

**Transcending polarities: counsellors' and psychotherapists'  
experiences of transformation**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own, except where work which has formed part of jointly authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

This study of therapists' experiences of transformation arose from reflections on the longing for change which motivates many clients to seek therapy and draws many therapists to the profession of counselling/psychotherapy. Therapy research typically focuses on outcomes and change processes, but the nature of transformational experiences, particularly for therapists, is not well documented. The aim of this study was to investigate therapists' experiences of personal and professional transformation, including my own. It therefore involved a personal quest for individuation. An autoethnographic account of the parallel research and individuation processes is interwoven with a dialogical analysis of research conversations with seven experienced counsellors/psychotherapists.

The initial conversations were video-recorded and an adaptation of Interpersonal Process Recall was used to facilitate joint discussion of the recordings. Selected key moments were analysed dialogically. My experience as researcher was documented by recording dreams, drawing and reflexive writing. These artefacts provided data for the autoethnographic account. Psychotherapy theories and practices, particularly Jung's (1960) concept of the collective unconscious and method of active imagination, offered a lens through which the data were viewed.

The study demonstrated that transformational experience often required an intersubjective relationship to enable shifts in perspective or new ways of being. Dynamic relational processes therefore became significant elements of transformation. The research conversations demonstrated processes facilitative of transformation as well as resistance. Building on Stern's (2004) concept of moments of meeting, the study suggests the significance for lasting change of additional intersubjective events identified as moments of not-meeting, reflective moments of meeting and shared interest focus.

Elements contributing to transformation were identified as firstly the connection of thinking with feeling and secondly reflection on the connection within a relational matrix, leading to integration and potentially to transformative action. The nature of transformational experience was found to involve transcending polarised states or positions, enabling movement towards a third perspective. The antithesis of transformation, referred to here as –T, was noted in some professional contexts.

The implications for therapeutic practice and other relational settings, and for therapy education, research and the professional social context, are discussed.

## Table of Contents

	Page
List of tables .....	v
List of figures .....	vi
List of abbreviations .....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Interweaving methodologies .....	12
Chapter 3: Autoethnography (1): a dream sequence .....	38
Chapter 4: Dialogical synthesis .....	53
Chapter 5: Dialogical analysis of conversations with Matthew.....	79
Chapter 6: Dialogical analysis of conversations with Kim .....	93
Chapter 7: Autoethnography (2): a railway junction, two saints and a queen ...	107
Chapter 8: Transformation and transcendence .....	125
Chapter 9: Processes in relational conversation .....	147
Chapter 10: Ambivalence, resistance and defence .....	162
Chapter 11: Metaphor and symbol .....	176
Chapter 12: Autoethnography (3): disjuncture and transition .....	195
Chapter 13: Interweaving findings .....	210
Chapter 14: Conclusion .....	213
References .....	224
Appendix 1: Key moments and themes .....	239
Appendix 2: Examples of dialogical analysis .....	242
Appendix 3: Website sources of images from the <i>Rosarium Philosophorum</i> ...	244

**List of Tables**

	Page
Table 1: Professional contexts of T and –T experiences .....	135
Table 2: Meanings attributed to transformational experience .....	139
Table 3: Conceptual metaphors and images of renewal .....	183
Table 4: Conceptual metaphors and images of intersubjective relationship .....	184
Table 5: Conceptual metaphors and images of the third .....	185
Table 6: Criteria for key moments and related questions .....	239
Table 7: Major themes derived from questions .....	240
Table 8: Sub-themes derived from questions .....	241
Table 9: Examples of dialogical analysis: 'Bureaucratic' overview .....	242

## List of figures

	Page
1	Interweaving methodologies ..... 37
2	The Mercurial Fountain (RP 1) ..... 40
3	Forth Bridge ..... 41
4	Section of Forth Bridge ..... 42
5	Immersion in the bath (RP 4) ..... 42
6	The <i>coniunctio</i> (RP 5) ..... 52
7	Active imagination drawings ..... 112
8	Medina del Campo railway station ..... 113
9	Dry river bed: Rio Zapardiel ..... 113
10	<i>Soportales</i> ..... 113
11	Casa de los Arcos ..... 114
12	Isabel la Católica ..... 114
13	Castiilo de la Mota ..... 114
14	Carmelite Convent ..... 116
15	Commemorative sign at Carmelite Convent ..... 117
16	Statue of St John of the Cross ..... 117
17	Mandala 1 ..... 118
18	Mandala 2 ..... 120
19	Mandala 3 ..... 120
20	The Shadow ..... 121
21	Transformation ..... 133
22	A reflective therapeutic approach ..... 134
23	Minus T ..... 136
24	Shared interest focus ..... 156
25	Threshold moments ..... 163
26	The research process ..... 180
27	Death (RP 6) ..... 197
28	The ascent of the soul (RP 7) ..... 200
29	The falling dew (RP 8) ..... 201
30	The return of the soul (RP 9) ..... 203
31	Building blocks of transformation ..... 212

All figures are my photographs and drawings except for those labelled 'RP', which are woodcuts from the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, an alchemical treatise originally published in Frankfurt in 1550. Images from this and other editions of RP were

reproduced by Jung (1966) in *The Psychology of the Transference*. All RP images reproduced here are taken from Google Images. Some are freely available under a creative commons licence and others are sourced from websites listed in appendix 3.



## List of abbreviations

BCPSG	Boston Change Process Study Group
EBP	Evidence-based practice
EMDR	Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing
IPR	Interpersonal process recall
KM	Key moment
MM	Moment of meeting
MNM	Moment of not-meeting
RMM	Reflective moment of meeting
RP	<i>Rosarium Philosophorum</i>
SIF	Shared interest focus
T	Transformation
-T	Minus or absence of transformation
WPF	Westminster Pastoral Foundation

Conversations with participants are referred to by their pseudonym initial followed by 1 (initial conversation) or 2 (IPR conversation), as follows:

M1, M2	Maria
C1, C2	Christine
N1, N2	Natalia
G1, G2	Gwyneth
L1, L2	Louise
Mt1, Mt2	Matthew
K1, K2	Kim

## 1. Introduction

### Background

This study of therapists' experiences of transformation initially arose from reflecting on the longing for change which motivates many clients to seek psychotherapy and seems to drive many therapists to enter a profession dedicated to facilitating processes of change. The study was conceived as a search for insight into the experiences of transformation that others might have and share with me as research participants, or which might emerge from analysis of the data. Yet I was also seeking a personal transformation to heal the wounds that I brought to my work as a psychotherapist and counselling trainer, some of which remained unresolved after several years of therapy or seemed to become more acute in the course of my practice. The study therefore took on the nature of a personal quest for transformation, which I thought of as individuation and healing. Following Jung (1968a), I understand individuation to mean becoming psychologically and spiritually undivided in so far as this is possible, so that polarised attitudes may be healed and a greater balance found between emotional, spiritual, cognitive and physical aspects of self.

In my own life I recognise a repeated seeking for what Bollas (1987, p.15) calls a 'transformational object', another person or ideology which we endow with power to effect a transformation in ourselves or our environment. One such transformational object for me was psychoanalytic theory and the practice of psychotherapy. Bollas (1987) suggests that the prototypical transformational object is the parent who can transform the infant's experience through holding, caring and feeding. A transformational object is thus a perception by a subject not yet able to contain and regulate affects or manage physical states by herself. In Bollas's (1987) view, the subject identifies the other with the experience of transformation; this is not yet a true object relation to a distinct other, but a perception of the other as the certain deliverer of a transformed state. In the research process I have confirmed what I already knew as a therapist, that a naive desire for a transformational object – something which would change my life – cannot be fulfilled, but that this recognition paradoxically brings with it the capacity to experience a transformation in thinking and emotional attitude. This experience is typically relational, and inevitably the research project has involved exploring relationships with research participants, supervisors and others both past and present.

The concepts of the transformational object and its successor, the transitional object (Winnicott, 1971), are discussed further below. Here I intend simply to indicate the very early basis of faith in the possibility of transformation, and the consequent need for

frustration and disillusion with the particular forms this faith may take, which can then lead on to the development of more mature object relationships and ego strengths. Winnicott's (1971) view is that disillusion is part of the normal process of development that enables us to accept without fear or retaliation the realisation that the environment does not always respond to our needs and wishes. As Jacobs (2000) argues, disillusion leads to the renewal of thinking and belief and so forms part of a transformative cycle.

Research conversations with the participants in this study reveal their variable relationships to the experience of transformation, sometimes longed for and passively experienced as the presence of a transformational object, sometimes grasped and worked through consciously, sometimes acknowledged with the ambivalence of the depressive position (Klein, 1935) and sometimes anxiously resisted. As well as the relationship of subject to experience, some kinds of transformation seem to require an intersubjective relationship between two subjects. It is often in relation with another that we shift perspective, gain insight or find new ways of being. The dynamic processes of being together therefore become significant elements of transformation, as both psychodynamic and humanistic psychotherapeutic theories recognise (see, for example, Rogers, 1957; Boston Change Process Study Group [BCPSG], 2010). The research conversations themselves demonstrate processes which facilitate transformations in perception or in the research relationship, as well as resistance to such transformations either by the participants or myself. The focus of this study is therefore frequently on the process as well as the content of conversation, and on the reflexive re-visiting of conversational moments through Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) (Kagan et al, 1969) and through my subsequent immersion in the recorded conversations.

At the beginning of the study I had a number of background questions in mind:

1. Are some features of therapeutic process in danger of being obscured through an emphasis on short-term goal-oriented therapies and evidence-based practice (EBP)?
2. How can practitioners resist the tendency to splitting and projection which characterises both the history of 'schoolism' (Clarkson, 2000) in psychotherapy and the political positions taken up within the profession in relation to EBP?
3. How can the apparent dichotomies of inner/outer, psychological/socio-political and psychological/ spiritual be held in creative tension?
4. How can I integrate my own split perceptions of these issues?

The last of these questions led to a reflexive approach which involved journal writing, paying attention to dreams and re-working the narratives of significant personal experiences. The story of this reflexive work forms an autoethnographic account of the research process which is interwoven with the narratives emerging from conversations with seven research participants. All these accounts are viewed as co-created and 'true' in so far as they tell one truth among many possible truths that could also be constructed. My autoethnographic account is similarly co-constructed through my internal dialogue as writer-reader of the text and dialogues with others who have read and responded to my writing.

The first two wider questions above, relating to professional therapy practice, are not addressed directly in this study, but the narratives of transformation presented here have, I believe, implications which speak to them. Several authors (Rowan, 2000; Freshwater and Robertson, 2002; Totton, 2007) have drawn a distinction between therapy as problem-based and therapy as liberation. The demand for EBP inevitably privileges the former since evidence is identified with measurable outcomes of symptom reduction and problem solution. But what draws many to the practice of counselling and psychotherapy is the attraction of engagement with the unknown and its potential for liberation, in themselves and others. For some clients also, this may be the motivation to pursue an arduous journey of self-discovery. Psychotherapy involves the creation of a potential space (Winnicott, 1971) in which something new may happen, or indeed apparently nothing at all. Nothing may also be new, in the sense that it is not anything which is already known. Therapy which is open to the unknown requires courage and humility on the part of practitioner and client. The act of engaging with the therapeutic process, for both partners, demands a willingness to go beyond familiar ways of doing and being. These, after all, are what no longer work well enough for clients. Practitioners are constantly faced with the challenge of a new client, a new person, a new story, a new understanding, and to remain engaged with newness we must go beyond the security of what we think we know. While theories may offer helpful frameworks for thinking, they can become ties that bind us to the past and all its limitations if we are seduced by them into imagining they provide insight into 'the' truth. This is illustrated by Brooks' (2012) discussion of the risk of theory becoming the master, not the servant of the practitioner, who is then unable to hear alternative truths in a client's story. In his account of working with a young man who was subjected to racism, Brooks (2012) describes both the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory to help the client reflect on his experience, and the danger of reductive interpretation which denies his actual experience of racism. The 'dangerous usefulness' of theory, according to Brooks (2012, p.181), is that while it can be helpful, its 'truth' is not

legitimised even by successful therapeutic outcomes. It is still just theory. This argument runs counter to the underpinning assumption of EBP that successful outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of theoretical models.

An example from my own practice shortly before beginning this study will help to illustrate my concern over the potential obscuring of therapy as liberation. A client, whom I will call Emily, died from a tumour after recurrent periods of illness. Three months before her death she was unexpectedly offered surgery and the sudden possibility of surviving filled her with hope and excitement. There were many things she wanted to do, more than in all the years of depression that had brought her into therapy. She had recognised in therapy the effects of a traumatic relationship which had hemmed her in and terrified her for much of her adult life. She had a dream in which her persecutor sat in the middle of her head like a tumour. Then she was afraid she had caused the cancer by stirring up memories which had been dissociated and were overwhelmingly disturbing. I held a sort of contrary hope that if we could work through the trauma sufficiently she would not need her illness to express her psychic pain. In the event the physical illness was too virulent and Emily died. But first she began a journey of inner liberation and in the process confronted me with the limits of the known as I worked with her towards dying. I was afraid of this unknown territory and felt a powerful desire to retreat into the safety of well-worn ways of practising and familiar theories. At some point Emily knew something had changed in me because she sensed that I did not know where we were going, and this frightened her. Of course I had never known, though my belief in theories enabled me to imagine that I did. I felt that I had let Emily down, but now I wonder if we were on the edge of a new discovery together, one that was beginning to take us beyond 'doer and done to' (Benjamin, 2004) into a third space of genuinely intersubjective relating. Then Emily went for surgery and I never saw her again. She sent a euphoric email when she came round and realised she was alive. And another later, expressing her sadness and anxiety that all was not well after the surgery. Three weeks later she died.

I cannot quantify the experience of working with Emily. It was the most profound work I have done as a psychotherapist and it took me beyond my training and theories into places I did not want to go. I watched my client move beyond and away from me into the final stages of her life journey, and I knew I could not go with her. I thought this was only because of my limitations, but I now think it was also because she was going beyond therapy into a new stage of life. In our final session she told me she had realised that another hugely important area of her life now needed to be re-thought, and also that we could not begin to do that work together. We had run out of time. I think Emily had the courage to face this truth.

Working with Emily, and seeing her go beyond the limitations of our work, challenged me to look beyond the practice of psychotherapy as I understood it. I asked myself how my practice could be wider, deeper, more open to spiritual and existential questions, and what personal transformation I needed in order to be liberated from familiar patterns of thinking. Several years of psychoanalytic psychotherapy had not helped me to move beyond the familiar analytical perspective and interpretation of my internal world, and this felt limited and unsatisfactory. The third and fourth questions listed above, how apparent dichotomies may be held creatively in tension and how I can integrate split perceptions, had an urgency about them which drove me to seek new answers and new ways of searching for them. The ways I chose were this reflexive research project and meditative practices, and reflections on both are included in the autoethnographic account interwoven throughout this study. The question of how to transcend splitting is considered principally from the Jungian perspective of individuation, drawing on Jung's (1963, 1966, 1968b) use of alchemy as a metaphor for psychic transformation. This question also goes to the heart of many of the stories created in dialogue with research participants, which are not so much answers to a question as accounts of intersubjective experiences in therapeutic practice and other contexts. The process of the research conversations also offered me and the participants the potential for transformational experience.

### **Research question**

The background questions described above crystallised into a research question that encompassed professional and personal inquiry:

*What experiences do counsellors and psychotherapists find transformational?*

As the research proceeded, it became evident that although some participants mentioned striking events, their focus was more often on cumulative experience and reflections on it. I deliberately left it to the participants to choose whether to speak of personal and/or professional experiences and to define the concept of transformation as they wished. However, I had an implicit hope that we would experience transformational moments in conversation and be able to recognise and analyse these together. Sometimes this happened, and sometimes only one of us recognised the significance of a dialogical event and brought it into focus. This collaborative work involved the participants sometimes acting as co-researchers, as discussed in chapter 2. The significance of some events became apparent to me only later, while transcribing and re-listening to the recordings or during subsequent writing and reflection. Further questions then emerged related to key moments and themes (see tables 6-8, appendix 1).

## Key Concepts

### 1. Transformation

The notion of transformation used here is that of a change in perspective or attitude of some emotional, spiritual or ethical significance to the person. It may occur anywhere on a continuum from a gradual shift noticed in retrospect to a profound *kairos* experience felt at the time to be life-changing. This broad definition includes personal and professional experience, though several research participants commented that they could not separate the two because therapeutic practice involves the person of the practitioner at such a profound level. While change is a condition of life, transformation as I am defining it is something more specific. It may involve psychological or spiritual growth, development of new understanding or insight, recognition of something already known but not yet brought into conscious awareness, development of the capacity to be with oneself and to enter into close relationships, or acceptance of the existential realities of health and illness, life and death. Transformational experience is therefore connected with the meanings and values we attribute to ourselves and our relationships, and as such has spiritual and ethical dimensions. This definition has emerged from the material contributed by research participants and from reflections on my own experience.

Studies of transformation in the therapy literature inevitably focus principally on clients' experience of therapy (e.g. Rennie, 1994) or on processes of change in therapy (e.g. Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982; Meekums, 2006, 2008a; Norcross et al, 2011). One recent study, however, explores everyday experiences, acknowledging that 'even in the absence of psychotherapy some people make momentous changes, often due to personal or mentoring relationships that help them transform their lives for the better' (Friedlander et al, 2012, p.454). These authors found that what they call 'corrective experiences' often involved relationships other than therapy which facilitated 'meaningful reconceptualization' (p.472), a finding in line with the present study. Reflection on significant events and emotions, alone or with another, contributes to learning from experience and has consequences for subsequent relationships. For example, the impact of assimilating profound grief is attested in two therapists' moving account of their transformed practice following the death of their child (Callahan & Dittloff, 2007). They describe deepened capacities for empathy, humility and respect for their clients' phenomenological experience, which enabled them to transcend theoretical assumptions and model-specific practices. The therapists in the present study, including myself, also integrate learning from experience through reflection, with transformative potential for practice and relationships. The findings of the study are

concerned with the nature of the human experience of transformation and the relational and dialogical processes that contribute towards it.

In the therapy literature a number of terms are in use which are related to, but not necessarily the same as transformation as defined here. An early example is the concept of the mutative interpretation (Strachey, 1934/1969), referring to the psychoanalyst's presumed ability to effect change in the analysand by making just the right interpretation at just the right moment. This concept assumes that the analyst is the agent of change. In his seminal paper, *The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic change* (1957), Rogers suggests that the therapist provides the core conditions which enable the client to change. In classical psychoanalytic and person-centred theory the focus is respectively on doing something to or being present for someone else, who it is hoped will experience transformation through the agency or presence of the therapist. The nature of transformational experience is less in focus than the therapeutic activity which may facilitate it. More recent relational theory shifts the focus to the intersubjective therapeutic relationship in which both participants are potentially agents of transformation for each other. Mearns and Cooper's (2005) account of relational depth, and the extensive relational psychoanalytic literature represented by the BCPSG (2010) among others, focus on the moment-by-moment unfolding of the therapeutic relationship which is itself the matrix and agent of change. As theories of therapy, all of these naturally centre on how change happens, rather than how it feels or what meanings are attributed to it. Although I make use in this study of therapy concepts such as intersubjectivity and moments of meeting (Stern, 2004), my research focus was primarily on the felt experience and reflexive understanding of transformed inner states, which may arise through therapy or in quite different circumstances.

Bollas's (1987) concept of the transformational object, as indicated above, refers to the residual impression which may persist from infancy into adult life of a total experience of being made well, whole and satisfied. The parent who provides such an experience, as Winnicott (1971) describes, must eventually provide sufficient experience of not having every need met to enable the baby to begin to recognise the separateness of the (m)other. This process of gradual disillusion from primary omnipotence is mediated by a transitional object (Winnicott, 1971) which enables the baby to play with the experiences of separateness and identification and learn to manage safely the anxiety, frustration and possibly rage thus aroused. Thus the transitional object is transformational in a different way, and the process of moving from illusion to disillusion is established early in life as a principle with transformational potential. Paradoxically, the transformational object described by Bollas (1987) is illusory when it persists



beyond infancy, and transformation is actually facilitated by disillusion. Jacobs (2000) suggests that continual disillusionments enable us to transform current beliefs as they cease to sustain us, so that what appears at one time to be true or real is later seen as merely a particular lens through which we saw the world. As we become progressively divested of the illusion of knowing, we may learn to live with not-knowing or un-knowing. This, says Jacobs (2000, p.116), 'is not a state of mind that can be actively sought, although when it occurs the experience can be accepted for what it is: a 'gift', perhaps from the unconscious; or perhaps, spiritually minded people might say, from the transcendent'. However, acceptance of this 'gift' is not automatic and can be refused; that is why the gift is not like a transformational object. The transformation of self which Jacobs (2000) describes may be thought about psychologically, and to do so I have drawn particularly on Jungian thinking and on psychoanalytic writers such as Bion (1970). It may also be thought about spiritually, in terms which transcend particular religious beliefs and yet are to be found in all the major faiths. Because of my own cultural heritage I make use of mystical writings in the Christian tradition to gain another perspective on transformation of the self.

