got so bad that the IPA was forced to take action.

Well, when I came back in '79 it was a small society and very closed, there were very few training analysts and then I don't remember the year but there was an

intervention by the IPA and they had to interfere because things were going badly here, the price of analysis was very high, the fees and there were very few training analysts... Authoritarian and class oriented, because only rich people could do the training. It was very expensive and that was very different from Argentina because in Argentina the first analysts were children of immigrants, weren't they? And here it was more the aristocratic families. (Participant 3)

All our interviewees agree that the dictatorial period was marked in the Society by the hegemony of the Kleinian school, followed by a turn to Bion after his visit at the beginning of the seventies.

... all of those stereotypes and dogmas that were very strong, which in the time of the Kleinian school was an army, a sort of a UDN [National Democratic Union – the Brazilian conservative party] for Psychoanalysis. And the schools fought, they did not even cross the Channel of La Mancha, what was more...we knew nothing about American psychoanalysis, nothing of French psychoanalysis. Therefore, there was that colonised spirit, absolutely colonised, those who came from England were blessed, we were attempting to be English, Frank Phillips was the rage at the time, took care of everything. So it was conservative in both aspects, politically very conservative and psychoanalytically very conservative. (Participant 1)

Unlike many of the British Kleinians and followers of Bion, who were often leftist in their sympathies (e.g Segal, 1997), Phillips was clearly a conservative reactionary, and whether through his direct influence or the power of the surrounding authoritarian ideology, the reading of Bion that he and others promoted emphasised elitism and anti-intellectualism. Indeed, Bion's famous idea of the analytic attitude as involving reverie 'without memory or desire' (Bion, 1967) became a slogan within the Brazilian psychoanalytic movement, often appearing interchangeable with 'without thought'. Marketising of psychoanalysis and evacuation of critical content became the norm.⁷ Another interviewee, Participant 5, was still angry after all these years and told us:

⁷ Even in the 1990s, a period of economic crisis and high unemployment in Brazil, the attitude that psychoanalysis need not consider economic realities remained strong. One of the authors was present in

At the end of my period of formation around '75, '76 there was a surge of enthusiasm about Bion's work and that was terrible for us, the students, because they thought that the way of teaching psychoanalysis, the way they used to teach was old fashioned and they decided to change the method, so it was decided that the students should find out psychoanalysis, discover the concepts by themselves. There is a famous saying, Bion's saying, 'without memory and desire' and this is the saying at that time. Then I was very busy because I had children, family, patients, things to do, to read and then there was like a very calm lagoon at the Society of Psychoanalysis and I was at that time so angry that I used to say, not very nicely, I used to say that without memory and without desire we were a group, aboulitic [i.e. without willpower], aboulitic and without memory...

Participant 5 also told us that in the early 1970s there were only six or seven training analysts in São Paulo. As they had control over the training market, they were, she said, 'like kings in their kingdom.' All this is perhaps quite a good description of what happens under the conditions of authoritarianism, when there is fear and corruption and the peddling of psychoanalysis as itself a type of closed, authoritarian rule.

Discussion

Our interest in this paper is to present material from the history of psychoanalysis during the dictatorship in Brazil as a way of exploring some 'conservative' elements within the institutional practices of psychoanalysis. We have not considered here the conservatism of *theory*, other than to note that the influence of Bion in São Paulo seems to have been to reduce the capacity for critical thinking and to encourage elitist practice – almost certainly not in accord with what he would have intended. In our interviews, we heard mixed views on this. For some respondents, Brazilian psychoanalysis was welcomingly open in comparison to the rigid hierarchies and policing of psychoanalytic ideas encountered by those who trained in the British Society. For others, the Brazilian scene, particularly that in São Paulo, was poor in its quality of theoretical understanding

a seminar with a senior analyst who said, regarding those people who claimed they were unable to pay the cost of a four- or five-times a week analysis: 'It is necessary to analyse their envy.'

and slavishly dependent on a 'colonial' outlook that blocked innovation. We are not intending to adjudicate these views, other than to note that there is evidence in the psychoanalytic literature for both of them: that is, Brazilian analysts developed some innovations, especially around psychoanalysis applied to the understanding of social violence (Pellegrino, 1985; Costa, 1983), *and* had their creativity restricted by the colonialist injunction to follow 'Northern' models of psychoanalysis (Rubin et al, 2016).