## **2. Conversation**

The term conversation, particularly research conversation, is used here in preference to interview to highlight the unstructured nature of the talk between research participants and myself. Within each research conversation there are of course some phases constrained by expectations about what an interview involves and some participants' assumption that I would lead by asking questions. However, when we begin to communicate genuinely and spontaneously in a way that involves us both in significant exploration and discovery, a quality can be distinguished which I refer to as *relational conversation*. We are no longer talking as two people in role, or without sustained attention and involvement, but with the whole of ourselves; we are being more fully human with each other. I make no claim that this quality is in any way particular to research conversations; indeed, it may occur anywhere when people are fully engaged in sharing their experience, feelings, thoughts and presence together with the intention of letting something profoundly meaningful to them emerge. This something is not already known to one and told to the other, but created or facilitated and perceived by both. In a spiritual context, this kind of talking together could be called a holy conversation, not because of the topic but because of the sense of opening to a transpersonal dimension. It may occur in counselling or psychotherapy when there is relational depth (Mearns & Cooper, 2005), a real engagement and opportunity for therapeutic change; it could then be called a therapeutic conversation. It may occur in conversation between friends or even relative strangers who engage with each other deeply and without defence to share a sense of connection and significance.

In all these settings, relational conversation in this sense does not happen all the time and may never happen.

Stern (2004) has developed the concept of the 'now moment', a *kairos* or opportunity for therapeutic change which requires the response of a 'moment of meeting', an authentic moment of shared connection between therapist and client. He further documents how these moments can emerge in the ordinary conversational process he refers to as 'moving along'. I make use of these concepts in discussing the process of research conversations (chapter 9), but I distinguish between moments of whatever length, which may be high points of connection or indeed of disconnection, and the sustained focus of relational conversation in which they occur. Relational conversation is intentional because the interlocutors are aware of the effort to find words for their meanings, to move together towards a new perspective, to think creatively and feel authentically. Within a relational conversation there will be now moments leading to moments of meeting, moments of not-meeting, times of moving along, and times of rest. The conversation may be brief or last several hours. This study demonstrates the potential of relational conversation to transform the inner psychological or emotional states of the interlocutors as well perhaps as their relationship.

### **3. Dialogue**

In this study I distinguish between conversation as an interaction between two or more participants and dialogue, which I use in Bakhtin's (1981) sense of a series of utterances requiring a response. Utterances may be spoken interpersonally or by internal interlocutors occupying different positions within the speaker or thinker, sometimes called inner speech. They may represent culturally normative discourses or positions determined by the speaker's relational history. I suggest that it is possible to recognise both consciously held and unconsciously influenced positions at work in both interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues, a notion I discuss in chapter 2. This dialogical interplay appears in the research conversations and is explored particularly in chapters 5, 6, 9 and 10. I refer to dialogue, then, with the intention of focussing on interactive features in conversation or inner speech that signal discursive positions which may or may not be consciously recognised. Dreams also appear to include dialogue between different aspects of the self, often dramatised as interactions between characters as in the theatre (Macaskie and Lees, 2011).

### **Outline of the thesis**

The thesis is not a straightforwardly linear account but is presented in an iterative way. In revisiting and editing the early chapters I was informed by later perspectives, so that the introduction (chapter 1) and methodological discussion (chapter 2), for example,

include references to findings and concepts that emerged later in the study. While this spiral structure does not adhere to the chronology of designing and conducting the research, it does mirror the reflexive process at the heart of the study: '*In my beginning is my end*' (T.S. Eliot, *East Coker* (Eliot, 1959)).

There are two aspects to this study. The first is the discussion of research conversations with seven participants, from which four main themes emerged (see table 7, appendix 1):

- i. Transformation and transcendence
- ii. Processes in relational conversation
- iii. Ambivalence, resistance and defence
- iv. Metaphor and symbol

These are relational themes. In other words, they depend on the dynamic intersubjective matrix of the conversations for their meaning, which shifts according to the relational movement between the conversational partners. The second theme, processes in relational conversation, therefore takes on an over-arching significance and it is only by grasping what these processes are as they operate in the material under consideration, that we can see the significance of the other themes for process rather than content. While the content of the research conversations is interesting in itself, its bearing on dialogical processes is the main focus of this study. All the themes therefore are to be understood from a perspective which asks, 'what does it *do*?'

I found that focusing only on these themes, while allowing important insights to be identified, fragmented the intersubjective context of the conversations and made it difficult to sense their dialogical nature. I therefore composed dialogical poems using text from the conversations to introduce the flavour of the interaction and allow each participant's presence to come alive through the text (chapter 4). I also give an extended account of my conversations with two participants, Matthew and Kim, to highlight the way internal and interpersonal dialogues influence our thinking and become apparent in our conversation (chapters 5-6).

The four main themes are discussed in chapters 8-11, which also integrate the sub-themes identified in table 8 (appendix 1):

- v. Reflections on our interaction and IPR process
- vi. Dominant and submerged discourses
- vii. Difference, connection and language
- viii. Impact of the research on the participants and their practice

The literature relevant to the study is wide-ranging and includes psychotherapeutic, linguistic and spiritual texts, which are discussed where relevant in each chapter.

The second aspect of the study is a reflexive account of my engagement with the research process, which I present here as an autoethnography using dreams, poems and journal entries as data. I include this because conducting the research was a transformative experience for me, and therefore provides a first-hand source of relevant data. The three autoethnographic chapters (3, 7 and 12) are presented chronologically at approximately the points during the study at which they provided a personal commentary or response.

The interweaving of the two aspects, the dialogical analysis of research conversations and autoethnography, is discussed in chapter 2, which focuses on methodology. The findings are presented together with discussion, firstly with a focus on dialogue, genre and discourse (chapter 4), then in two extended dialogical analyses (chapters 5 and 6), followed by the four thematic chapters listed above. Relationships between the findings are theorised in chapter 13. Implications for therapeutic practice, the therapy profession and for myself as researcher-practitioner are suggested in the conclusion.

## **2. Interweaving methodologies**

This study weaves together dialogical analysis (Sullivan, 2012) of research conversations with practising therapists and an autoethnographic exploration of the research process, which was deeply transformational for me. In this chapter I describe the data collection and analytical methods used with the conversations, followed by a discussion of autoethnography and the interrelation of these two aspects of the study.

### **Research participants or co-researchers**

I contacted potential research participants by means of a letter to all therapists and supervisors working at a voluntary sector counselling agency where I had previously worked. Nine people replied, and seven took part in the research. They were all experienced practitioners and described their therapeutic approaches as integrative, relational, psychodynamic or gestalt. They included one man and six women. Three participants identified as European, one as British Asian and three as white British. Two were former students of mine, two were former supervisees, and the others were former colleagues and in one case a friend. I refer to them here both as participants and co-researchers because the emphasis on each of these roles varied throughout the research conversations. When the focus was principally on their experiences and reflections, the term 'participant' seems appropriate; when the collaborative exploration of process and meaning predominated, we became co-researchers.

### **Research conversations and interpersonal process recall**

I conducted research conversations lasting between one and 1.5 hours with each participant at their workplace or the university, and in one case in the participant's home. All conversations were video recorded. I transcribed the conversations and then met each participant for a longer session (approximately two hours) in which we watched the video, referring to the transcript to orient us in finding particular remembered passages. The follow-up meetings were held as closely to the initial conversations as practicable given availability, and varied from three weeks to two months apart. The follow-up conversations used an adaptation of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) (Kagan et al, 1969), in which I invited the participants to stop the video at any point they felt was interesting, surprising, significant, unclear, or to which they wished to add something, and indicated that I would do the same. It was usually impossible to watch the full recording and discuss it in the time we had agreed for IPR, because the process proved so intriguing and fruitful in sometimes surprising ways.

IPR has been used as a training and research tool for over half a century, and was first applied to process research in the psychological therapies (Elliott, 1986). The method

consists of asking a client and/or therapist to review a recording of a recent therapy session with a consultant, commenting on specific moments. In Kagan's early work, a one-way mirror was used to enable the researcher to observe the consultant's interaction with the interviewee. Later versions include a meeting between therapist and client together with the consultant, in which their perceptions are explored jointly. Two major discussions of IPR are to be found in Elliott's (1986) review of its history and application and in Rennie's (1994) grounded theory study of client deference.

Elliott (1986) reviews the use of IPR to measure aspects of therapy process, including therapist response quality (e.g. helpfulness), intention, therapist and client state or content (e.g. comfort, congruence and internal speech) and significant therapy events. In all these cases, psychometric measures were used during IPR to score aspects of the therapy session under review, and although Elliott argues that IPR has untapped potential for investigating 'subtle and covert aspects' of therapy, he nonetheless regards the analysis of the qualitative data thus generated as 'a major stumbling block' (Elliott 1986, p. 524). It is surprising that this is seen as a drawback, since IPR creates an unparalleled opportunity for shared exploration and reflection which could open up new areas of intersubjective therapy research.

Rennie (1994) conducted a grounded theory analysis of recorded IPR sessions with fourteen clients, using transcribed therapy sessions as context but not as data. Again, the potential of the IPR method to generate intersubjective understanding was not the main focus of the study. However, this is not surprising since the aim of this and other IPR studies was principally to obtain a more accurate perception from clients of their experience in the original therapy session. The interaction with the researcher was seen as a means of access to this information rather than an event of interest in itself. For example, Kagan and Kagan (1997, p. 296) report that individuals who watched a video of an initial session immediately afterwards could 'recall thoughts and feelings in amazing detail and depth' and that the presence of a third person as inquirer facilitated more 'reliable' recall and verbalisation of their understanding of self states. The implication is that the participant was able to access and communicate a true record of their earlier thoughts and feelings, and that this is somehow more likely to be guaranteed by the presence of a trained inquirer. This raises the question of what a true account might be, and whether this could be recognised.

A partial answer to this question comes from studies of imaginative experience. Edgar (2004) addresses a similar issue in discussing the authenticity of dream reports: in what sense can a report *now* of a phenomenon experienced *then* be said to be an authentic representation? His answer is that the object of study in dream research is

not the dream image itself, but the research participants' understanding of the imagery and the process by which this is reached. Truthfulness therefore 'consists in the authenticity of the attribution of cognitive meaning to visual experience, rather than in the authenticity of the reported dream image' (Edgar 2004, p.69). Similarly, the use of IPR need not imply a reification of the thoughts and feelings experienced in a previous conversation; rather, it opens up the possibility of exploring the unexplored and creating a new experience in the present. In using IPR to review research conversations, it is important to clarify this, since neither the initial conversation nor the IPR session encapsulates a supposed authentic record of some other experience. Rather, both invite and enable reflection on experience, thus creating new experiences in the moment.

The process used in this study departed from traditional IPR practice in that there was no consultant present. Thus the research participants and I needed to be at ease exploring unspoken but perhaps intuited meanings and embodied communication. In general, these are skills which counsellors and psychotherapists have developed in their professional role, and I relied on the participants' familiarity with and ability to articulate reflexive self awareness. The process of viewing ourselves on video and discussing our interaction produced initial responses ranging from discomfort to amusement, but without exception the participants settled into the IPR process and some found that it provided unexpected opportunities for deepening self-understanding. It also provided me with the opportunity to question my assumptions of having understood. Using IPR facilitated several collaborative processes:

- Identification of key moments
- Joint clarification of meanings
- Expanding on thoughts and feelings that were implicit in the initial research conversations
- Challenging each other's perceptions
- Enabling research participants to decide whether they wanted sensitive material to be included or not
- Noticing non-verbal messages and how they meshed or otherwise with spoken material
- Facilitating joint understanding of the intersubjective dynamics
- Recognising here-and-now phenomena that operated as a sometimes unconscious commentary on the topic or research relationship
- Co-analysis of conversational processes

## **IPR and key moments**

By enabling reflexive exploration of the conversation, IPR facilitated our understanding of its intersubjective nature and helped us to collaboratively identify processes and narratives as key moments for further exploration and dialogical analysis (Sullivan, 2012). This approach draws on Bakhtin's (1981) concept of multi-voicing in dialogue. From this perspective, the presence of inner others to whom speech and thought are addressed renders dialogue complex and many-faceted. We cannot take the contributions of ourselves or others as simple questions and statements for two reasons: firstly, we are always inevitably speaking within the pre-structuring of speech genres such as the interview, and secondly, our expectations, perceptions of each other, doubts, 'sideways glances' and 'loopholes' (Sullivan 2012, p.60) find their way into the texture of our thought and speech. Dialogical analysis seeks to make this complex texture explicit by uncovering the genres, voices, emotions and chronotopes (space-time contexts) of research conversations.

To do this, it is necessary to select key moments from the transcript because of the huge quantity of dialogical material that the analytical process can reveal. Key moments are defined as follows:

'Key moments' are an 'utterance' of significance. An utterance is a significant unit of meaning, different from the sentence or the line and is defined by its readiness for a reply/reaction. As a unit of meaning, it can be of variable length. (Sullivan, 2012, p. 72)

The selection of key moments clearly depends on the researcher's perception of significance, but 'readiness for a reply/reaction' implies that this is a dialogically-based perception. The utterance identified as 'key' asks something of the interlocutor, reader or researcher. It enters into dialogue and invites reciprocation. Madill and Sullivan (2010) make use of key moments in their study of the experiences of medical students intercalating a year of psychology. Their selection emphasises emotional resonance as a criterion of choice:

A key moment consisted of a reasonably bounded narrative so that, in context, it was a recognisably complete story of an experience. To be considered 'key', a passage also had to be recounted with particular emotional involvement by the student and/or to have a particular emotional impact on us as listeners. (Madill & Sullivan, 2010, pp.2196-7)

These criteria for 'key-ness' are narrative-based and subjectively perceived by the researchers. Using IPR, however, allows both researcher and co-researchers to identify key moments and to interrogate the 'key-ness' of a given moment together, thus bringing a participatory quality to the study which is in keeping with its dialogical nature. Participation in research need not be limited to talking about experiences or



attitudes, but can also include co-analysis of material. From a justice-based perspective, co-analysis attempts to address the inherent power imbalance implicit in the traditional researcher-researched dyad. Horsfall and Titchen (2009, p.150) point out that for research to be 'transformatory and democratic', research processes as well as outcomes must have these qualities. IPR is one way in which I tried to democratise this inquiry.

My criteria for selecting key moments evolved in interaction with the data through watching the recordings, first with the participants and then alone. They are:

1. Narrative that illustrates a theme of passionate interest to the participant, or
2. Narrative that illustrates a theme of passionate interest to me
3. Instances of intersubjective connection
4. Instances of intersubjective difficulty
5. Reflexive discussion of our interaction
6. Review or revision of thinking
7. Implicit commentary on interaction or theme

IPR proved to be very useful in identifying key moments in partnership with participants as co-researchers. It enabled us to reflect together, deepen our understanding and sometimes to focus on the dynamics between us at that point in the recorded conversation. Sometimes the topic of our initial conversation seemed to be embodied or enacted in the subsequent session (e.g. Gwyneth, KM19, p.171) and in some cases further key moments occurred in the IPR session.

A problem in writing about research data of any kind is the almost inevitable implication that it is in some way real or true just because it is 'there'. It becomes reified on the page, so that what participants say seems more real than anything else, including what they did not say. This becomes even more problematic when snippets are taken out of context. However, what I have recorded, transcribed, analysed and written up is an artefact transformed at every stage of these processes, and what the participants and I said is also an artefact constructed in dialogue. It is not a reflection of supposed objective reality, or even necessarily of pre-existent thought, since what we think emerges as we form it in language. I have tried to give an account of what we constructed, our discourse, which is still my interpretation even when the participant has shared in the process of interpretation. This has some bearing on the selection of key moments. Taylor (2012) stresses the importance of clarifying the theoretical basis for selecting quotations, and argues that consistencies in talk represent the speaker's 'discursive resources' (p.393) rather than an affirmation of truth. This leads me to question the discursive functions my selection performs within this study. After all, I am

authoring the voices of others into my text. My selection of key moments may offer answers to my research question(s), pose new ones, support my pet theories, challenge them, surprise me, touch me emotionally, confirm or disconfirm the discourses and theories of counselling and psychotherapy, among other discursive purposes. The selection criteria outlined above clearly encompass these, and criteria 1 and 7 seek to include what matters to the participants even though I might not otherwise have thought it significant. The IPR process thus provides a balance to my personal selection.

Sullivan (2012) notes that the selection of key moments in Madill and Sullivan's (2010) study involved an iterative process, first selecting what seemed most interesting to the researchers and relevant to their research question, and then excluding more peripheral extracts. They were left with forty key moments from a data set consisting of two interviews with each of eleven participants. I identified 73 key moments varying in length from a few lines to two or three pages of dialogue from two conversations with each of seven participants. I have selected from these to exemplify the four themes discussed in chapters 8-11.

### **Dialogical analysis**

Having considered various approaches to narrative and discourse analysis which pay attention to the storied structure of accounts (Riessman, 1993, 2008; Speedy, 2008), the social functioning of discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and the broad cultural and political context of thought (Foucault, 1981), I selected the dialogical approach to data analysis outlined by Sullivan (2012) because it helped me engage with the text at several levels. This approach draws on Bakhtin's (1981) understanding of dialogue as both interpersonal and internal, in the sense that the other is always present in the thinking and speech of an individual. Our utterances are shaped not only by our own intentions but also by the interlocutors we are in dialogue with. On the interpersonal level these are most obviously our immediate conversational partners, but also include our apprehension of unseen hearers or readers, so that both speech and writing defer to the imagined audience's expectations of particular speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986). Utterances are also shaped by the multiplicity of the speaker/writer's discursive positions, which create a dialogue of voices perceptible in the utterance as hesitation, self-questioning, irony and defensiveness. In a dialogical analysis, therefore, Sullivan (2012) states that 'rhetorical features of language are viewed as both internally addressed to self and externally addressed to others' (p.14), giving rise to "double-voiced' discourses where the presence of more than one voice can be detected (faintly or strongly)' (p.16).

This awareness of multiple discourses in the utterance or text bears some resemblance to Foucault's (1980a) concept of dominant discourses that shape and constrain what can be conceptualised in any given historical context. However, Sullivan (2012) follows Taylor (1984) in critiquing Foucault's account for 'leav[ing] us hanging with a history that involves strategies (of power) without human projects' (p.32). In contrast, in a dialogical analysis,

Subjects may not be aware of mechanisms and effects of governance but these need to be explained with reference to human projects. In a dialogical approach, a key human project ... is an aesthetic one – to give form to the other while being authored by the other. (Sullivan, 2012, p.32)

This is precisely the aim of my analysis: to give form to the other(s), both research participants and others within myself, while recognising that as analyst of the data and as writer I am also authored by discourses grounded in my relations and interactions with these others and with those represented by 'the university', 'the therapy profession', and the many others who are part of my history and culture. The aesthetics of this analysis are grounded in awareness of patterns of interaction that sometimes enable and sometimes block 'moments of meeting' (Stern, 2004) between myself and the participants, myself and the text, the participants and the other(s) in their experience.

To demonstrate this process of discovering layers of interactive voices in the text, I need a non-linear way of representing them. I feel constricted by the linearity of the words on the page and the syntax of English which structures experiences into an apparently straightforward chronology of this and then that. It is true that layers of meaning sometimes appear chronologically, as when I hear someone speak and only later recognise a meaning that eluded me at the time. Was that meaning 'there' all along? Or is it a new insight, emerging in a new interaction of remembering, re-reading or re-listening? The notion of time is relative to the present in which I experience and formulate meaning, in dialogue with other real and imagined speaker/listener(s), texts, and surrounding cultural discourses. However, sometimes layers of meaning and echoes of other voices are evident in the moment and then it is space rather than time which seems to distinguish them: here and there. The spaces are sometimes places in the world, and sometimes spaces internal to the participant, myself, or in between us. These notions of 'internal' and 'in the world' are themselves metaphors that always implicate both 'places' since the borders of internal and external are infinitely permeable. Inner 'space' and outer 'place' can be experienced and thought of as mutually in dialogue. We operate as if we are discrete individuals, yet we constantly shape and structure ourselves and the world through this dialogue, in interaction with others and the environment.

## **Chronotopes**

To capture some of this complexity, Bakhtin's notion of *chronotope* is helpful. Bakhtin derived the term from biology (Holquist, 1990) and applied it to 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.84). He recognised that the term also refers to the concept of space-time in relativity theory and that in literary theory it is used 'almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely)' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.84). For Bakhtin, chronotopes have an essentially narrative function:

They are organising centers [*sic*] for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250)

Chronotopes are the concrete representation of events and provide the means for linking these to other types of discourse within the novel, or in this case within the accounts given by research participants:

Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center [*sic*] for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. (Bakhtin, 1981, p.250)

The chronotope fulfils similar functions of organising the narrative of research conversations and allowing speakers to concretise their representation of events and reflections on them. In analysing the conversations, the concept also allows me to distinguish the movement between here and there, now and then, in relation to what is being said in the initial conversation and in the subsequent discussion about that conversation in the IPR session. It allows for reference to different pasts and futures; for example the past of an event, imaginary or mythical pasts, possible futures and futures imagined in the past. It also enables reference to spaces that shape perceptions and memories of events, including actual places, interpersonal spaces, social and cultural locations and internal spaces.

## **Bureaucracy and charisma**

Sullivan (2012) draws on Weber's (1947) notion of bureaucratic and charismatic approaches to organisation in order to develop two complementary types of data analysis. In bureaucratic analysis, 'there is a procedure to be followed, this can be left as an 'audit-trail', the procedure systematically processes all of the data and the findings can be corroborated or at least given independent value on the basis of the procedures followed' (Sullivan, 2012, pp.64-5). The charismatic aspect of data analysis,

Sullivan (2012) suggests, depends very much on the personality of the analyst and is expressed in making choices, for example what to include and what to emphasise, and in how the analysis is written up. Both aspects 'should intertwine' so that the authority of the final interpretation arises from both 'rigour' and 'the charismatic capacity of the individual to actualise procedures' (Sullivan, 2012, p.78).

I followed the examples of Sullivan (2012) and Madill and Sullivan (2010) in making an initial 'bureaucratic' overview of key moments in table format, noting their principle genre, discourse features, emotional register and chronotope, and the context in which they occur (see table 9, appendix 2 for examples). Where relevant I have noted IPR comments on key moments. Some of these key moments are then written up more 'charismatically' with dialogical process commentaries. I have also used 'charismatic' elements in selecting and arranging words spoken by the participants and myself to compose dialogue poems (chapter 4).

### **Interlude**

As I was learning to use dialogical analysis, I noticed that what was happening between me and the data seemed to link organically with the metaphors that ran through my autoethnography. This poem describes a moment of recognition.

***Getting into the water<sup>1</sup>***

*I sink down,  
settling  
deeper.  
Sometimes a splash for fun?  
Sometimes desperation  
as the waters rise,  
seem to close over me.  
How can I breathe?  
How can I immerse  
emerge  
with this immense  
amount of data  
water*

*I buy a cook book,  
draw a map,  
mixing metaphors  
I found a path!*

*The waters are rising again.  
This time I build channels  
so the water can flow.  
Stones in the river bed<sup>2</sup> let in oxygen  
water plants grow.  
Maybe I'm learning to breathe...*

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<sup>1</sup> 'Getting into the water' is a theme of the autoethnographic chapters.

<sup>2</sup> The image of stones in the river bed comes from Kim, a research participant.

## **Dialogical unconsciousness**

'Getting into the water' is a recurring metaphor for the evident need to engage with the data and its recurrence shows my resistance to doing so, which persisted for some time after the research conversations. My dreams represented through the image of water something that was both scary and attractive. I understood the water as whatever is consciously unknown to me, including personal and archetypal unconscious material and intersubjective unconscious material 'in' the interviews. I place inverted commas around the metaphor 'in' because whatever this 'material' (another metaphor) is, it is created and re-created in the moments of knowing it, though I would argue that some of it is already known before reaching consciousness. Perhaps conscious knowing is a matter of articulating in space-time and in language, while non-conscious knowing co-exists outside the chronotopes that shape narrative and reflection. Matte Blanco's (1998) concept of bi-logic helpfully describes the co-existence of time-bound asymmetrical or rational thinking which builds categories of difference, with a non-temporal, non-spatial, symmetrical mode of perception and representation which recognises identity and simultaneity. As a psychoanalyst, Matte Blanco (1998) calls this mode 'the unconscious', noting its appearance in dreams, art and other manifestations of mental processes not accessible to rationality. I suggest that this mode of symmetrical 'logic' may not always be totally unconscious since knowing in this symmetrical way is in some sense a pre-cursor to consciously articulated knowledge. In this sense the water in my dreams and writing is not a completely murky depth, and the meanings 'in' the data are not entirely unknown to me.

Bakhtin and his associates (the 'Bakhtin Circle' of writers such as Voloshinov and Medvedev, some of whose publications may have been written by Bakhtin himself (Holquist, 1990)) rejected the notion that inner speech was unavailable to the speaker's consciousness. Voloshinov (1927), for example, thinks of the Freudian unconscious as open to introspection by the analytic patient, which suggests a partial reading of Freud. However, Voloshinov and Bakhtin were not conversant with later analytic writing on the unconscious dynamics of transference and countertransference which emphasises their reciprocal nature, for example, Sandler's (1976) concept of role responsiveness and the intersubjective perspective articulated by BCPSG (2010). Neither could Bakhtin and colleagues have known Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, first fully articulated in 1936 (Jung, 1968a). Theories of how unconscious experience and knowledge are replayed in the transference have now developed far beyond Freud's early formulations (Macaskie, 2008). However, the emphasis of Voloshinov and Bakhtin on the social world is a corrective to the 'asocial, ahistorical, biological terms'

(Shotter & Billig, 1998, p.19) of Freud's early work. In a slightly later essay, for example, Voloshinov argues that inner experience is social in origin:

*The subjective psyche is an object for ideological understanding and socioideological interpretation via understanding.* Once understood and interpreted, a psychic phenomenon becomes explainable solely in terms of the social factors that shape the concrete life of the individual in the conditions of his social environment. (Voloshinov, 1929, p.56, italics in original)

However, the impact of the social environment is not necessarily conscious. Shotter and Billig (1998) suggest that if we conceptualise consciousness as dialogically constructed between the individual and the social environment, as Bakhtin and Voloshinov do, then we also need to theorise a dialogical unconscious.

We see it as operating, not within the heads of individuals, but in our use of others. In such a view, there would be a dialectical relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness, for, as the very words we use in our dialogues with others draw attention to certain issues, it is drawn away from others. As dialogic consciousness, or attention, is focused on particular aspects of language, so others slip by, as it were, unnoticed. (Shotter & Billig, 1998, p.20)

This conceptualisation implies that in principle at least, attention could be focused on whatever 'slips by'. As dialogue is understood by Bakhtin and Voloshinov to include inner speech, Shotter and Billig's (1998) idea of a dialogical unconscious-conscious relationship allows for non-conscious knowing to be present though not attended to, perhaps intimated, for example in dreams, and subsequently to enter consciousness through articulation in language.

Shotter (1997) argues for a way of understanding experience based not on abstracting generalisations but on developing awareness of the dialogical nature of life. He suggests that while we think conventionally of two kinds of activity, firstly the actions of individuals and secondly those events which appear to happen independently, there is a third area of dialogical phenomena which 'occur in a chaotic zone of indeterminacy or uncertainty in between the two' (p. 345), and which he likens to Winnicott's (1971) concept of transitional phenomena. Shotter (1997) draws on Wittgenstein's (1953) idea of offering a reminder of what we know but have not yet noticed, to explore 'the amazing 'fractal fullness' of the momentary events occurring between us' (p.347). For Shotter, language is always interactive and reactive to the other, embodied, relational, and includes 'original or 'first-time' phenomena – a crucial part of what we can call for short, the usually unnoticed *background* to our lives' (p. 348, italics in original).

Since we are always responding to the world around us, Shotter (1997) argues, it makes no sense to think of this world as simply external to us. Because we are always in dialogue with each other and with our environment, our activities are interdependent.



Shotter (1997) suggests that this 'joint action' (p.349) is what Foucault (1980b) is indicating when he states that power relations do not operate as a result of one individual's decisions, but through discourses in which we all participate. The influences on our actions are not simply within us or within others, but in our shared background, which in Foucault's terms is the background of discourse that produces and constrains our thinking and practices:

Thus, to act in such a 'space' is to participate in a set of distinctive practices, to live a certain form of life, in which what, at any moment, I *do*, is a part of what, overall, *we* are doing. It is to live in a *participatory way*, a way in which one's life is connected on to, or related to a larger whole. (Shotter, 1997, p.350, italics in original)

Most theories and models of communication cannot explain this dialogical background satisfactorily because they focus on outcomes rather than processes of dialogue, and are themselves the outcome of dialogue – they cannot represent their own genesis. However, Shotter (1997) proposes that instead we can use Wittgenstein's 'poetic' methods to understand dialogical backgrounds. Rather than looking for commonalities amongst instances, we need to inhabit the 'interconnected landscape of actual and possible activities' (Shotter, 1997, p.352) which we already know from the inside, a practical knowledge of relating which is very different from a purely cognitive representation. Shotter (1997) refers to this as 'a 'scenic sense' of where we are' and asks 'How do we learn to live within such a landscape – or an ecology of such a landscape?' (p.353). His answer, following Wittgenstein, is that we remind each other conversationally of this landscape by means of discourse features which orient us, make links, point things out, and so on. We also connect all the details of what we notice 'by developing an embodied '*way*' or a '*practice of seeing*' them', which gives us 'a relational-responsive kind of understanding' (Shotter, 1997, p. 354, italics in original).

### **Naming names and moments of (not) meeting**

From the beginning of this project I wrote about the research participants using pseudonyms, even in my journal. I chose the pseudonyms on the basis of some perceived similarity or connection in my mind with each person, which reflects my own semi- or unconscious associations as well as social categorisations. In the case of participants whose names are not English, I found pseudonyms that seemed to reflect this while not defining their origin. Taylor (2012, p.390) notes that a pseudonym 'tends to reinforce categorizations of the speaker because it almost inevitably carries additional markers of age group, ethnicity and class', while being 'subtly informal and intimate'. As I began to write more systematically, I wanted to avoid imposing my own associations as far as possible and so I decided to follow the practice of a student of mine in asking the participants to suggest names for themselves (Connell 2012).

Categorisations are still inevitably implicit, but they are at least the ones the participants have chosen. The first reply came from someone whose interviews I had already analysed in some depth and presented at a conference, so the name I had given her was fixed in my mind. I had called her Astrid, which reflected her European origin. Her own choice of name is Kim, and I was almost shocked by the difference. The strength of my reaction is not really explained by familiarity with the former name I had chosen, but rather by the forcible recognition that there is much that I have not understood and that my capacity for attunement has definite limits. I had already realised this in working with the metaphors Kim uses and finding that I had unconsciously adapted them to match my interpretation (see chapter 11). This theme of not understanding occurs overtly with two other participants, Natalia and Louise, and is associated with differences of culture/ethnicity and social class. In these conversations we actually discuss the fact that I have not understood, and the memory of admitting it contributed to my resistance to returning to the data. In the case of Louise, my admission of not understanding leads to a 'moment of meeting' (Stern, 2004) in the dialogue, but the memory that stayed with me was one of shame and I even considered not using the material.

Another participant, Natalia, chose a name that echoes the pseudonym I had given her, Nadia. This seemed significant to me, perhaps because it suggests a degree of attunement on my part that would compensate for my perceived empathic failure in our research conversations. I began to notice other similarities in the pairs of names – an echoing syllabic rhythm, the same vowels, the same initial or mid-consonant, in one case a difference of only one letter – and got very excited by the idea that here was an example of unconscious communication. However, I think the main significance is that it suggests a capacity for unexpected degrees of both attunement and lack of attunement that have consequences in relationships but may often pass unnoticed.

Listening again to the recordings, I discovered more disjunctures or moments of not meeting where I had not noticed them, and also coded these as key moments. They offer some insight into the emotional quality of conversations which has implications for understanding alliance ruptures and repairs in psychotherapy (Safran & Muran, 2000), and ways in which therapist (and researcher) power can distort meaning. Not meeting, not understanding, is something that both Louise and Natalia mention in their work with clients whose lives are different in ways it would be possible to overlook, because they are outside the circle of our social and cultural assumptions. Louise speaks of an 'underclass' who we never see, either literally because they do not access counselling or metaphorically because their lives are so different that our categories do not fit. Natalia describes an old lady who lives a life so cut off from her surroundings that she

is utterly separate from what is known as 'the community' around her. It is as if we make assumptions about our ability to relate to others and understand them, particularly as therapists, yet this in itself blinds us until there is a disjuncture, an event, an image, a moment of seeing ('Oh! It's not what I thought!'). Louise connects with me for the first time in our conversation when I say I don't understand and I know that I don't. But I think I understand Kim and Matthew (see chapters 5 and 6) and only discover much later that this assumption is wrong.

The assumptions we use to make sense of conversation could be understood both as dominant discourses within the cultural worlds we inhabit (Foucault, 1980a) and the conventions of speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986) that dispose us to familiar patterns of meaning. Dialogical analysis offers a way of accessing these assumptions, seeing how they operate, and how subjugated voices also echo around and below the surface of dialogue in double-voiced discourse. It does this by highlighting the activity of the speaker/writer/researcher as author, whose utterances are shaped both by wider cultural and social discourses and by the dialogical situations in which the individual is embedded. A consequence of this emphasis on the author is that 'radical or heretical discourses are therefore authored within a network of social relations, as are established world-views and beliefs' (Burkitt, 1998, p.164), in contrast to a more disembodied Foucauldian understanding of discourse.

### **Dialogue, discourse and narrative**

Dialogical analysis, as I am using it in this study, differs from discourse and narrative approaches in the particularly intersubjective perspective it facilitates, and hence the nature of the research conversations that took place with this perspective in mind. My interest is in what the research participants and I do together in conversation and how this can be explored and tracked. We are of course tracking it largely unconsciously in the moment of happening, so that we respond to dialogical signals from each other and from the internal 'others' we bring with us. We are also tracking it more consciously as we watch the video recording together and stop to discuss what we observe. At the same time, new intersubjective processes are happening between us as we watch and discuss, in response to what we hear and see on the video and to each other in the moment, as well as to other events and influences in our lives. I go on tracking these processes as I listen, watch, transcribe, reflect, feel excited or puzzled, analyse and write. At every point, an intersubjective process is occurring between me and others, including the 'other' of my written words. Becoming more aware of this continuous dialogue involves noticing my embodied responses, dreaming and reverie (Bion, 1970) and writing reflexively to realise these states in language.

My analysis shares with forms of narrative inquiry an interest in the stories participants tell and how they tell them, for example in their use of metaphor. Narratives are not always stories because stories tend to emerge from a particular kind of context or question. If I ask, 'tell me about when...' or 'what was it like when you had that experience?' then I will most likely be told a story with sequencing of some kind (not necessarily chronological) and a plot. Classical narrative analyses such as those of Labov (1982) draw out this kind of structure. Narrative analysts such as Riessman (1993, 2008) and Speedy (2008) focus more on the dialogical context and intersubjective influences on narratives. The work of Doucet and Mauthner (2008) helpfully summarises debates within feminist thinking on the nature of the subject and what can be known about her/him, and suggests the concept of a narrated subject who may indeed have a depth of experiencing outside their narratives, but cannot be known outside the narratives they tell and researchers write. However, the focus of this kind of narrative inquiry is precisely on what *we* can know of *someone else*. Stories are contextualised, explored for cultural and relational meanings, but they are still someone else's stories. Once a researcher writes them, or writes about them, they become to some degree the researcher's story of that other person's experience, and epistemological questions arise about how and the extent to which we can have knowledge of another.

A dialogical approach presents a slightly different focus. Conversational partners are all involved in the creation of conversation at the many levels on which we engage. These include conscious levels such as what is spoken, heard, embodied, felt, seen, intuited and thought. They also include levels of semi-awareness and unconsciousness such as what is perceived but not registered in thought, fleeting awarenesses of paralinguistic communication and illocutionary force, and the transferences and countertransferences that arise from our personal histories and historicity (Gadamer, 2004). Also implicit in our conversations is shared participation in dominant discourses associated with academic research, the therapy profession, and in a wider sense the overlapping discourses of late modernity and the postmodern period in western culture. A dialogical approach offers tools for tracking some of these levels of conversation so that the emerging account is an interpretation of an intersubjective event, rather than an account of the 'other' or their story.

Stories are sometimes embedded within the research conversations in this study. It is interesting to note where and when they occur, in response, apparently, to discursive, dialogical and relational events. For example, Gwyneth tells several stories which she has thought in advance would be relevant to our conversation and to my research topic. Louise also begins the conversation by telling stories which she thinks are about

'*transformation*', and later expresses dissatisfaction with them because they fail to convey something she is reaching towards. Kim gives several narrative accounts which, though not stories in the sense of relating a specific episode or incident, are generalised narratives distilled from experience. All these narratives are pre-planned to some extent, since each participant has reflected on what to say that might be useful for my research. They are told in response to a wish to help me and informed by underlying discourses of what research is like and what a research participant is expected to produce or perform. Kim refers several times to these discursive assumptions, checking if what she talks about is '*helpful*', and she does this when after a pause I reiterate that I don't really want to ask questions but wonder if there is anything else she would like to say. There is, but Kim is hesitant in case it is '*not relevant*'. What she goes on to tell me is a different kind of story about her own suffering and resistance to coercion. Her language is full of metaphor ('*I am a strong river*') and strongly emotional words (feeling '*cut off, chopped into something, pressed into something*'). This has a different feel from the generalised accounts earlier in the conversation.

The genre of much of the research conversations, however, is not narrative but reflective, reflexive, professional and lyrical. Even autobiographical and confessional genres, which most closely fit the notion of narrative, are used not so much for stories as accounts of states of mind, and often our dialogue becomes the explicit focus of shared interest as we reflect on what is happening in the moment. Dialogical analysis can reveal dialogical intersubjectivity, not a separate narrated or discursive subject. I am part of the dialogue and have not tried to remove myself. I consciously sought to be present, and to enter into dialogue that could facilitate transformative experiences for both of us in the moment.

### **Composing autoethnography: controversies and ethics**

Freshwater et al (2010) consider autoethnography 'a research approach that privileges the individual...but hesitate to call it a research method' (p.504), since individual experience may be included in research in diverse ways. In this study I attempt to integrate reflexive thinking throughout the discussion, but specific chapters designated as autoethnographic (3, 7 and 12) present parallel stories of doing research and individuation. I include these for philosophical and practice-based reasons and in the interests of truthfulness. Philosophically, I share Muncey's (2010, p.3) view that 'in order to take the leap into creating an autoethnography one has first to recognise that there is no distinction between doing research and living a life.' Analysing and reflecting on the research process and research participants' narratives creates a new experience for me as researcher, which I iteratively analyse and reflect on, thus

changing it, so that I live with greater awareness of the shifting present moment. I use Stern's (2004) concepts of the present moment and moments of meeting to explore the intersubjectivity of research conversations (chapter 9) and these concepts also provide a metaphor for the 'data' of autoethnographic accounts. The data here include dream reports, reflective writing, drawings and photographs, which I recognise as bearers of significance at the border of the personal and the cultural. They represent a moment of meeting between my reflective awareness and my culturally-situated history. Working autoethnographically heightens awareness of how I live in the present moment by constantly calling attention to how my experience is shaped and interpreted, and how I thus contribute to shaping the surrounding culture. The hermeneutic circle becomes a spiral as I move between living and reflecting, since the effect of reflecting is to transform future moments of life.

This means that I cannot detach my own experience of doing research from the research itself; I am as much a participant as the people I interviewed. Also, as my research question asks what is transformational for the participants, it asks what is transformational for me. I find that doing research in this way is transformational; my research practice transforms how I think and feel and live my life. The autoethnographic chapters therefore present narratives of my experience while doing this project and attempt to show how my experience impacted the research process and how doing research impacted me. To show this reciprocal impact seems to me a requirement of practice ethics and I concur with Grant's (2010) claim that:

The challenge emerging from the perspective of relational ethics, and an ongoing relational consciousness, is for autoethnographers to live the person that is storied. The point is to work towards a better world and (re)story oneself accordingly. This points to a form of *morality ethics* where one lives one's autoethnographic task. (Grant, 2010, p.115, italics in original)

I see my task as that of living openly in practice and in my written text as a person in transition towards transcending polarised thinking. This task will never be complete because unreflected attitudes and behaviours are called forth from us all the time, and the work of an autoethnographer and a reflexive practitioner is to seek to increase awareness of these attitudes and challenge them. In chapter 8 I argue that transcending polarities is one way in which we transform ourselves and in so doing may incrementally transform our small bit of the world. In writing an account of my research process, I attempt to show my own lived process of working towards transformation.