Our central point is that at the time of trouble in Brazil, when the society was governed by a violent right wing civil-military dictatorship that perpetrated significant crimes, including murder and 'disappearance', the major official psychoanalytic societies not only offered relatively little resistance, but they enacted this violence in material ways. Psychoanalysts who were themselves linked to the political right wing had connections with the military and political authorities, and knowledge of this promoted fear within the São Paulo Society so that open expression of other views and affiliations, and dissent in general, was tightly constrained. The authoritarian structure of the Society, for example in the training regime, contributed to this situation, as did the genuine fear of denunciations to the military. At least two situations of psychoanalysts collaborating with torture have come to light; one, the Rio case of Amilcar Lobo, is now well known (Vianna, 1994; Rubin et al, 2016), but the other one, in São Paulo, has been revealed by our research. We have also noted how conservative *economic* and 'marketing' forces were in action in the same period, pushing psychoanalysis towards a more privatised and elitist practice that coincided with the regime's ideology and that built on the escalating inequalities promoted by the 'economic miracle'. The result of this was a form of psychoanalytic training and practice that was highly abstract and inward-looking, and deliberately disengaged not only from political reality, but from the ordinary requirements of trainees (as illustrated in our concluding quotation). Whilst we have not presented direct evidence to show this also extended to a neglect of *patients*, there are other examples we could draw on to demonstrate the arrogance of at least some analysts towards those who could not pay high fees. Indeed, the elitism of training and treatment in São Paulo seems to have been the major cause of the intervention by the International Psychoanalytical Association in the late 1970s, which closed the doors to new applicants to the Society for several years, until 1994 (Azevedo, 2008).

In some respects, none of this is a surprise. Under pressure from a violent surrounding authority, there are likely to be ways in which professional societies narrow their activities and act to preserve what they can. As with psychoanalysis in Germany in the 1930s, there may be a belief that bad times will blow over, or that the survival of the institution itself might be more important than making a political protest. It is also important to take into account the actual, realistic fear of violent retribution for acts of

dissent, a state of mind that is widespread and of course not culpable. What is striking about the Brazilian example, however, is the degree to which the 'complicity' of the Society with the governing norms was coincident both with the self-interests and attitudes of particular individuals, and with normalising tendencies in psychoanalytic practice itself. These included the authoritarian and economically elitist structure of training, and the privatising of practice so that a 'neutral' individualistic focus was the norm. They also followed on from a 'colonial' attitude in which certain forms of expertise were legitimated over others, militating against the emergence of a 'home-grown' perspective that might recognise the impact of the social context of Brazilian society. Relatedly, psychoanalytic 'neutrality', a notion developed to refer to the analyst's *clinical* capacity to avoid trying to 'direct the treatment according to some ideal' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.271), came to mean *political* neutrality in the sense of non-intervention even when the surrounding society was violently corrupt. As we have seen, this process could even take over the ideas of one of psychoanalysis' most creative thinkers, Wilfred Bion, and make them into a recipe for abstraction and the evacuation of critical content.

Conservatism is, obviously, not the same as violent authoritarian repression. Nevertheless, in this 'case study' we see how psychoanalysis, an approach that by and large tells a story about itself as a subversive, critical discipline, can find within it conservative elements that are possibly self-protective, but can also be turned towards self-promotion and collusion when the political situation gets tough. At various times, individual psychoanalysts and on occasions groups of psychoanalysts have stood out against such pressures (Frosh, 2005; Jacoby, 1983; Hollander, 2010), but as an organised 'official' grouping, psychoanalysis has not always risen to the challenge of maintaining a principled stance under these admittedly difficult circumstances. Perhaps it is possible to recover this afterwards, as the trajectory of many of our interviewees suggests; or perhaps the subversiveness of the unconscious is just too much to handle, and it is even at times a relief to subside into insular conservatism when the conditions allow.

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