Autoethnographies allow an individual story to be told that may be hidden by conventional research methods because it is a 'deviant case' or because it does not fit with widely-held perceptions of truth (Muncey, 2002, 2005). In counselling and

psychotherapy research, in spite of the value accorded reflexivity in therapy practice, the researcher's story is paradoxically seldom told<sup>3</sup>. Published exceptions include Etherington (2003), Meekums (2008b), Mott (2013), Speedy (2013), Wright (2009) and Wright and Cunningham (2013), all of whom discuss the rarity and controversial nature of autoethnographic contributions to counselling and psychotherapy research and the potential for innovatively authentic critical work which this methodology offers. Etherington (2009) suggests that a legacy of psychodynamic reluctance to self-disclose, combined with reverence for objectivist scientific methodologies, contributes to an avoidance of reflexivity and transparency throughout the therapy research field. Wright (2009) also notes the marginalising of the researcher's voice by objectivist paradigms in therapy research, in contrast to its acceptance in other social science fields more influenced by feminist approaches. In an account of her experience of migration, Wright (2009) specifically reflects on becoming her own therapist through the medium of autoethnographic writing. The writing is a medium of transformation, and reading it clarified my understanding of why I also needed to write autoethnography, as I noted in my journal:

I read and write, listen and write, crystallise a version for now of the flowing moments and the sense I make of them – for now. I want to write in response to this article, not to discuss or critique it but just to write myself into words that are never only mine. And to tell a story of my understanding, now that a door of perception has opened for me. It makes sense to think of my dreams and writing over the last two years as 'being my own therapist' (Wright 2009, p.629) and emerging from a state of unbelief in my own healing agency. How could I be a therapist to anyone else when I did not believe I could be that for myself? (Journal, 7.9.10)

This extract highlights the need to heal myself which was a major factor in giving up my psychotherapy practice in 2007. I began this study as a 'wounded researcher' (Romanyshyn, 2007) looking for healing that I had not found as a client in therapy, and writing, dreaming and meditating became a way of healing myself. Composing autoethnography can be therapeutic and transformative, and it is also a method of critically studying the cultural context(s) of the story it tells. The overlapping contexts of my story include the uneasy relationship of therapy and research, the ambivalent desire of the therapy profession to be seen as scientific and to become academically respectable, the increasingly dominant discourses of objectivism and positivism in much therapy research, the narrowly sectarian nature of some of the psychoanalytic discourses I absorbed in training, and the tendency of psychoanalytic theory to pathologise resistance, which contributed to my reluctance to find creative non-analytic solutions to my resistance as a client. My autoethnographic task includes making these

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<sup>3</sup> A PsycInfo search (conducted on 2.1.14) using keywords 'autoethnography' AND psychotherap\* OR counsel\* produced only 24 results.

contextual discourses audible and critiquing them as I describe the personal trajectory of my research process.

Anderson (2006) distinguishes between evocative autoethnography, exemplified in the work of Bochner and Ellis (2002) and Ellis (2004), and analytic autoethnography, which he argues is less concerned with the emotional resonances of the researcher's story and more with focusing it as a critical lens to view cultural phenomena. The five features<sup>4</sup> which Anderson (2006) suggests distinguish analytic autoethnography appear in my text. Anderson (2006) claims that these features help to ensure that 'analytic autoethnography is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well' (p.386), towards 'a value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization' (p.388). My autoethnographic texts, however, while compatible with the listed features, are not motivated by a social scientific need to generalise but primarily by a psycho-spiritual need to transcend polarities in the search for individuation and to locate that search within the present study alongside the material arising from research conversations. Like Vryan (2006), I believe that Anderson's (2006) requirement that other informants be included in autoethnography misses the point: an individual's story is precisely that, even though that story is necessarily relationally and culturally constructed because life is lived with other people in communities. My study is not intended to be an autoethnography with additional participants, but a composite study with two aspects, dialogical analysis of research conversations and autoethnography which comments on the parallel individuation and research processes. How far the two join up or remain polarised illustrates the difficulty of transcending oppositions. The fact that I find some common ground with other research participants in this study is perhaps 'value-added' but I do not intend any generalisation of our experiences or stories. These are unique to each individual. However, my experiences and those recounted to me are all relationally constructed and contribute to the theoretical perspectives developed in this study. In writing autoethnography, I attempt to show the blending of conscious, unconscious, cultural and theoretical perspectives that I have woven into the fabric of this study, so that my process of creating meaning may be more transparent.

My position as an autoethnographer, however, is not the same as that of the transparent ethnographer advocated by Anderson (2006) and endorsed by Atkinson

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<sup>4</sup> (1) Complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis. (Anderson, 2006, p.378)



(2006, p.403), who warns of the 'need to guard against any implicit assumption that self-transformation is the main outcome of such research processes'. In fact self-transformation is one of the main outcomes of my research process, and this enables me to listen differently to others and to reinterpret my own earlier interpretations (see for example, the discussion of hijacked metaphors, chapter 11). Denzin (2006, p.422) highlights the 'messy and pedagogical' nature of research practices and how they 'instruct' readers about the world seen through a particular lens, and argues that Anderson's version of analytic autoethnography fails to embrace the radical challenge to this pedagogical purpose posed by autoethnographic writing. Instead, Denzin (2006, p.423) 'seek[s] a writing form that enacts a methodology of the heart, a form that listens to the heart'. Ellis and Bochner (2006) also critique Anderson (2006) for reducing the power of stories that evoke the reader's emotions to something not very different from realist ethnography. They characteristically present their argument through a dialogue which shows their emotional relationship to the positions they develop and invites the reader to participate in their thinking. This is no less analytical for being written in a dramatic process-focused way.

The controversy around analytic and evocative autoethnography demonstrates the tendency to polarise, even among highly reflective and self-aware writers, once some kind of categorisation occurs. The basic thought process of dividing phenomena into categories typifies linear thinking but risks imbalance unless the non-linear, symbolic and emotional capacities of the mind are also engaged (Jung, 1967). We need head and heart, conscious and unconscious, analysis and evocation. The autoethnographic chapters of this study attempt to invite the reader into my process of learning to recognise, disturb and hopefully transcend the settled perspectives that limit my thinking and self-healing. It has been difficult to write from both the heart and the head, and one or the other has prevailed at different times. I have found the head takes the lead whenever I feel under pressure from academic structures and other dominant discourses. In the autoethnographic chapters particularly I attempt to integrate head and heart and have chosen dreams and reflective practices that in terms of Jung's (1971) theory of personality compensate for my tendency to emphasise intellectual capacities over emotional and spiritual ones.

Chapter 3 presents a dream sequence which occurred during the first year of this study, with reflective amplification. Chapter 7 presents a dream and a journey I made in consequence of it around the middle of the study, with reflections on meditative drawings. Chapter 12 includes dreams linked to illness and focuses on the final year of the research process. In each chapter I understand the dream images as both personal and research-focused communications between aspects of myself, which reflect the

psychological impact of doing research and represent the process of transformation this engendered in me. Personal work and research became inseparable. Jung (1960) warns that active imagination, a method used therapeutically to amplify dreams and other material arising spontaneously, runs certain risks:

A further danger, in itself harmless, is that, though authentic contents may be produced, the patient evinces an exclusively aesthetic interest in them and consequently remains stuck in an all-enveloping phantasmagoria, so that once more nothing is gained. The meaning and value of these fantasies are revealed only through their integration into the personality as a whole – that is to say, at the moment when one is confronted not only with what they mean but also with their moral demands. (Jung, 1960, p.68<sup>5</sup>)

This warning speaks to the risk autoethnographers run of losing sight of the social and ethical purposes of their study. I am aware of the power of dream images and my imaginative elaborations of them to capture my aesthetic interest and seduce me into a 'phantasmagoria'. The 'moral demands' Jung (1960) speaks of require a commitment to integrating the learning that arises from working with these images into a more balanced or individuated personal state. This is the task of the analytic patient and the seeker of personal transformation. As an autoethnographer I share this task and have the additional one of making plain the relevance of my experience to the socio-cultural context in which it occurs.

In short, this autoethnography has two aims: to document my trajectory towards individuation during the study, thus offering another narrative of transformational experience alongside those of other research participants, and to comment reflexively on the research process. The emphasis varies between these purposes at different times. A thread is provided by the symbolic narrative of the *Rosarium Philosophorum* and Jung's (1966) commentary on it in his essay *The Psychology of the Transference*. The *Rosarium* is an alchemical treatise which describes a process of bringing opposing elements into conjunction and through further stages to rebirth as a composite form. On one level it refers to transforming chemical elements, but as Jung (1966) notes, it presupposes that the alchemist is also transformed and that the chemical processes are a metaphor for psycho-spiritual ones. The *Rosarium* also provides a metaphor for the parallel research and individuation processes described in this study. I discuss the metaphorical connection of my 'data' to the stages of the *Rosarium* in the autoethnographic chapters.

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<sup>5</sup> References to Jung's writing conventionally cite paragraph numbers rather than page numbers from the volumes of his *Collected Works* unless the text cited is not so numbered, as in this case. The text cited above is taken from the Prefatory Note to *The Transcendent Function*, CW8.

## **Self and other in autoethnography**

The autoethnographic self occupies multiple positions of experiencing, reflecting on experience, creating a medium of expression which can resonate with its audience, and critically exploring the socio-cultural discourses which inform both experience and expression. 'Self *is* other' (Spry, 2001, p.716, italics in original) since it is at once the centre of proprioceptive and introspective awareness and the site of critical reflexivity. Using dreams as autoethnographic material takes advantage of the process of othering self which is already happening in the dramatic interplay of dream images. Grotstein (2000) suggests dreams are like a performance commissioned and directed by the dreaming self to enact concerns and resources that are currently unknown to consciousness. The other(s) are within as well as without, since the border of self and world is infinitely permeable. Dream reports offer an effective way of presenting both inner and outer phenomena, since they trouble the binary of inner/outer through their representation of personal and collective unconscious elements stirred up by situations arising in current life. The task of reflecting critically on dream reports involves locating them as far as possible in their context of surrounding discourses, since they are already shaped by this context. Edgar (2004), an anthropologist who uses his own dreams and those of informants as data, comments on the difference between raw dreams and dream reports:

This filtration of imagery into thought is an act of translation which begins the construction of meaning. It does this by relating the visual imagery to the cognitive categories of the dreamer's culture. Such cognitive categories carry implicit ways of ordering and sequencing time and space, person and action that inevitably begin to define and delimit the possible readings of the text or narration (Edgar, 2004, p.70).

Edgar (2004) used his own dreams to inform his research while studying a therapeutic community and found that 'what is important is the impact of dream imagery on the dreamer, in this case an ethnographer, and the congruence and synchronicity of at least parts of the imagery with central preoccupations of the community in question' (p.129). Similarly, the relation of my own dream imagery to my research question and the process of this study is significant. Edgar (2004) presents a 'charting model of ethnographic dreaming' (p.129) relating his dream images to dream relationships, dreamt physical qualities, time and dream analysis. This does not go very far since he could make much deeper links to events and concerns in the community he is studying and analyse the dreams more than he does. But the idea of charting a dream sequence in relation to a research project is already present in his work, and I develop it further here to enable a dialogue between self and other(s)-in-the-self. All the dreams reported here occurred when I needed to become aware of something I did not know consciously, and so constitute 'messages' from that internal 'other' to my conscious self.

Horsfall and Titchen (2009, p. 152) also suggest that 'intuition, images and processes of creative imagination are one step ahead of, and integral to, the reflective process, so that ... if we stay close to images and processes of creative imagination, they will suggest new frontiers of understanding.' Similarly, Meekums (1993) likens research to creative processes. These authors all evidence the power of imagination and creativity to lead as well as complement reflective thinking and so bring to research a much-needed balance between left and right hemisphere capacities.

In discussing consciousness and unconsciousness I make use of the theoretical perspectives of psychoanalysis and Jungian psychology that may be considered 'grand narratives' and require critical appraisal. Psychotherapy's project of increasing consciousness, deriving particularly from Freud's notion of the repressed unconscious, implies that unconsciousness exists somehow and somewhere else outside awareness, and this implication may appear in some of my discussion. It also seems to be implicit in Jung's concepts of the collective unconscious and archetypal symbols if these are understood in Platonic terms as shadowy forms appearing on the cave wall of consciousness. However, Hauke (2000) argues that this dualistic perspective is unnecessary to reading Jung:

Perhaps there is no 'something else', something lost or unconscious, that is 'freed' or 'recovered' or 'discovered' by the process of fostering greater consciousness. Perhaps this *process of greater consciousness*, implied by the Jungian concept of individuation, is the 'freed' thing itself. In other words, there is no separation between the *process* (freeing) and something it is *acting upon* (the freed). The process is *it*: conscious awareness's 'aim' is the 'achievement' of itself: consciousness expressing itself or even *consciousness 'consciousing' itself*. (Hauke, 2000, pp.78-79, italics in original)

Kugler (2008) also argues that Jung's thought avoids the dualistic trap of separating reality from its representation in the observing mind. Jung's view of imagery as neither simply a representation of what is 'out there' nor a self-referential construction of the mind adopts 'a mediating third position, *esse in anima*, between what today would be called deconstruction and universalism' (Kugler, 2008, p. 89). Psychic reality for Jung is actually constituted by images appearing in dreams and their amplification and other cultural artefacts, since it is through these images that consciousness is expanded.

What the image signifies cannot precisely be determined, either by appeal to a difference or universal. While the significance of the image cannot precisely be defined, it does, however, induce consciousness to think beyond itself, not by an appeal to divinities nor to history, but to a knowing that cannot be designated a priori. Perhaps the most important function psychic images perform is to aid the individual in transcending conscious knowledge. Psychic images provide a bridge to the sublime, pointing towards something unknown, beyond subjectivity (Kugler, 2008, pp. 89-90).

Something beyond subjectivity implies intersubjectivity, the dynamic relation of self and other constituted by interpersonal dialogue and by the interaction of conscious awareness with its potential to expand itself. Autoethnography, like the dialogical analysis of research conversations in this study, tries to show this dynamic relation in action.

### **Autoethnography and ethical issues**

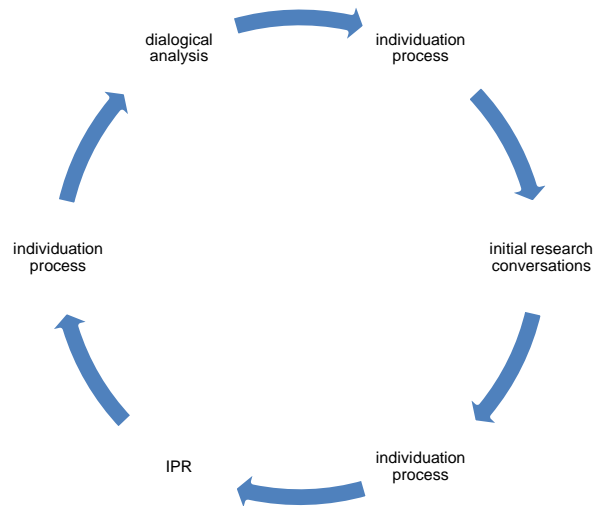
Being involved as a participant in my own study goes some way towards equalising the power imbalance of research relationships. Berger (2001, p.507) notes that sharing her own story reduces 'the hierarchical gap between researchers and respondents' and 'fosters relationship formation and exchange between us, allowing all involved to feel a greater sense of rapport'. This was one of the reasons I shared dreams with research participants at a workshop, and continued to share during our research conversations something of the process described in the autoethnographic chapters. It thus became clear that participants were invited to be co-researchers.

However, there are other hidden participants who may appear without their knowledge or consent in autoethnographic texts. In this study, they include dream figures who take the form of real people I know, for example research supervisors, colleagues, students, friends and family. Psychologically, I consider that these figures represent aspects of myself, but I have undeniably if unconsciously selected particular people to carry my projected self-states. There is some fit between them or my perception of them and the projections expressed in the dreams. I have anonymised dream figures with the exception of my research supervisors Dawn and John, who have consented to my use of their names. The stories I tell are my own, not those of the personae of the dreams, and I have followed the advice of Tollich (2010, p.1608) to 'treat any autoethnography as an inked tattoo' by which I will be indelibly identified and to 'assume all people mentioned in the text will read it one day'. I protect my own vulnerability by selecting what to disclose, and that of dream personae by as far as possible presenting them without identifying features.

### **Interweaving methodologies**

I think of this thesis as a metaphor for my own process of moving towards integration and transformation. In keeping with the metaphorical nature of the thesis, the research design reflects the need to transcend binary oppositions (Jung, 1960) so that a new perspective or potential may emerge. How far I am able to weave together the autoethnographic and conversation-based elements into a coherent whole is a question I ask myself throughout, and yet the option of choosing only one of these has never felt right. The task is to try to create something which at times seems like a

tapestry and at times a patchwork quilt, but is still a recognisable whole. Although I am referring here to research design, the last sentence could equally describe the individuation process which runs parallel to the research project and is explicitly the focus of the autoethnographic chapters. However, this personal process could not have taken place in the same way without relational conversations with the research participants. Similarly, the conversations and the way I worked with the material the participants shared with me depended to a great extent on my own trajectory. The methodological strands of the study are mutually interdependent, as shown by figure 1.



**Figure 1 Interweaving methodologies**

Figure 1 shows how the various stages of my individuation process, activated by doing research, interweave with, influence and are influenced by the research conversations, IPR and dialogical analysis. The two aspects of the study come together in specific chronotopes at points on the spiral, created by the time and space/place of data such as key moments in the conversations and dreams and other events described in the autoethnographies.

### 3. Autoethnography (1): a dream sequence

Beginning the research process represented a new attempt to experience, identify and understand something that had seemed to elude me personally and in my practice as a psychotherapist. I was seeking a significant transformation of self to heal psychological splitting and help me to be more in tune with the spiritual dimension of my being. The research process therefore included a personal trajectory towards individuation or becoming undivided.

I began to think about how we talk of experience, and how the stories we tell and hear have the power to change the shape of the experiences recounted. My experiences and the stories I told about them at the start of this study were shaped by the particular perspective of psychodynamic training and psychotherapy which had been in their own way transformative for me. But I was in need of a new story. Psychodynamics alone could not help me move from being an interested participant observer of my internal world to greater integration of my intellectual, spiritual and relational being.

I gradually realised that the story of the research process was one of several stories of transformation that the study would include, alongside those emerging from research conversations with participants. I was being changed by the process. I began to notice symbolic markers of these changes as they appeared in a sequence of ten dreams, which continued throughout the first year of study. The development of the dream imagery and its relation to the research process is discussed by Macaskie and Lees (2011), who focus on the second dream of the series as an example of its characteristic imagery and the method of active imagination used to explore its symbolic resonance. The ten dreams are presented here followed by reflections on their relevance to the individuation and research processes in the context of the dominant discourses of psycho-social research and the therapy profession. I explore the dream imagery in terms of alchemical symbolism which Jung (1963, 1966) considered a metaphor for individuation. The early pictures of the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, discussed in Jung's (1966) essay *The Psychology of the Transference*, represent the problem of separate elements or polarised psychological states and a gradual movement towards immersion in waters that dissolve and transform them. I feel a resonance between the dream sequence and this alchemical imagery, while recognising that this is only one possible way to make sense of dream experience.

## The dream sequence

### Dream 1: Kick-boxing, 28.11.08

*I was doing a course at Westminster Pastoral Foundation (WPF), where I trained as a counsellor and psychotherapist. Everyone looked the same and although they wore name badges, when I was introduced the names all sounded similar. This was puzzling because they weren't the same as the name badges. I made an effort to remember names but they were hard to grasp. We were shepherded into a room and I said to someone, "What's this, evening prayers?" She said, "Something like that." It seemed like a group activity. We were all in lines and the leaders made shadow boxing or kick boxing gestures towards us while the lines all responded with similar movements. I didn't join in. John, my supervisor, was teaching some students and paid no attention. The leaders were very critical of him, but I said "He's a brilliant teacher." I felt pleased he was going to teach my students but embarrassed that he would see my boring power point presentation. People who made me feel included left and I felt isolated. A senior colleague from my university department asked why I hadn't joined in the kick boxing and I felt told off. I said, "I know this organisation and I choose not to join in." There was nothing left to say. Outside it was raining heavily and there was no-one about; it looked desolate.*

The dream states a problematic situation. I am affiliated to a regimented organisation identified with WPF and the university department, but I am cynical of its devotion to ritualistic procedures ('evening prayers'). I feel I am going against the prevailing orthodoxy of both psychodynamic and academic practice. The kick boxing routine suggests an adversarial stance towards a shadowy enemy who perhaps carries the group's projections. Perhaps my Shadow has been constellated and needs to be integrated. Jung (1968a, para 513) notes that the Shadow 'appears either in projection on suitable persons, or personified as such in dreams' and 'personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself'. Clearly, I need to acknowledge my tendency to rigid thinking. The dream 'organisation' seems like a psychic retreat (Steiner, 1993), a mental space of rigid structure that does not allow development. John, however, does not engage with the group activity but represents a non-orthodox way of being an academic, suggesting that this research process offers me a new way of engaging with my Shadow. I feel both admiration for his stance and shame at the possibility that he will find me boring and unoriginal. Significantly, a male figure offers me an alternative way, and perhaps implies a need to learn from the *animus*<sup>6</sup>. The senior colleague telling me off is female and I experience her in the dream as surprisingly authoritarian. These male and female figures then seem to represent an

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<sup>6</sup> The *animus* is Jung's (1968a) term for unconscious and under-developed aspects of a woman's psyche which, like the *anima* in the male psyche, possesses qualities conventionally attributed to the gender opposite that of the individual. However, Samuels et al (1986, p. 23) note that 'they operate in relation to the dominant *psychic principle* of a man or woman and not simply, as is commonly suggested, as the contrasexual psychological component of maleness or femaleness' and 'act as psychopompi or guides of soul'. This is an important distinction, as the idea of a contrasexual component is open to criticism as based on a narrowly biological view of gender. As 'guides of the soul', however, *animus* and *anima* can compensate for an unbalanced attitude, and arguably both need to be integrated within the personality regardless of the individual's sex. This is the sense in which I use the terms here.



opposition. The male figure is self-contained, wise, and teaches a different way of doing things; he appears to be a figure of integration. The female figure is authoritarian and represents the old ways of the organisation, and is seemingly possessed<sup>7</sup> by the *animus* rather than integrated. The dream appears to be showing me two *animus* possibilities. It is time to shake off accustomed ways of thinking and try something different which will involve engaging the untapped *animus* wisdom available to me. However, this will mean breaking ties to a familiar community and going alone into a desolate rainy landscape. The rain is the first occurrence of water imagery which recurs throughout the dream sequence, suggesting the initial stage of *solutio* in alchemy. This is the process of dissolving the *prima materia* so that it can be worked with. In picture 1 of the *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Jung 1966, p. 205) the water in the Mercurial Fountain hints at the need to dissolve the separate elements represented as the sun and moon, male and female.



**Figure 2 The Mercurial Fountain (RP1)**

In my dream the male and female figures are disconnected and the female is actively oppositional to the male, who disengages from the organisation she represents. In alchemical terms, the opposites need to come together and the way forward is through the water of dissolution.

As I began to think about the prevailing orthodoxies of healthcare and therapy research, I realised I would have to find another way of investigating transformational experience. I could not, for example, use a methodology which did not take account of my experience as researcher, nor one which neglected a psychotherapeutic understanding of intersubjectivity in research conversations. My supervisors Dawn and John encouraged me to risk finding my own way by trusting the process of dreaming, reflecting and challenging the received wisdom of several organisations, both external,

<sup>7</sup> Possession in Jungian thinking means 'a take-over or occupation of the ego-personality by a complex or other archetypal content' (Samuels et al, 1986, p. 110). Possession by the *animus* implies 'being taken in by second-rate thinking' (Samuels et al, 1986, p. 24) leading to an unbalanced domineering attitude.

such as the academic world and the therapy profession, and internal, such as the unintegrated Shadow and *animus*. In this first dream of the sequence, my unconscious or internal 'other' presented me with a clear image of a rigid mental organisation, mirroring external pressures to conform, and pointed out the need to work differently. It also highlighted the anxiety and feeling of isolation this aroused in me.

### **Dream 2: Forth Railway Bridge, 12.1.09**

(The dream text is reproduced with permission of the publishers from Macaskie and Lees (2011) and the subsequent paragraph is adapted from the same source).

*I had a picture of the Forth Railway Bridge and knew it was a terrorist target. I also knew I was a target because I had taught some students who were somehow implicated in this terror. I woke up feeling this was an experience of terror from some unnamed, vague source, directed at me and at my students. The bridge was in black and white and grey, not in colour. The fear was real, icy, physical, not a concept but a sensation, raw and direct.*



**Figure 3 Forth Bridge**

### **Reflections**

Coming a few weeks after the first dream, this one also indicates my ambivalence and unconscious fear at the start of the research project. I am confronted with the terror of the unknown, and I am both the target of threat and a participant in creating it, having taught the students who may be terrorists. I am unleashing something which threatens to destroy the comfortably structured thought processes of my habitual defences. Working reflexively with my experience is a familiar therapeutic practice but feels daring and somewhat disturbing as a research method. The railway line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, which crosses the bridge, links the two universities I attended and recalls the work I left unfinished in Scotland and perhaps now have a chance to complete, both academically and psychologically. The binary opposites of black and white (not colour) in the dream image suggest dichotomised thinking, which needs to be deconstructed and transformed as part of the individuation process. The grey bridge seems to represent ambivalence, perhaps being stuck. The fact that it is a railway bridge also suggests a perception that the way is laid down in advance so that

any deviation would involve 'going off the rails' and ending up in the watery depths below. And yet, as the dream sequence shows with increasing clarity, that is what I need to do.

Symbolically, this dream image also shares features with the first picture of the *Rosarium Philosophorum*. Like the rectangular shape enclosing the fountain, the sections of the bridge are four-sided.



Figure 4 Section of Forth Bridge

Discussing the concept of quaternity, Jung says:

Four as the minimal number by which order can be created represents the pluralistic state of the man who has not yet attained inner unity, hence the state of bondage and disunion, of disintegration, and of being torn in different directions – an agonizing, unredeemed state which longs for union, reconciliation, redemption, healing and wholeness. (Jung 1966, para. 405)

For Jung, the number four or four objects represent the basis and possibility of unity but not yet its achievement. This can occur only when the four are integrated into a whole, as in a mandala which combines a circle and square, though 'these images are naturally only anticipations of a wholeness which is, in principle, always just beyond our reach' (Jung, 1966, para 536). From this perspective, the dream appears to be showing me my current state of disintegration and a hope of integration. Beneath the bridge lies the water, reminiscent of the fountain at the bottom of *Rosarium* picture 1, which is said to represent both the *aqua permanens* or divine water and *mare tenebrosum* or chaos.

Falling into the water therefore represents a descent into terrifying confusion and immersion in the alchemist's vessel where the necessary work of transformation can take place. This is called the *solutio* or dissolution, foreshadowed by the rain in dream 1 and made plain in *Rosarium* picture 4, the immersion in the bath.

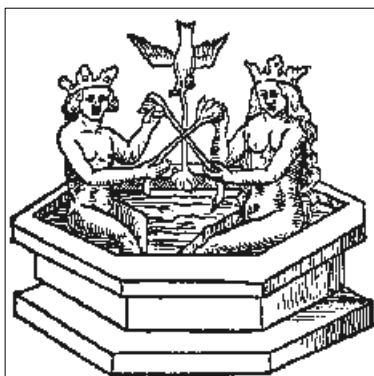


Figure 5 Immersion in the Bath (RP4)

The unnamed terror in my dream seems to be associated with the dissolution of my established thought patterns through doing research. According to Edinger (1985), *olutio* reduces a substance to its original state as *prima materia* and represents a process which breaks down rigid aspects of the personality so they can be transformed. The dream ego experiences this prospect as a terrorist threat, but it is already implicated in the threat by association with the terrorists, thus creating the context for its own dissolution. I recognised the paradox as I embarked on a research process that both inspired and scared me.

It seems that the *animus* wisdom represented by John in dream 1 is not accessible in the second dream, perhaps because of the increased level of fear. The iron bridge and the terrorists bent on destroying it suggest an extreme polarisation of *animus* qualities as rigid and threatening. At this stage of the research process, my fear dominates and makes it difficult to integrate the polarities implied by the black and white dream image. Edinger (1985) suggests that:

Whenever a one-sided attitude encounters a larger attitude that includes the opposites, the former, if it is open to influence, is dissolved by the latter and goes into a state of *olutio*. This explains why a more comprehensive standpoint is often experienced as a threat. (p. 57)

Beginning the research process, like entering psychotherapy, certainly involves a conscious effort to include opposites, and both processes engender anxiety. The dream points to a degree of anxiety far in excess of anything in my conscious awareness at the time, and so implies that the archetypal realm has been constellated. The vague threat and icy physical fear suggest an encounter with the numinous, which inspires terror. Numinous experience may be understood as the projection of unconscious contents onto an object in the external or internal world, but the qualitative difference between the ordinary experience of projection and numinous experience lies in the degree of archetypal content of the projection (Stein, 2006). It is not simply that personal repressed fears are projected, but that the potential for the apprehension of archetypal elements is realised. These elements have about them a quality of awe and mystery.

Jung (1983, p. 225) describes his encounters with the numinous in dreams and waking fantasies as ‘the *prima materia* for a lifetime’s work’, indicating that numinous experiences are the starting point of the individuation process, not its end. Stein (2006) notes that they contribute to the development of the transcendent function (Jung, 1960), the capacity to move beyond binary oppositions:

The individuation task is to make them conscious and to bring them into relation with other aspects of the Self, and thereby to attain approximate wholeness. (Stein, 2006, p. 50)

This second dream then intimates a need to make conscious the sources of fear and to integrate the opposites within my personality and thinking. Thus the dichotomies of qualitative and quantitative research, research and practice, counselling and psychotherapy, academy and profession, all of which are present in the discourses surrounding research in the therapy field and therefore unavoidably present in my thinking, need to be challenged and subjected to the *solutio* of reflexive awareness.

The next two dreams of the series are closely related and both seem to point to a loosening up of earlier rigidity as I engage more deeply with the research process.

### **Dream 3: The veil and the boy, 8.2.09**

*I was walking through a city, wearing black robes like Muslim dress, including a veil. I threw off the veil and headscarf and folded back the black robes and there was a bright thick lining inside. It seemed to be academic dress and I wanted to show off the coloured lining. I felt freed up from the clutter of the robes. Then I met a little boy who looked at my hand and told me I was going to die. I asked when and he said the 24<sup>th</sup> of June. I didn't feel upset by that.*

I initially associated the black robes with repression, denial, restriction and narrow religious orthodoxy, so they offered a hook for my projected unintegrated polarities. In the dream I cast off the veil that has hidden me from myself and others and find the process liberating and exciting. As I push back the robes I find bright colours underneath and the restrictive dress is transformed into an academic gown. Symbolically, the research process is transforming my internal organisation from being hampered by dichotomous thinking to creativity and liveliness.

The boy who reads my hand brings a message of death. It does not seem frightening, however, but feels as though I am being freed from the constraints and limitations of the past, symbolised by the dark robes. Dying can be thought of as the *nigredo* process of alchemical transformation, going into the darkness as a purification. Death and darkness in this view are necessary conditions of transformation, not to be overcome but entered into, even embraced. To resist entering the darkness is to refuse the transformation and ultimately to stay with the decaying body rather than releasing the spirit.

The boy is perhaps best understood as an archetypal figure. Jung (1968a, para 303) found that:

As a matter of experience, we meet the child archetype in spontaneous and in therapeutically induced individuation processes. The first manifestation of the "child" is as a rule a totally unconscious phenomenon.

This third dream is the first in which the dominant emotions are happiness and a sense of liveliness, and the appearance of the child perhaps signifies that the dream-I is becoming more able to play. I am beginning to relax and becoming more creative in the research process, which is now identified with individuation. The child 'is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind' but also 'represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself' (Jung, 1968a, para 289). This child warns of death, but in a way that does not threaten the dream-I. The exactness of the date of 24<sup>th</sup> June is curious. Of course I do not know when I will die, but as this is Midsummer's Day perhaps it expresses a wish to be fully alive when I die, as Winnicott is reputed to have wished. I wrote in my journal:

For so long I have been told, and more than half believed, that I use books and academic work as an escape and defence. There is truth in that, when I use them to avoid. But now I feel I am using them as a means of transformation, and it is whole-hearted for once and creative. I feel alive, in mid-summer.  
(Journal, 19.2.09)

#### **Dream 4: The cat gets the veil, 5.3.09**

*I dreamed about a Muslim student. She was wearing her black robes but still somehow managing to either swim or water-ski. I led the way and she joined in. Then I noticed she'd removed her veil even though there was someone there who she couldn't see, possibly a man. She was risking it and having fun, playing and joining in. A cat got hold of the veil and played with it, and I wondered what she would do. Her veil was all bunched up in the cat's paws and would be the worse for wear!*

Women in Muslim dress were becoming hugely symbolic for me because I now see that they reminded me of aspects of myself and carried some of my unconscious projections. I felt angry with what I perceived to be rigidity, fundamentalism and split thinking, which were all aspects of my own defences. I had turned to Catholicism and later to psychoanalytic theory, both of which I had embraced in a fairly dogmatic way, from a need for faith in some kind of total explanation of human life. But the dream woman is a genuinely lively person with a strong sense of fun and she subverts the image of the repressed veiled woman from within. She seems to represent both my defensiveness and the lively energetic part of me that was emerging as the research process unveiled hidden aspects of myself. The lively side leads the way in this dream and the hidden side takes the risk of being seen. Doing reflexive research does not allow hiding places, and so perhaps the unconscious 'other' is showing me that this self-revelation can enable me to 'join in' and find the process fun. The sense of loneliness and desolation experienced in dream 1 has been dispelled.

In this dream, it is unclear whether we are swimming or water-skiing; we may be in the water or on the surface. Water has already come to symbolise the dissolving of polarised attitudes in dream 2, and now it seems that I am almost getting into the water, but only enough to enjoy it. I am not in its depths yet, which will require more of me than play, just as research does. But for now, the playful, mischievous cat-me has no respect for defences, though the dream-I seems both excited and slightly anxious about the destruction of the veil.

Dreams 3 and 4 both represent a challenge to orthodoxy. This is not only a matter of personal development, but of subverting the dominant discourses symbolised by the dark robes and veil, which conceal a truth. These discourses refer to the perceived 'correct' ways of doing research, which in therapy and healthcare so often emphasise supposed objectivity and neglect the experience and accumulated wisdom of the practitioner (Lees & Freshwater, 2008). The present study, combining a personal experiential trajectory with participants' accounts of transformational experience, requires me to unveil myself as I use my own experience as research data. This is not new; autoethnography and other forms of reflexive research are well established, but they remain marginal even within the therapy professions from which some of their methods derive (Macaskie & Lees, 2011).

Just before the dream of the cat and the veil, I had attended a research methods module which made no concessions to reflexivity except to warn of researcher bias and gave the impression that much conventional research reifies something which is not a thing, freezes an ephemeral impression or objectifies an interviewee's response made in a particular intersubjective context, without attending to the complexities of that human context. I had also very recently attended a colleague's presentation of research in which I had been a participant. I was strangely shocked to recognise my words quoted anonymously on the screen. I had forgotten, so it was like meeting myself, though not quite myself, as if I had lost something and saw it there, no longer in my possession. My words were no longer in the context of my thinking, but given the context of the researcher's argument. This experience led me to wonder how faithfully I could use my research participants' words. I felt that they were offering me a gift in the context of our shared understanding, and that to 'clean up the data' for my own purposes would be to do violence. '*We murder to dissect*' (Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned* (Davies, 1975)). These two experiences provided the immediate context for dreaming of casting off the veil and a cat scrunching it up in its paws. It is as if unconsciously I responded to the orthodoxies of the research methods module and my concern to respect the context of participants' stories by understanding that play rather than confrontation is the best way for me to challenge dominant discourses. A familiar

reaction would be to take an oppositional stance and become polarised; instead, unconsciously I already seem to know that playing is more creative and integrative, and probably more subversive. These dreams encourage me to let myself play as a researcher.

**Dream 5: The house (1), 9.3.09**

*I was in a house I knew was mine, though not my actual house. There was a fairly well-furnished, traditional room with paintings on the walls and orderly furniture. Dawn, my supervisor, appeared and we went down to another room that seemed to be underground. It was a kitchen with a big table and the remains of yesterday's meal, apparently a large dinner party but not at all formal – just lots of people had come for a meal. I thought, "Oh, I never cleared up." I didn't mind Dawn seeing this. I felt more concerned about her seeing the first room and wondered if she would like the paintings.*

This dream suggests that there are areas of myself like the first room which present a conventional appearance, other more intimate areas that I invite friends into and perhaps others that I keep closed off and whose existence I may not even know. As I reveal more of myself in the research-individuation process, I feel more vulnerable to shame about my defensive manoeuvres than about what they are designed to hide. I am concerned about Dawn not liking the paintings in my orderly traditional room, but not at all about the convivial underground kitchen. I rather want to be seen and known in this deeper part of myself, where I enjoy offering warmth and friendship and having fun. I recognise three aspects of myself in this dream: a defended orthodox part, embodied in the orderly room, a more hidden informal part that is welcoming, warm and fun, and the dream-I, who is embarrassed by her defensiveness.

As I engaged more deeply in the research process, it began to seem very therapeutic. Working with my supervisors Dawn and John sometimes felt like being in therapy, unsurprisingly, since they are therapists. Although the research and individuation processes went hand in hand, there were times when one predominated. At the time of this and the subsequent dream, the predominant aspect is individuation. I am opening myself up, going down to a deeper level and inviting Dawn to come with me. The house as symbol of the self, here and in dream 9, echoes Jung's (1983) dream of a two storey house in which he discovered a cellar and then an even deeper level below a stone slab, representing collective unconscious and primitive aspects of the psyche. He states:

It was plain to me that the house presented a kind of image of the psyche – that is to say, of my then state of consciousness, with hitherto unconscious additions. (Jung, 1983, p. 184)

It is sometimes said that patients in Jungian analysis have Jungian dreams while those in Freudian analysis have Freudian dreams. In the research process I became a Jungian through reading his writings and discovering the use of Jungian analytic



methods for research purposes (Boyd, 2008; Macaskie & Lees, 2011). In this very Jungian dream with its allusion to a text I had read though not remembered consciously, I invite Dawn, a Jungian psychotherapist, to the underground kitchen where I welcome friends. It is as if the dream dramatises the blurring of a number of apparently distinct categories through the figures of Dawn and myself and the background reference to Jung. It indicates that my therapeutic journey is linked to the research process since it is my research supervisor who accompanies me, and seems to confirm that the means by which I can actively make sense of this conjoint process is a Jungian method of working with dream symbolism. Another set of apparent polar opposites, an inner journey of the self and research as discovering something 'out there', are being dissolved like elements in an alchemist's crucible. In this and the next dream, I am tentatively getting closer to immersion in the bath as pictured in *Rosarium* picture 4.

#### **Dream 6: Wise woman, 20.3.09**

*I dreamed of a wise woman who might have been Dawn and might have been me, encouraging me to go deeper, down into deep places.*

The wise woman knows it is necessary to go deeper and I feel I can trust her wisdom. I am unsure whether she is Dawn or me; perhaps I project my inner wisdom onto her because I do not yet fully own it. I know clearly that I need to go deeper both personally and as a researcher, and the wise woman helps me find the courage to do this.

This dream reaffirms the message of the previous one, that the research journey involves exploring deeper aspects of myself and bringing them to light. At this stage the connection between the aims of the research project and the personal experience of individuation was clear, but I could not yet step outside these intertwined processes in order to articulate the connection. I was stuck inside the hermeneutic circle, immersed in the experience, not yet able to move to a reflexive perspective. The wise woman of this dream, however, encourages me to continue and to trust the process, which means trusting her/my inner wisdom.

#### **Dream 7: I can't rescue Elf, 17.5.09**

*Elfie (my black cat) was going to live with other people. They immediately let her out and I was afraid she wasn't used to her new place and wouldn't come back. I could see her out there, jumping around and backing away from people, and I wanted to go and call her quietly but loads of noisy people started shouting and trying to come with me. I got very upset and angry because they would frighten her away, and told them to leave me alone, but one of them trapped my foot and I couldn't get away. Felt sure I had lost Elf. In the dream she wasn't black, but not black and white either – sort of both at the same time.*

Anxiety is once again sparked off. Cats have often appeared in my dreams seeming to represent my lively but vulnerable side, calling forth my sense of fun, compassion and protectiveness. Here the cat has moved out of the sphere of my defences and I am

afraid she will get lost so I try to rescue her. I am unsure if the noisy people are trying to rescue her too or deliberately trying to stop me. Elf appears both black and white at the same time, not patches of each; she holds the opposites together. This recalls the Forth Bridge dream: the unnamed terror has a definite focus this time (I am afraid of being so lively and adventurous that I lose myself) and the stark contrasts of the black and white bridge have come together in a cat who conjoins the polarities. It is as if having approached the metaphorical water of the bath in *Rosarium* picture 4, I am teetering on the edge of getting into the depths.

Meditating on this dream I was struck by the idea that perhaps Elf wanted to be free and wasn't lost at all. I realised that, as in dream 5 of the house, there are three images of myself: the lively free spirit of the cat, the noisy though possibly well-meaning clodhoppers, and the dream-I, trying to keep control. These three aspects were just then activated in my ambivalent relation to the conventions of research manifested at the 2009 BACP Research Conference in Portsmouth, which I had just attended. Here, famous names in therapy research presented randomized controlled trials and case studies that seemed to carry weight with the academy and the medical research establishment, while fringe elements presented more interesting reflexive narrative studies in smaller rooms down a side corridor. I felt affinity with the latter group but wondered if I should try to engage more with the former, and how to transcend the splitting inherent in this perception of opposing tendencies. The workshop choices offered at the conference made it possible for me to stay within the bubble of the more congenial strand, unchallenged by different thinking. I was aware that unless the difference in thinking could itself be actively debated, the split would remain. Yet it seemed to me that the best way was not to try to integrate different approaches to research but to transcend the polarising tendency that splits them into valid and invalid, most obviously expressed in the hierarchy of evidence used in NICE (2012) guidelines. In this context dream 7 appears to depict the anxiety and confusion that lead to defensive splitting and tells me to let the cat/spirit go and trust her to find her way. She is not to be identified with one side or other of the split. Ironically, the dream-I was not greatly worried by the cat going to live with other people until they failed to follow my rules! It is as if by engaging with research I have begun to let my cat/spirit go free, but have still to accept that my conscious ego cannot control where she goes.

#### **Dream 8: The key to the door, 27.5.09**

*I was going back to Aberdeen to finish my degree. I was given a key and had to validate it by opening a door, but just as I was going to put it in the lock someone opened the door from inside. I couldn't wait to try again because the bus was coming, so I ran and got on it, still carrying the key. I felt apprehensive about Aberdeen, but then I found myself in a seminar full of middle-aged people like me. The room was dignified and full of heraldic images and I*

*knew it would be OK going back there. I was going to meet an old university friend and the room full of people was warm and welcoming.*

Aberdeen has frequently appeared in my dreams, usually with an anxious compulsive wish to return there, but this time the anxiety disappears and the return feels right. Perhaps the dream refers to my disrupted academic life (I did not complete my first degree there) which I have returned to in undertaking this study. I have the key but have not used it, and need to validate it by taking action. When the door opens, strangely I feel no impulse to go through it, only a slight irritation that I will have to try the key again. Perhaps completing my degree at Edinburgh only finished an academic task but did not conclude the psychological work I began at Aberdeen. In the dream I cannot try the key again because the bus arrives and I must catch it. I am apprehensive because I should have done this work when I was younger. However, I am reassured by the presence of people of my age. The room reminds me of Kings' College Library in Aberdeen and I feel at home there. The heraldic images convey a sense of ceremony, history and belonging. It is the right place for me to be. The presence of an old friend promises company and fun.

Evidently, this dream confirms my sense of it being personally right for me to undertake this research study now. It is as if the key to the door will be validated by going back to a familiar place in a different spirit, and perhaps '*know the place for the first time*' (T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding* (Eliot, 1959)). This turn of the spiral represents a spiritual homecoming just as the heraldic images and deep sense of belonging suggest a re-enchantment with the world of learning and scholarship. Being at home among these symbols suggests a connection with an archetypal dimension distinct from the details of personal history which the dream makes reference to. The future focus and the connection of scholarship and spirituality continue in the last two dreams of the sequence.

### **Dream 9: The house (2), 19.7.09**

*I was in a very large house, which I knew was mine. I had inherited it. There was a large space near the top that was being renovated – plain walls, painted yellow, with people working on them on scaffolding. Some visitors came, among them a woman who I knew also had a large house. I asked her to come and see this house that had been left to me, knowing that she would appreciate it and not envy me. I said, "Come and see the roof space" – this was going to be full of light. But we had to go down lots of dark stairs first and I said, "There are two places you must see, no, three – you must see my roof space, my chapel and my library." I saw the library in my mind's eye, and it was old, panelled in wood, lined with books, a lovely old library. I hadn't seen this or the other places before, but I knew we had to look at them and they would be wonderful, special places.*

I have inherited the house, so it carries my history as Jung's (1983) dream house carried his. It is large and has rooms I have not explored, though I seem to know about them. The roof space is being transformed into a light, bright room with plain walls that

are not filled up with pictures like the walls in the first house dream. Here they are open to the light and not concealed by decoration or design. I feel open to new impressions. The woman is not a threat because she will not be envious and so I have no need to hide anything from her. In showing her the house I discover it for myself. Paradoxically we go down dark stairs to reach the light roof space, as if our way involves exploring the unconscious. We will find the wonderful library and chapel on the way. I know about the chapel without seeing it, and then in my dream-mind's eye I see the library, which is well-loved and lined with books. It is as if the library represents learning and wisdom that are within reach. I recounted this dream to a friend who saw a picture of the library in her mind, similar to the picture I then described. I understand from this that the library represents something readily accessible to me which I can therefore communicate fairly easily in image form. The chapel is less accessible but I know it is there, perhaps because I have often tried to follow a spiritual path. The dream tells me it will be a special place, but I have no image of it so I have to take it on faith.

At the time of this dream I was approaching the end of the first year of study. I had learned to recognise the fears the research process generated in me, which were often associated with my perception of deviating from conventional research methods in the psychotherapy field. By this point, however, I am thoroughly engaged in a research process that also transforms me, and the imagery of the dream suggests both learning and spirituality play a part.

**Dream 10: The square, 20.7.09**

*A group of people were gathered together for an event which may have been students' presentations at the end of a module or a celebration of the Eucharist. In any case it was a presentation of something and a celebration of something. There was a square object like a card, which I focused on.*

This image stayed with me strongly. A couple of days after the dream I recognised the square object in the metal grill of a tabernacle door fixed to the wall of a small chapel in Wales. The square suggests a mandala, a symbol of wholeness common to many traditions (Jung, 1968a). I had no further associations to this dream at the time and was reluctant to write it down. Perhaps it was too soon to say anything about it.

In retrospect as I now approach the end of this study, I feel that this dream represents a desired goal that I could not describe or imagine before. It is not only the projected completion of the study, indicated by the metaphor of the students' presentations, but also the celebration of some indefinable state of wholeness suggested by the mandala-like square and its spiritual associations. The dream gives me a glimpse of transformation. The Eucharistic reference also recalls the grail or chalice, which is mentioned by my research participant Kim as a symbol of the transformative process of

therapy (p.185). The symbolism of this dream draws together the threads of research and personal trajectory, my individual process and the experience of my research participants, suggested by the group gathered together for an event, and links the social phenomenon of researching human experience with the spiritual endeavour of meaning-making. It is in a sense a *coniunctio* like that represented in *Rosarium* picture 5, where king and queen make love in the water of unconsciousness (Jung, 1966). The unconsciousness of this joining together is important; my dream projects a potential future consummation that is beyond my current capacity to realise in practice. However, the *coniunctio* is not the final goal of the *Rosarium*. There are more phases including death before the final image of rebirth. The lack of immediate associations to the dream image suggests that it too offers a glimpse of an ideal state of integration.



Figure 6 The *Coniunctio* (RP5)

Although I continued to dream aspects of the research process from time to time, this dream sequence seemed to be complete after dream 10. It provided a running commentary that brought unconscious anxieties and aspirations to my awareness and located my experience of the research process in a particular cultural context.

This is the context of a profession striving to secure its place in the academy, struggling to find its voice among the powerful discourses of social and medical research that seem to confer validity on its efforts but subtly distort the wisdom of its practitioners to fit dominant paradigms of what counts as knowledge. The earlier dreams in the sequence show my fear of not conforming to accepted methods and the personal struggle activated by my ambivalent wish to belong to the academic-therapeutic club at the same time as subverting it. The later dreams suggest that this ambivalence is gradually being resolved as I continue the processes of research and individuation. As I argue in chapter 8, transformation involves transcending polarities and moving to a new third position. Dreams 9 and 10 of the sequence offer images of transformation that imply the inclusion of apparent opposites in a new perspective that transcends their binary opposition.

#### **4. Dialogical synthesis**

In this chapter I present a dialogical synthesis of salient features of the research conversations. Polkinghorne (1995) proposed two forms of narrative inquiry, analysis of narratives and narrative analysis, corresponding to Bruner's (1985) distinction between paradigmatic and narrative knowing. The analysis of narratives results in generalisations, themes and structures, while narrative analysis refers to the synthesising of accounts into stories. In parallel, I use two forms of dialogical inquiry in this study, dialogical analysis applied to key moments which leads to the identification of themes, and dialogical synthesis which attempts to present findings holistically and stay closer to the intersubjective contexts they emerge from. First, I show how all the conversations began with participants' implicit or explicit responses to the research topic, thus announcing central issues and dialogical features from the start and shaping the 'plot' of the dialogue. Following this, I introduce dialogue poems which also synthesise themes that are analysed in subsequent chapters. Following a suggestion of Sullivan's (2012), I use 'sound bites' to provide further examples of content and process which fall outside key moments but resonate with their spirit.

##### **Answering the question**

In considering the general research topic, participants spoke in the first few minutes of experiences, concepts or processes that were highly significant for them, yet often quite surprising for me. I had preconceptions based on my own experience and expected participants to describe transformative moments in their practice, personal therapy, dreams or perhaps transpersonal experiences. I also hoped the research conversations would provide a facilitating environment for experiences such as moments of meeting (Stern 2004). This certainly happened, giving rise to complex examples of conversational processes, and my attention was drawn to these processes rather than the content. It was only after analysing the conversations that I recognised the significance of what was said in the first few moments. As sometimes happens in therapy sessions, participants' central preoccupations seemed to be communicated in these moments, sometimes overtly and sometimes in implicit ways that we elucidated later.

Although I did not ask specific questions, I encouraged participants to talk about experiences they felt to be transformational, and their initial responses showed they had prepared in advance by reflecting on experience. These responses set the scene for the whole conversation and point to dialogical elements such as participants' relation to dominant discourses and intersubjective features that develop between us. I

now detail the participants' initial answers to the research question; key moments and emerging themes are further discussed in chapters 8-11.

### **Maria**

*Well I've brought a bit of art as well, so I don't know if that might kind of fit in, maybe a little bit about the transformation – you know, from [own country], with me leaving and coming over here, has kind of happened. And then looking back at how it influenced my life, as well, being a counsellor, and the way I work really.*

Maria came to England from her own country at the age of 19 without being able to speak English. This was a profoundly significant experience that she has come to understand emotionally through art and intellectually through counsellor training. Having always been 'very creative', at this transitional point she stopped doing art but 'recently picked it back up, as a result of one of my clients'. Her art journal and sculptures tell the story of the loss of her familiar environment and communicative competence, through 'scary' times to a gradual recovery of a sense of wholeness. There are already intimations here of themes that emerge later in our conversation: the trauma of not having a voice which reactivated early experiences, the fear of losing English, the impact of clients on her self-understanding, gaining confidence in English through becoming a counsellor, and joining up theory, art and feelings in a creative 'triangle'.

### **Christine**

*My first response weeks ago when we first touched on it, started talking about this, was oh my current training has had a big impact, so that would be something. And then I was thinking yesterday more how and where exactly, and I was getting into a bit of a theoretical sort of way of thinking... and then I started to think much bigger and how had I come to where I am at all, you know, sort of life course almost, and that seemed quite big in a way... Well, the idea that therapists change as well as clients, I like that idea ...because that fits very much in the Gestalt approach ... that's what you're focusing on, what's happening here and what's happening between.*

Christine's Gestalt training provides a way of thinking about her experience of 'what's happening here and what's happening between' therapist and client, and how 'by definition it changes you ... because what's happening between you is going on, it's happening all the time'. She talks of the impact of the training on her practice and the personal importance of 'staying with what is'. She is learning that she can allow herself to relate to others and accept support for herself, and during our conversation this learning seems to be transmuted from an intellectual to an emotional realisation. There are transformational moments for us both in the conversation, so that 'what's happening between' us becomes a live concept.

### Natalia

*For me the workshop – I think it was nice it was a small group. Also it was a mixed group. Mixed in the fact that there was a male, and also a mix from different cultural backgrounds. So I think there was a richness in the group... Yeah, cos it's not just me bringing a different culture, it's somebody else... I think in my experience, having read about the counselling profession, it has been a white western profession, my learning. Now being in this field and seeing colleagues in different organisations, and how they network together, the organisations themselves, but it's individuals you know, learning and feeding off each other, I think it's essential.*

Natalia focuses on the diversity of participants in the research workshops she attended and the contrasting 'white western' homogeneity of the counselling profession in general. For her it was 'wholesome' to be part of a diverse group and to discover through her job as a community counsellor in a culturally diverse neighbourhood that there are other organisations and practitioners extending beyond the traditional limitations of 'white western' counselling. These comments on diversity set the scene for Natalia's wish, stated in the IPR session, to help me understand the experience of counsellors from another culture. Our dialogue about difference and working through misperceptions are perhaps the key elements of our conversations. There is a link for Natalia between the need for cultural diversity in the profession and the personal opening she experiences in her work. Her counselling course was 'an eye opener' because it challenged the world view she grew up with and led her to re-think her parents' protectiveness, so that as a parent herself she has become 'more relaxed with the boundaries, and respecting ... individuals with choices'. 'Learning and feeding off each other' is Natalia's hope for herself, her relationships and her profession.

### Louise

*Am I the last? ...I'm thinking transformational and it's huge isn't it, it's such a big, I know it's not a question but it's big I think, cos sometimes I don't know if this is due to my professional work or just ageing but I look at the ten years I've been a counsellor with all the training and stuff and I think I've opened, I've opened and I've spent a long time knowing that one day I would open but knowing that the time wasn't right... So that's transformational isn't it? ... But also I can't stop thinking about a client that I worked with yesterday now, how so many times when I'm with my clients something might happen and it's transformational it really goes, it really gets into me.... It's a bit like souls meeting, isn't it?*

Louise starts with the expectation of being the last participant to be interviewed; I wonder if she feels she is the least important. This sets the scene for our struggle to relate to each other congruently which Louise later ascribes to the 'background music' of social class. In these first moments there is a rush of talk and Louise seems to want to assure me or herself that what she is describing really is transformational. It is as if discourses of class have positioned her as unequal in our relationship and in an interview context, and she needs to get it right but is angry with herself for feeling this need. Self-opening and 'souls meeting' feel real to her, yet she is unsure how far she



can trust her experience. Our relationship needs to be transformed, and when this eventually happens through a moment of meeting and shared reflection it becomes possible for us to talk as equals and for Louise to voice her longing to sustain her fleeting trust in being able to attune to the other.

### **Gwyneth**

*I trained as a social worker straight after my degree, and I'd not wanted to do it and not wanted to do it and I knew deep down that I didn't want to be a social worker but I have massive, not spoken pressure from my family and my environment, my family and my school, to contribute, to use whatever skills I had... I think I've struggled with that always, that actually I'm not sure that this is fully my choice, but nevertheless I do get an awful lot out of it.... I learned a lot about my own defences, and how they'd disintegrate at night ... I wasn't completely there at night and in particular my defences for managing ...didn't function well at night.*

For Gwyneth, the paradox is that she felt 'channelled' into a role she did not want, but has nonetheless come to find satisfaction and fulfilment in it. By making a pragmatic decision to use her skills, including listening, which she recognises was a originally a defence, and by finding ways to manage the huge anxiety she felt as a social worker, she became able to do what at first seemed impossible. She discovered that she does after all 'get an awful lot out of it' because the relationship with her clients is transformative and this enables her to work more freely and creatively. The dynamic Gwyneth describes seems to be present in our conversation, as she conscientiously describes to me the emotional struggle of her work, sometimes enacting the defences she talks about when memories touch her deeply. Understanding defences and resistance, learning to respect their functional value and challenging herself to transcend them, has brought Gwyneth to a point of greater self-acceptance and inner freedom which we both feel at the end of our conversation.

### **Matthew**

*Well it's very interesting that you should ask me this at this moment because it's only in the past few weeks that an area of my work has come right to the fore in a way that has completely surprised me. I wasn't expecting it. And I can only think that it's also got something to do with where I am in my life. And it concerns ambivalence.*

The theme running throughout my conversations with Matthew is ambivalence as the characteristic emotional response to the question 'what next?' For him, there is a transformational quality in recognising the personal relevance of the idea of ambivalence, in thinking about it analytically in order to understand more about his clients and himself, and in consciously acknowledging the dilemma of 'staying where it's comfortable' or taking 'a leap into darkness'. Thus the scene is set for our discussion of the relationship of ambivalence to resistance, which has personal and professional significance for us both. For me, the discussion is therapeutic in nature

and for both of us it has spiritual relevance. The use we make of a highly-charged metaphor, '*the ambivalence seam*', illustrates some of the discourses that shape our understanding and the dialogical processes through which we negotiate our reflection.

### **Kim**

*One thing I found that it is very difficult to get out of the counsellor mode. That means, whenever I walk somewhere, whenever I am in a crowd of people, because I feel that one can develop a high level intuition. Even if you are in a café and somebody's serving you a cup of tea, you pick up on things, the way they relate to you ...And you hear things and you see things, it's getting finer and finer and finer, and a more high level of intuition ...which then again you have to challenge again and again and again, because what can be intuition can also be just simply assumptions. Intuition can become assumptions. And that's where your personal inner work also comes in, to question, to re-check and also sometimes just to learn let go, switch off now.*

Kim's clear statement that it is difficult but necessary to '*get out of counsellor mode*' surprises and challenges me to re-think my assumptions in this conversation. Kim implicitly challenges me not to assume that I know what is going on, and as further analysis has shown, I do indeed assume that I know and frequently fail to notice the relational dynamic indicators of my misperception. Being aware of what is unspoken, symbolic and sometimes on the edge of awareness is a therapeutic skill I assume I have, but in conversation with Kim I miss significant communicative events even when these enact the overt theme of our conversation. The attitude of self-questioning which she advocates in these first few minutes could almost be a warning to me if I could hear it, and it encapsulates both the content and the process of the rest of our dialogue.

### **Dialogues with research participants**

The concern of narrative and other social researchers to honour the spirit of participants' accounts has given rise to expressive techniques of representation which seek to convey something of their emotional and dialogical quality. Denzin (2003, p.256), outlining 'performative understandings in the seventh moment' of inquiry, states that

Ethics, aesthetics, political praxis and epistemology are joined; every act of representation, artistic or research, is a political and ethical statement. An ethics of care is paramount.

An ethics of care implies mindfulness of the vulnerabilities of research participants and myself and a willingness to risk offering our words to readers. All relating carries risks of being understood more than we anticipated, and misunderstood with concomitant frustration, and the relationship that may develop between you, the reader, and this text naturally shares these risks. I attempt to convey a sense of the relational quality of the research conversations and invite the reader to engage in dialogue with the text. The knowledge I hope will emerge is knowledge of conversational processes that will

resonate with the reader's experience. I hope to bring into focus the procedural knowledge we all have in potential for meeting each other in conversation, which involves negotiating not-meeting and recognising its functional value. Denzin's (2003) reference above to 'political praxis' in this context signifies for me an ethical attempt to become more able to make connections with the other and to make an imaginative effort to recognise differences between us. As some of the research conversations show, this can happen when we negotiate not-meeting. The implications of connecting across and through differences are political because it then becomes harder to impose one's own cultural assumptions on the other. This has relevance for counselling and psychotherapy, which are only slowly becoming aware of the politics of difference in the consulting room.

Dialogical analysis calls into question whether narratives can be said to belong exclusively to one narrator. Within a speaker's or writer's text are the inner voices of others, either authored into dialogue with the narrator (inside-out discourse) or submerged beneath a dominant authorial voice (outside-in discourse). This is evident in narratives within the data presented here. Besides stories or anecdotes couched in autobiographical or confessional genre, much of the data include reflections, discussion, theorising and dramatised inner dialogues, as table 9 (appendix 2) shows. These narratives explicitly invoke the voices of others. I therefore make no attempt to re-tell participants' stories, since representation in my words produces another text which like all writing is not created *ex nihilo* but builds on the accumulation of earlier texts both in and out of my awareness. Instead, in the sections which follow, I attempt to convey something of our dialogue with each other beginning with dialogical poems made from our words taken from the transcript. My aim is to create a dialogue with each participant on the page, while acknowledging that as editor and author, I choose what is written. The words I have selected convey what I feel to be outstanding dialogical events of the research conversations, such as intersubjective negotiations towards moments of meeting and reflective moments of meeting (see chapter 9). These page-dialogues have been offered to the participants for their further responses, which I include in the conclusion. You, the reader, also enter into dialogue with me and the participants and you may hear subtexts that I am unaware of. Dialogues are never complete.

Composing poems from research participants' words is one way to offer the reader a sense of voice and meaning which might be lost in extracting thematic concepts or summarising narratives in prose. Richardson (2003) notes that speech is full of pauses not determined by breathing or grammatical structure, but significant for communication. Illocutionary force is conveyed through intonation, rhythm, speed, pitch and pausing

rather than in words. Poetic forms of writing may use the visual shape of the stanza and breaks between lines to express some of this non-verbal content of speech, which is usually lost in prose, especially in conventional academic writing styles. Rather than presenting material from the conversations as if it were factual information, which is the underlying purpose of much social science writing (Richardson 2003), I hope to present a sense of dialogue between two people as we learn how to talk to each other reflexively.

Poetic forms of writing have been used by several researchers intent on listening between the lines and helping readers to do the same. Etherington (2004), for example, uses stanza form to capture the rhythm and emotional quality of spoken narratives and includes her own words, also in stanzas, in her reflexive re-presentation of dialogues. Doucet and Mauthner (2008), describing their practice of using the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al, 2005) as a structured way of reading and re-reading interview texts, literally mark in coloured pencil the 'I' statements in the transcript in order to focus on how the narrator perceives and presents herself. This method has been extended by Rogers (2014), who uses the second reading of the Listening Guide to compose 'I-poems' from the transcript as a way of re-presenting the participants' narratives in their own words. The Listening Guide (which is also a reading guide) does not necessarily preclude the reflexive inclusion of the interviewer in a dialogical account, though this was not the focus or intention of these authors.

Davis (2012, p.227) also presents research participants' words as poetry 'to capture the tenor of self-disclosure and experience that was shared with the author and to draw the reader towards these experiences'. She does not explicitly choose 'I' statements, as her aim is to identify common themes across the narratives and to bring the participants' differing perspectives on these themes together, so that 'the poems begin to take on one voice that can be interpreted as a mutual understanding of experience' (Davis, 2012, p. 233). Davis acknowledges the power dynamic involved in choosing how to re-present the participants' words, but because her interest is in their differing perspectives, the researcher herself appears absent from the resulting text. The dialogical context of researcher and participant is missing.

Because the focus of my interest is dialogical, the poems presented here are in dialogue form. To compose the poems, I selected chunks mainly from key moments and sometimes from other sections of the conversations which I experienced as significant for our negotiation of meaning and mutual understanding. As used in linguistics, the term 'chunk' indicates a section of talk not delimited by conventional grammatical boundaries such as the sentence or by textual boundaries such as the

paragraph. Here, chunks are identified pragmatically by their emotional impact and dialogical invitation to respond in some way - as utterances in Bakhtin's (1986) terminology. The intention of the poems is to provide a taste of the emotional and thematic content of the research conversations, showing something of the process of working together towards developing 'relational conversation' (see chapter 9). The poems illustrate the impact on the participants and me of being in conversation with each other.

### **Dialogue Poem 1: Maria and Jane**

**Maria** Well, I've brought a bit of art, I keep an art journal now  
 Shall I show you a bit about being a little girl?  
 I don't know what my language is any more  
 I'm afraid I'll lose English.  
 Shall I show you something else because I do sculpture as well?  
 These are heads  
 That's something I did in my 20s, scary in a way.  
 But that's maybe how I saw things.  
 When I first came to England it was a bit scary really.  
 I couldn't relate to people any more.  
 Because how do you relate without language?  
 Being a baby without the language  
 It's like being a baby again I suppose.

**Jane** Having your language taken away

**Maria** I don't want to be like a baby any more  
 That scares me to death

**Jane** When did you start to feel confident relating in English?

**Maria** When I started doing the counselling course.  
 I think that's the triangle, it's linking it up.  
 Being able to communicate what I'm feeling.

**Jane** So it's as if you've grown into being who you are again in English

**Maria** Yeah, in another language.  
 It was that thing you said, the three things,  
 It was the three things, communication, feelings and theory

**Jane** But you said that

**Maria** Well I know, but you kind of gave me the feedback  
 Which made me then put it together  
 And then I thought about it

**Jane** Well that's what counselling does actually, isn't it?  
 I mean it's all there, but saying it to somebody brings it together

**Maria** Sometimes you don't really hear what you say  
 And it's not till you hear it back

**Jane** You see you made that image with your hands there  
 And then I did it back for you

**Maria** You made a triangle in my head  
 Because I saw it first,  
 I saw it and then I did it  
 But you made me see it, yeah.

**Jane** For me that's saying counselling is only a particular instance  
 Of the kind of conversations  
 Where we really explore together

**Maria** On a deeper level, isn't it?  
 And being open to what other people say.

### **Negotiating genre in Dialogue Poem 1**

The dialogue demonstrates how Maria clarifies through the image of a *'triangle'* how language or communication, feelings and theory link up in her experience. This was her idea and her embodied metaphor as she made a triangle with her hands, which I mirrored. Her first impression is that I gave her the idea, then she realises I reflected her words and gesture, and we tease out how our new understanding emerged. As in a therapeutic situation, attuned mirroring helps Maria hear her own words and see her gesture and so bring into full awareness her semi-conscious sense of how these fit together. This recognition occurs in a moment of meeting, followed by a reflective moment of meeting (see chapter 9).

The genre of this dialogue is intimate. Facilitating speech in intimate genre is the goal of many therapeutic conversations, and Maria and I note that what occurs here also happens in counselling. Yet this dialogue is not counselling but a research conversation in which we move between negotiating the procedure (*'Well, I've brought a bit of art .... Shall I show you something else?'*), and a deeper level of intimacy. There is movement back and forth between interview genre and *'the kind of conversations where we really explore together'*. Maria and I have known each other for several years, during some of which I supervised her counselling practice, so *'exploring together'* is a familiar way of talking. We both have a sense of doing something different however when we begin the research conversation, and seek a different genre. This appears in Maria's checking if I want to see the art work, and my question about English. We need this more structured interview genre to direct our talk until we are attuned emotionally. My first utterance here (*'having your language taken away'*) is a counsellor-like intervention in response to Maria's description in confessional genre of being without language. Perhaps this is too therapeutic, for she seems to acknowledge it and then shake off the feeling of being *'scared to death'*. I take the hint and revert to interview mode by asking about her confidence in English.

This dialogue, constructed from elements of two much longer research conversations, illustrates the negotiation of speech genre as we establish how to have a research conversation. We refer implicitly to familiar genres: interviews, counselling sessions, supervision sessions, discussions as colleagues and friends. We tease out explicitly in a reflective moment of meeting just how we created understanding. Reflective moments are characteristic of this and other dialogues and are facilitated by IPR, which allows for the intimate genre of moments of meeting to open into shared reflection.

**Dialogue Poem 2: Christine and Jane****Christine**

Staying with what is  
 Rather than thinking about change  
 Or something different to what is  
 That's really helped me somehow.  
 The idea of support has really spoken to me  
 In a different way.  
 Maybe that's what I'm changing from,  
 From being self-sufficient to not needing to be.  
 You said that new things might come up  
 And it's not new, it's the way of putting it that's new.  
 Trying to be my own little unit  
 Not able to relate to people  
 So then I've ended up in a job where relating is the essence of it

**Jane**

Yes, certainly that's true for me as well

**Christine**

Counselling was for me an opening to relating to people  
 I didn't have to justify being there  
 Didn't have to justify trying to relate to somebody.  
 It goes back to having a right to exist.  
 Yeah, what am I saying here?  
 So I don't need to isolate

Because it's OK to be

And to be in contact with other people

**Jane**

I really identified with what you were saying  
 That was quite powerful for me

**Christine**

When I first said it, it was sort of cerebral  
 I could just say it  
 And then it hit me  
 What I was saying.  
 But also, how accurate that is really.  
 However much I'm familiar with it  
 The rightness of it  
 Or how it strikes a chord  
 Can still hit me.

**Jane**

This is in the moment, the whole interview,  
 Which is what I was hoping but not expecting,  
 Much more about what was happening here and now in the moment  
 Because you're putting things together for yourself.

**Christine**

As I watch it I think, yeah, I know,  
 This is how it happens.  
 And so it is funny and it's nice as well,  
 It's really nice to see it.



### **Transformation in the moment in Dialogue 2**

The speech genre is intimate throughout this dialogue. Christine moves between reflective and confessional genres and I match them, disclosing my identification with what she has said. Christine begins by reflecting on what has helped her (*'staying with what is ... from being self-sufficient to not needing to be'*), and this reflection leads to an emotional realisation through hearing herself speak this experience aloud (*'it's not new, it's the way of putting it that's new'*). She speaks of her experience first in a *'cerebral'* way, then voices the immediacy of emotional experiencing (*'yeah, what am I saying here?'*) as her words impact on her. Taking in the impact, feeling the profundity of the realisation, she moves back to reflective genre to think about the experience and the new understanding she has reached. We move together through moments of meeting and reflective moments, and although the impact of the conversation seems to be therapeutic for both of us, this is clearly not a therapy session. It is more mutually confessional in genre. Then we reflexively comment on the conversation itself. I am delighted by the transformational impact *'in the moment'* during this research conversation, and Christine, watching the video in the IPR session, recognises *'how it happens'* as a process not unlike therapy but not quite the same, *'funny and nice as well'*.

Discourse forms in this dialogue are multi-voiced, as Christine allows different voices within her to find expression. The voice of her training is heard in the theoretical terms *'staying with what is'* and *'support'*, each with its specific meaning in Gestalt theory. This voice is in dialogue internally (*'really spoken to me'*) with the voices of emotional experience and calm reflection. She is aware of the shift from one voice to another, recognising the *'cerebral'*, the feeling of *'the rightness of it'* and the calmer tone of reflecting on these states and their expressive tones. Christine also dialogues with me in different voices, those of emotional impact, reflection on experiencing and reflexive commentary on watching the video.

We are not doing therapy, yet the immediacy of Christine's transformative realisation and my emotional identification makes the dialogue therapeutic for us both. Elsewhere, Christine comments humorously on this mutuality: *'Well, I guess it means that we both have some qualities to be therapists'*.

### **Dialogue Poem 3: Natalia and Jane**

**Natalia** *One of the reasons why I wanted to be part of the research  
Was to I think help,  
Help you be aware of what it's like for somebody from the BME community,  
What their experience of perhaps coming into this profession is like  
And having a voice sometimes or being heard, or misinterpretation.*

**Jane** *And I'm a white western middle-class therapist  
And I wonder how that feels  
That we are talking about this  
And this is my research  
And you were talking about your experience as an Asian  
So for me it's really important that you try to help me understand  
If I'm misunderstanding, misinterpreting.  
I think I missed what you were saying there  
I didn't get that when you were just saying that before*

**Natalia** *I didn't think you got it, no  
I didn't think you did get it.  
Yeah, so it leaves me in a bit of a, which boxes am I supposed to tick?  
It's what is expected of me as well with the organisation out there.  
Am I meeting the needs?  
Am I being compliant?  
Am I, is the counselling going to be, is the relationship going to be valuable for  
the client?  
So lots of question marks.*

**Jane** *But that is such a clear example of me misinterpreting you  
Because I hadn't understood the cultural dimension of what you were saying,  
do you see?  
It's that there's a dimension that I didn't understand.*

**Natalia** *A dimension that you didn't understand is where I was coming from.  
And I think it's important and it's a bit like the supervision is,  
It's where I'm coming from and where my supervisor's coming from  
And all the conflict going on  
And how do you work through that?  
Or come to a compromise or learning from each other different ways of  
thinking.*

**Jane** *That's precisely what you tried to give me I think at the beginning,  
You said you want me to understand this.  
Perhaps you each think that you've understood something  
But perhaps, perhaps you kind of missed each other.  
So actually learning to hear a little bit more, it's very important.  
And think about, why didn't I hear that?  
What are the reasons?  
So I think this is the core of it for me:  
How we can just become more aware?*

**Natalia** *When you've reflected on something there's a deeper level that you get to.  
It makes you think again and again.*

### **Missing and finding each other in Dialogue Poem 3**

This is a dialogue of trying to connect, through moments of not-meeting and reaching out across a gap in understanding. The genre is reflective as Natalia says she wants to help me understand and describes a gap in understanding, with me and with her supervisor. I also reflect on '*the core*' learning I take from our conversation. This is a hard dialogue. I am aware of the potential to miss each other across the gap between British Asian and English experience and cultural assumptions. In the IPR session Natalia initially responds to my request to '*help me understand if I'm misunderstanding, misinterpreting*' by saying '*I don't think I've ever experienced that, Jane. Never, no.*' Yet this dialogue shows her realisation that she is experiencing my misunderstanding. Natalia describes a dilemma which I understand purely as a practice issue, and so miss its personal and cultural dimensions. When she first acknowledges that I didn't '*get it*' she moves on quickly to '*the organisation*' she works for as if not wanting to dwell on the interpersonal gap. I repeat '*there is a dimension that I didn't understand*' and there is a long pause before Natalia responds that this dimension is where she was coming from. It is hard for us both to talk about this, so hard that I could not bear to listen to the recording for a considerable time and carried a sense of shame that I had not heard her, not been able to reach out across the gap. Yet when I did go back to the recording, I found that we were both honest and unafraid to name what had happened and that we transcended not-meeting by reflecting together. It is interesting that my memory of shame was stronger than that of co-creating a way of meeting. Strong feelings leave a stain on memory.

The genre here, while reflective, is also one of interpersonally peeling back layers of wishes to reveal a truth. Our wishes are to help, understand, connect, meet each other, maintain the liking and respect we feel for each other, and enable others to understand something important about culture and the counselling profession. I also feel some fear about not understanding. To meet each other fully, we have to work at revealing the truth that we have not yet met, and the wish to feel there is genuine understanding perhaps makes it risky to challenge the appearance of understanding. This genre is hard to name because we do not have a template for mutual and kindly truth-telling about the dialogue we are engaged in. It is reflexive and mutual, as the more or less equal length of our stanzas indicates. Confessional genres are usually composed of longer utterances by the one who discloses, but here we both take the risk of disclosing what we recognise about our dialogue. The reflective moment of meeting we reach at the end points towards future growth, for me to becoming '*more aware*' and for Natalia to a '*deeper level*'.

### **Dialogue Poem 4: Louise and Jane**

**Louise**            *I wouldn't know what to work with  
If I didn't have my sense of connectedness or not  
It'd feel like we were just two shells.*

**Jane**                *This sounds like you've always had that capacity, that potential*

**Louise**            *I think the counselling allows it,  
Gives you permission,  
It's actually valued.  
That's why I'm a counsellor  
Cos I like that deep connection.  
How much do I understand?  
We get a lot of very, very poor women  
And they might as well have come from China,  
Our worlds are so different  
And our expectations.  
What vision do some people have  
If they're trapped in their poverty?  
We're not talking working class, we're talking underclass,  
People that we don't see very often.  
It makes me angry you see  
And this is what I'm worried about acting out.  
If I could empty myself then trust is easy  
It's when I get full of everything else that it's hard.*

**Jane**                *You've said some things which really kind of touched me  
And helped me with stuff that I'm working on.  
I don't think I can do this as an observer, I have to be a participant.*

**Louise**            *I felt that you knew what I was talking about  
And that you really do believe it's difficult for people  
Not that you're just saying it*

**Jane**                *No I do believe it's difficult  
I know I can't understand the experience of people  
Whose lives are so very, very different from mine.*

**Louise**            *That segment changed us, didn't it?  
I remember thinking you got it, you understood it  
As if you were feeling what I was feeling.  
I think the rest of it is you asking a little question maybe  
And me bombarding you  
Not relating to you*

**Jane**                *Yes, and there we started to relate more*

**Louise**            *Definitely, definitely, yeah. I can't find the words. What do I mean?*

**Jane**                *It felt to me like we connected more*

**Louise**            *Connected, it's as simple as that, isn't it?  
And I think the reason we hadn't connected before,  
I think I'm really anxious.  
Yeah, I'm completely out of my comfort zone doing this.  
But it felt like there we could both,  
There was a meeting there.*

### **Making a connection in Dialogue Poem 4**

The connection Louise and I reach in this dialogue represents a central, repeated moment in our research conversations. In both conversations, Louise's discomfort with the situation becomes evident, and here at the end of the dialogue she explains why; she is anxious because she is '*out of her comfort zone*'. Yet there is a point of connection when I say I know I don't understand the experience of people whose lives are very different from mine. '*That segment changed us*', I think, because Louise feels the gap of understanding can be talked about. Her concern about understanding clients who '*might as well have come from China*' reflects her experience of not being understood herself, by middle class teachers and counsellors who do not realise that their normative assumptions deny the experience of a working class child and woman. When I say that I have to be a participant, not just an observer, Louise starts to believe that we can connect and my admission of not knowing is what she needs to hear in order for us to reach a moment of meeting.

The dialogue begins in a reflective genre as Louise talks about her sense of connection in counselling and her doubts about being able to connect with the very poor women she works with. She questions herself – is she acting out her own anger in expressing it on their behalf? She longs for the clarity of being '*empty*' so that she can trust the process, her client and herself. The emotional tones are becoming stronger now. Perhaps when I say I have been touched and helped by what she says, I am emptying myself by taking off the persona of researcher. Here the focus shifts to my feelings about our dialogue, and both of us move into a more reflexive genre in which we step back to explore together what is happening between us. Louise feels I know what it is like not to understand and to recognise that some people have difficulties I have no experience of, so now she can '*relate*' to me and we can both '*connect more*'. The recording shows the excitement of this moment and the struggle to put it into words as it is happening. There is a mutuality about the way we find words and make sense together in this reflective moment of meeting. Perhaps these are features of a genre of meeting.

### **Dialogue Poem 5: Gwyneth and Jane**

**Gwyneth** *All the way through I was resisting it  
I didn't want to do it  
By the time I got to the end of my degree I thought,  
Actually, you are able now to do it  
You better get on with what you've got to do.  
So I'm more and more aware of how channelled I was  
To get into the helping professions.  
I learned a lot about my own defences  
And how they'd disintegrate at night  
I could feel the defences growing through the ritual of getting up  
And the last bit was driving  
And by the time I got to the end of the ten mile drive  
I was ready to walk in.  
So very interesting, learning about defences.*

**Jane** *So you learned from the inside about defences.*

**Gwyneth** *I learned from the inside about defences.  
I learned from seeing in the middle of the night I was a shaking jelly.  
To manage it I had to find, to build the defences and find my way.  
I think the listening was a defence.*

**Jane** *It is for me too I think.  
We become professional listeners  
And maybe have to think, why?*

**Gwyneth** *I don't have to expose myself  
If I'm listening to somebody else, I don't have to.  
When I started I was a very very silent counsellor  
And it took a lot to find I needed to get in there.  
The challenge involved in psychodynamic work  
Really required me to be more open about myself  
And what I saw and what I felt with my client.*

**Jane** *My defence was certainly to listen  
But it was to be the blank screen.*

**Gwyneth** *And what a client needs,  
What we all need  
Is a real response of some sort, some kind of human response.  
And maybe that's about the search for connection as well  
My search for valid healthy connection that's generative.  
I do on the whole want my clients to know where I'm coming from.*

**Jane** *I think what you've talked about all the way through was  
You trying to find your way of doing things with other people*

**Gwyneth** *And then the panic rises.  
Have I spent my whole life working on my development rather than my clients'?  
Do I use my clients for my own ends?  
And we do to a degree  
But that's how life works.*

### **Reflecting on our defences in Dialogue Poem 5**

Gwyneth's story of learning about defences from the inside culminates in a recognition which resonates with me, that listening was initially a defence. Both of us turned this defence to professional advantage by becoming psychodynamic counsellors. But while I used to play with the '*blank screen*' version of the analytic attitude, Gwyneth's practice challenged her to emerge from silence into a more relational way of working. This intrigues me, since both of us trained in a similar theoretical approach though in different training institutes. Gwyneth's narrative traces the course of two transformations: her daily journey as a young professional from night terror to morning competence through the ritual of constructing defences, and the reverse journey of deconstructing defences which is her lifetime search for mutual candid connection with others. She sees the desire for a '*human response*' as universal, '*what we all need*'. When I reflect that finding her way of doing things with others is the main theme of the conversation, Gwyneth is seized with a kind of reflexive panic as she questions her motivation and purpose. For a moment of splitting it is as if she sees her '*own development*' and that of her clients as mutually exclusive, before she transcends the polarisation in a more philosophical perspective of holding these together and accepting that '*that's how life works*'.

My responses to Gwyneth here acknowledge my own defensive stance and show how she challenges me with an alternative understanding of the psychodynamic approach. This dialogue touches my own inner process of working towards overcoming split thinking and perceptions. Gwyneth's conclusion is forgiving towards herself and implicitly towards all of us who share mixed motives '*to a degree*'. I take from this dialogue the realisation that while our research conversations were apparently about Gwyneth's experience, they resonated strongly with my own defensiveness and inner work towards individuation. My final words in the dialogue are as much addressed to myself as to Gwyneth, though I was unaware of it at the time. Trying to find my way of doing things with other people is my inner motive and purpose in doing research.

### **Dialogue Poem 6: Matthew and Jane**

- Matthew** Suddenly ambivalence has become the core of the universe,  
Become this very live issue, so it must be a live issue for me.  
It's as if I'm hearing it for the first time  
So that's certainly transformation.  
And so what next?  
Staying where it's comfortable now,  
Going out into a leap of darkness,  
A leap of somewhere that may be very uncomfortable  
But might well be rich with life.
- Jane** I find that such a refreshing view of ambivalence,  
An indication of something coming to life in you.
- Matthew** Inwardly I think it's a conversion of heart,  
The heart looking in a different direction,  
Wanting something more.  
There's a humility in returning,  
Finally yielding or submitting or giving in,  
Say ok ok ok, I'll go that way,  
The way my heart's taking me  
Even though I'm resisting it like hell.
- Jane** I've understood ambivalence as being pretty much the same as resistance  
But it's not for you, is it?
- Matthew** There is that part to it  
But it's got other meanings, connotations which can be life-giving.  
I feel more confident in being uncertain.  
For me prayer is into a silent land which is absolutely full of life  
And the unknowing quality of that,  
It's essential really that it has to be unknowing.  
It's the getting of it which obliterates something,  
To try and make sense of it for ourselves.  
But why do we need to?  
Who I am right now,  
Oh, that feels agonizingly freeing,  
But the depth of pain to it as well.
- Jane** It's almost as if we are at the edges of thought
- Matthew** So when it's hard to think, actually we can make
- Jane** We can make thought happen between us
- Matthew** We can make thoughts
- Jane** So something new happens between
- Matthew** We are spiritual but we need to be more human.  
We have to come to know ourselves  
And that's what being spiritual involves,  
For ever deepening self-knowledge.
- Jane** I thought, Matthew has talked about something you need to think about  
And you don't want to do it, you're resisting.  
It was the meaning of ambivalence,  
It was spirituality, this psychological spiritual  
Where do they overlap?  
And it does confront me with my resistance.
- Matthew** But that's also ambivalence, isn't it?  
And isn't that the human condition?



### **Making thoughts happen in Dialogue 6**

Matthew and I are friends and colleagues who have trained and done peer supervision together over the years, and this degree of intimacy and familiarity with each other's ways of thinking is apparent in the dialogue. Yet it is not simply familiarity which enables us to make thoughts happen between us. This is a process of dialogical thinking together that happens when we become very centred in the present moment and aware of a dimension of experience that seems to be beyond our normal reflective capacities. The dialogue traces the process of reaching this point.

Matthew's theme of ambivalence arouses strong resistance in me and my first two responses here are spoken as I gain a more reflective perspective on that instinctive reaction. We are not yet in a moment of meeting, though we manage to emerge from not-meeting in the research conversation via reflection. My words (*'a refreshing view, it's not for you, is it?'*) indicate my gradual recognition that what Matthew says about ambivalence is challenging but not threatening to me. Matthew's talk is open and free, not at all resistant to disclosing very deep experiences, though he speaks of resisting the pull of the heart towards inner conversion. For him the dynamic of ambivalence can be *'life-giving'* as it opens the way to being more at ease with not knowing. We both recognise that he is speaking of not knowing in Bion's (1970) sense of 'negative capability' and in the mystical sense of opening up to dimensions of experience that transcend thought or rational sense-making. We have had conversations like this before. As our talk touches on this transpersonal dimension it seems harder to find words for what we mean, and yet we both know what we mean, and don't know, at the same time. When I say *'it's almost as if we are at the edges of thought'*, Matthew and I begin to make thoughts happen together and we move between this depth of shared thought and reflective awareness of what we are doing. We reach this moment of meeting when we allow ourselves to be in a state of reverie and thus open to thoughts which are not limited by asymmetrical logic (Matte Blanco, 1998).

The spiritual significance of experiences we often think of in psychological terms runs throughout the dialogue. For Matthew it is evident that *'we are spiritual'* but the work we need to do is developing self-awareness (*'we need to be more human'*). The themes of ambivalence and spirituality both challenge me to transcend familiar perspectives, which I admit is hard (*'you don't want to do it, you're resisting'*). Matthew's final words to me in the dialogue convey an accepting recognition of this inner struggle as the shared *'human condition'*.

### **Dialogue Poem 7: Kim and Jane**

- Kim** *You have to challenge again and again  
Intuition can become assumptions.  
Constantly shifting, moving oneself, a constant river,  
Hopefully it's a river where there are stones  
and bends  
and roots  
and waterfalls.  
That's how a river gets all the oxygen back, it's renewed.  
That tells of moments when you can wake up,  
Maybe you've got in a habit,  
To challenge you  
So it's quite enlivening.*
- Jane** *I'm really interested in that metaphor of yours of the river gaining the oxygen*
- Kim** *I have outgrown something.  
I think I go through the world differently  
And it's very healthy.*
- Jane** *I notice you said 'and it's healthy'.  
And you said the river was healthy too if it had oxygen*
- Kim** *I think renewal is a central motif  
Whether it's the phoenix  
Or Krishna or Nataraja dancing  
So that the earth breaks open and a new one can come into existence*
- Jane** *So maybe your natural way of thinking was quite symbolic, metaphorical?*
- Kim** *There is a level,  
Unconscious level,  
Whether you work with symbols or not  
It's still there.  
The grail  
Like a chalice  
And the counsellor puts something in,  
The client puts something in,  
And it becomes a different substance because the two merge.  
But I can't explain well, but maybe also I don't want to.*
- Jane** *Because you reduce it when you try to put it in conscious rational words*
- Kim** *I think everybody who is open for it,  
And observant enough,  
Can experience this.  
It doesn't have to be counselling  
It can be a completely different situation.  
Again, renewal.  
And what is the substance between human beings?*
- Jane** *Energy.*
- Kim** *Yes. What is it? What gives a friendship substance?  
And we can feel, people can feel happy and enthused by just sitting, saying –  
What are words?  
I don't think you can lock in a word.*

### **Two kinds of thinking in Dialogue 7**

Jung (1967) described 'two kinds of thinking', the 'directed thinking' developed through culture and education and the 'fantasy thinking' associated with waking and sleeping dreams. It seems important to consider the dialogue between Kim and myself in Jung's rather than Matte Blanco's (1998) terms, although his concepts of symmetrical and asymmetrical logic are similar. Jungian ideas underlie this dialogue and come into conscious focus several times in our research conversations.

It is as if Kim moves freely between the two dimensions of thinking while I am locked in directed thinking. She uses striking metaphors for renewal, the river regaining its oxygen and Nataraja dancing to break open the earth, which I do not respond to imaginatively. Instead, I talk *about* metaphors. The idea of metaphor has captured my attention as my words show (*'I'm really interested'*) but I seem to miss the actual embodiment of meaning in her metaphors. I latch onto the word '*healthy*', perhaps because it does not seem metaphorical in this context. I ask Kim about her symbolic way of thinking but I do not engage with it. Kim's insistence on challenging assumptions that masquerade as intuitions is directly relevant to me in this dialogue, since I make the assumption that I understand her while failing to become attuned to her mode of communication. These are moments of not-meeting because we are thinking in different dimensions. Yet we both persist, as if we sense that a deeper connection is possible.

Kim explicitly mentions the deeper level (*'whether you work with symbols or not, it's still there'*) and this is an implicit hint to me to listen at greater depth. She offers me another metaphor which perhaps I can make use of, and certainly I am familiar with and excited by the Jungian image of therapy as the grail or the alchemist's crucible in which a new substance is created through the conjunction of opposites. But too much explanation kills the spirit, so although she may not be sure I am with her, Kim does not want to explain. I understand why (*'you reduce it when you try to put it in conscious rational words'*), but again I explain by putting it in just that kind of words.

It is as if Kim again implicitly tells me there is something important here if I am '*open for it and observant enough*' and that it is there in all kinds of conversation (*'it doesn't have to be counselling'*). She asks what the '*substance*' of this connection is, and I answer directly (*'energy'*), and now it is as if we have managed to meet on the same level. This is a metaphor I can engage with. Kim seems to know this and to warn me that the warmth of friendship and dialogue could be lost if we try to '*lock in a word*'. This is precisely what I tried to do in the earlier part of the dialogue.

This dialogue demonstrates how goodwill and perseverance bring us through repeated moments of not-meeting that we perhaps perceive semi-consciously but do not bring into full focused awareness. It is as if the dialogue is working on both conscious and unconscious levels which become clearer on reflection. Even in our shared reflection while doing IPR, we were not able to make explicit much of what now appears to be my unconscious resistance and Kim's challenge.

### **Genre in the dialogue poems**

The closely-related terms genre, register and style are used in different ways by different authors to refer to aspects of both spoken and written language use. Taking them as different approaches to analysing texts, rather than different varieties of text, Biber and Conrad (2009) describe genre analysis as a whole-text approach focusing on conventional features and formats (for example, conventional beginnings and endings in telephone conversations), while register and style analysis focus respectively on functional and aesthetic lexico-grammatical features and typically consider extracts rather than whole texts. (*I notice the genre shift of my writing in this dry discussion*). Bakhtin's (1986) understanding of speech genre is much more complex and includes all three aspects. For him, the language units of interest are utterances, which are addressed to another from whom they require a response or responsive understanding. It follows therefore that utterances may be of any length, from a single word to a whole novel, and Bakhtin (1986) defines their limits by the addressee's recognition that the speaker has completed their speech plan. This does not of course allow for interruptions, failure to understand accurately, or the inability of the speaker to express their meaning, which makes this definition unsatisfactory from the perspective of language pragmatics. However, focusing on the utterance highlights the communicative value of genre:

If speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible. (Bakhtin, 1986, p.79)

Genre in this sense is shared knowledge of how to do something together in language. It is not conscious knowledge, since we readily and fluently adapt to different dialogical contexts without having to think them out. But when we do come across a new dialogical context, negotiation of genre is necessary, as can be inferred in the dialogue poems above. There is some hesitation and exploration of how to talk to each other reflexively about our conversation. This is different from the negotiation at the beginning of some of the research conversations, where participants typically expected me to ask questions because of a pre-conception of what interviews are like. Without exception, the participants then settle into conversation with me in a reflective genre

characterised by thoughtful evocation of experiences, feelings and their significance. Sometimes we also speak in an intimate genre, which as Bakhtin (1986, p.97) suggests, has a 'candor [*sic*] of speech' that depends on a relationship of trust.

Intimate speech is imbued with a deep confidence in the addressee, in his sympathy, in the sensitivity and goodwill of his responsive understanding. In this atmosphere of profound trust, the speaker reveals his internal depths. (Bakhtin, 1986, p.97)

Something more than reflection and intimacy is needed, however, when we watch a video of ourselves talking, stop at intervals, and inquire into the relational dynamics of our talk. This requires a reflexive genre which we have on the whole not encountered before, though as therapists we have all practised similar reflexive inquiry in supervision. The difference here is that we are watching ourselves, not reflecting on a therapy session with someone else, a client. This feels a little odd, and there is uncertainty about how to proceed until we establish some shared but largely unspoken repertoires for doing IPR.

The dialogue poems above are presented in the order in which I conducted the research conversations, and some development in learning to use a reflexive genre is apparent. At first I was unsure what to do; these were unstructured interviews, and the lack of a predetermined format seemed to require a negotiation of expectations. The dialogues all share intimate and reflective genres in varying degrees, with some confessional elements, and a sense of mutuality in creating moments of meeting. However, a reflexive focus on the intersubjectively shaped space between us seems to develop and change with the level of attunement through the sequence of dialogue poems.

1. With Maria, focus on the intersubjective space is almost accidental, arising through her perception that I originated the metaphor of the triangle and my sense that it came from her. Hesitantly at first, we discover how to talk about this and reflect on its meanings for us.
2. With Christine, the predominant genres are those of emotional experiencing and reflection. A reflexive focus arose partly through discussing a moment of not-meeting which is not included in the dialogue poem; in the poem, some reflexive comments provide a summing-up of the experience at the end.
3. With Natalia, the reflexive focus is declared by both of us to be significant because it centres on cross-cultural (mis)understanding, but we have to work hard to reach this focus. When we do, it brings a greater clarity of thinking and awareness to us both.
4. Louise raises the topic of not being understood and not being able to understand another's experience, which leads me to say that I cannot

understand a life that is very different from mine. It is this admission which changes our relationship and thus leads us to a reflexive exploration of what has happened. There is an emotional quality which identifies it as a moment of meeting and at first makes it hard for us to find words for what is happening. Then we find the words together.

5. Gwyneth and I do not focus directly on our interaction in the dialogue poem. However, I comment on the implicit theme of finding her way of relating to others, sparking a momentary panic as Gwyneth questions herself. Reflexivity raises anxiety, which she quickly assuages.
6. Matthew demonstrates his assured grasp of reflexive genre from the start of the dialogue poem. When we reach the moment of meeting where '*we make thoughts happen*' we seem to have found a shared way of speaking centred in not-knowing. This is a special kind of reflexivity in the present moment.
7. Kim and I are communicating on conscious and unconscious levels throughout the dialogue poem. I think I have grasped the symbolic and imaginative level but I fail to tune into it, and this failure makes it impossible for me to focus reflexively with Kim on the implicit level of our interaction. There are reflexive elements in our research conversations as a whole, but the dialogue poem illustrates how not-meeting on the symbolic level blocks shared reflexive understanding.

## Summary

Participants' central preoccupations were communicated implicitly or explicitly in the first few moments of conversation, pointing to the dominant discourses in operation and the developing relational dynamics. The dialogue poems convey a synthesis of these intersubjective features. Familiar speech genres such as interview style are negotiated to establish a different reflexive genre for relational research conversations. This genre is related but not identical to the reflexive inquiry of clinical supervision, and is specifically needed to explore relational dynamics through IPR. The capacity to use this genre changes with the level of mutual attunement between us. It is blocked by not-meeting through cultural misperceptions or powerful discourses such as class, and by one person operating in directed thinking and the other in symbolic thinking, resulting in not-meeting. Sharing the symbolic domain helps to expand our normal reflective capacities, especially when centred in the present moment in a state of reverie.

The participants' experiences and the relational dynamics of our conversations challenge my resistance and defences, contributing to my individuation process. Symbolic and metaphorical features of dialogue sometimes comment on what is

happening intersubjectively, though this may be difficult to bring into awareness at the time.

## 5. Dialogical analysis of conversations with Matthew

It is not possible due to space limitations to discuss all seventy three key moments exhaustively, and selection creates the dilemma of what to include or exclude. Madill and Sullivan (2010) sought to present a key moment from each participant in as many of their themes as possible, but some participants in the present study do not contribute key moments to every theme. More importantly, the themes are mediated through conversational and dialogical processes which by their very nature can only be understood in context. Approaching each theme separately fragments the presentation so that its dialogical quality is distorted. I therefore adopt a more holistic approach in this and the next chapter by writing up detailed sequences of key moments in conversation with Matthew and Kim, chosen from the seven participants because of the particular interest of the dialogical processes in operation and the interweaving and interaction of themes. Indeed, it becomes clear that this interweaving of themes and shifting of relational positions is part of what inevitably happens in relational conversation. To select and analyse themes, even themes that focus on conversational processes rather than content, seems to kill the living dialogue. However, keeping the themes in mind makes it possible to add mental 'sticky notes' to the holistic discussion of key moments. In the following account, key moments from the initial research conversation are expanded to include comments from the IPR session which cast light on them.

The two research conversations with Matthew are notable in that the key moments tend to cluster around two core themes, ambivalence and spirituality, which are significant for both of us. We both come to these conversations with an awareness of this significance, since we have talked about these themes previously. Matthew and I are friends, and have worked together as colleagues in psychotherapy training and as members of a peer supervision group. We have a history of trusting each other, developing shared insights, and ranging in our conversations from the deeply personal to the professional, and from great seriousness to great fun. I think this background emerges into figure from time to time in the research conversations, for example in KM43 where I tell something of my story to Matthew, and KM48, where our familiarity makes it possible for him to stop me so that we can both catch hold of a '*mind-blowing*' idea.

### **The ambivalence seam: KM43**

This key moment illustrates themes of resistance, metaphor, dominant and submerged discourses, and processes in relational conversation.



The powerful metaphor of the ambivalence seam appears at the beginning of our first conversation (Mt1) in response to my asking Matthew to tell me about experiences of personal and professional transformation. The metaphor resonates with both of us in different ways, and this key moment with its IPR commentary (Mt2) illustrates ways in which moments of meeting and not meeting in the dialogue are created. Meeting occurs when one of us is attuned to the emotional tone of the other without being overshadowed by our own resistance. Not meeting is grounded in different chronotopes, different discourse types and different emotional registers, and occurs when resistance to staying attuned to the other becomes dominant. I am usually the one who is resistant to attuning, and there are also instances where Matthew resists being authored by me in a way that does not feel right to him, which is resistance to my non-attunement. The following analysis explores the use of chronotopes and discourse types in Mt1, and emotional intonation and discourse types in Mt 2 which lead to a reversal of roles in the dialogue.

### **Chronotopes**

Matthew focuses on the timing of my question and its resonance with his recent experience:

*M: Well it's very interesting that you should ask me this at this moment because it's only in the past few weeks that an area of my work has come right to the fore (J mm) in a way that has completely surprised me. (J mm) I wasn't expecting it. And I can only think that it's also got something to do with where I am in my life. (J mm) And it concerns ambivalence.*

Space-time or chronotope appears as a combined metaphor here, as *'this moment'* and *'in the past few weeks'* indicate the place *'where I am in my life'*. It is as if my asking him this question just now has the significant feel of synchronicity (Jung, 1960). Similarly, the experiences with clients and supervisees that he then describes have a feeling of significance that he reads as a timely marker of personal relevance; they have *'taken on a richness'* that *'tells me that I am ready to start looking at maybe a core issue for me, which is ambivalence'*.

The immediately present space-time of this experience makes it 'live' for him:

*M: ...suddenly ambivalence has become the core of the universe (smiling, gesturing). You know, everything clients are saying, I'm thinking well there's ambivalence, there's ambivalence, there's ambivalence, it's like dancing around in the room (gestures dancing movement), become this very live issue, so therefore it must be a very live issue for me.*

The question it presents him with is imagined spatially as *'staying on the inside of what I know rather than going out into a leap of darkness, into a leap of somewhere that may be very uncomfortable but might well be rich with life'*. Recognising ambivalence as *'an*

*indicator that something needs to be attended to*' sparks his excitement and curiosity. The metaphor of the ambivalence seam captures the quality of potential richness and the mystery of exploring the unknown:

*M: I really want to follow this (J mm), to understand the depths of myself (J nods, mm). You know, it's a bit like various coal seams and there's the ambivalence seam (indicates horizontal seams with hand), but I'd like to follow it down and down and down (gestures downward slope), see how far this goes and where it goes.*

Matthew's metaphors are mainly spatial here, and this reflects the live presence of ambivalence in his awareness. Time is not so important in his thinking now. This reflects Bakhtin's (1981) notion of 'the chronotope of threshold', which

...is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)...In this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time (p.248).

In contrast, my response to Matthew is time-based since it contains repeated experiences, and the lack of spatial reference contributes to their feeling of dreary sameness:

*J: That is such, I find such a refreshing view of ambivalence, because (hesitates, smiles), my therapist commented time after time after time (gritted teeth), it was an absolute theme of well, you are ambivalent about being here, you are ambivalent, but it was always, and that's bad, you know, you shouldn't be. But you're talking about it differently, you're talking about it as an indication of (pause) of something coming to life in you.*

### **Discourse types**

Matthew's discourse is predominantly of the inside-out type, while mine is outside-in (Sullivan 2012). For example, Matthew's speech allows various voices and emotional intonations to be heard: he is surprised, curious and excited by his sudden recognition of ambivalence, reflects thoughtfully and humorously on his own emotions, and is thoughtful in his responses to me. All these voices in his speech find expression because he is discovering them as he talks; this is inside-out discourse, where the other(s) in the self express differing positions and perspectives. There are some moments of certainty, for example '*now that's got to have come from within me*', which could be seen as outside-in discourse as he authors this perspective, the emphasis excluding a different view. However, he quickly returns to inside-out discourse in the next sentence ('*and it's that that tells me ...*') as if in dialogue with himself.

The contrast with my own discourse is marked. Beginning with a guarded response echoing the statement of his key theme of ambivalence, I demonstrate defensiveness

rather than attunement. I quote a chunk of dialogue here to show the impact the theme has on me, and the dialogical impact my response has on Matthew.

*M: And I can only think that it's also got something to do with where I am in my life. (J mm) And it concerns ambivalence.*

*J: (silent pause, hand across mouth) Ambivalence.*

*M: Yes. As if, I've read so much about ambivalence, I've talked and thought about it so much over years now, about ambivalence and working with ambivalent clients, (J mm) and I can see where my own ambivalence is (pause) sometimes, (J mm) but suddenly ambivalence has become the core of the universe (smiling, gesturing).*

I have simply made empathic minimal responses ('mm') until he mentions ambivalence, when I draw back, my hand across my mouth embodying my resistance to the word and its associations. Matthew seems to feel the change in me. His fluent talk is interrupted, he confirms the topic ('yes'), and then gives a short history of how he has worked with the concept of ambivalence, as if in the face of my resistance he needs to re-assert that this is indeed the theme he wants to talk about. But what he really wants to say is not what he has thought and read about ambivalence, but its sudden irruption into his awareness, and as he reconnects with this he smiles. His intonation is humorous, marking 'the core of the universe' as if in inverted commas, distancing himself from the emotional impact of the words to a reflexive position which he implicitly invites me to share.

I think this extract demonstrates the beginning of the subtle shifts between meeting and not-meeting which characterise our conversation, here initiated by my very ambivalent response to the theme of ambivalence. Because I am defensive I am less open to receiving the perspective and feeling of the other. This is expressed in my predominantly outside-in discourse when I attempt to interpret and author Matthew in my own terms, as in the following extracts:

*J: Mm. I'm thinking about (pause; speaking slowly) how sometimes resistance is because there's something pushing to come out. (M mm) And you resist it (M mm). (Phone rings)*

*M: Sorry about that (J it's ok) I'll turn this off. (Pause while he turns it off). I have now. (M turns back towards J, both settle in chairs)*

*J: So it's kind of confronted you with (pause) where you are?*

*M: (pause) I don't know whether it's confronted. (J mm) It's something which has suddenly become very alive.*

I equate ambivalence with resistance, which Matthew has not done. I was thinking at this point of Cambrey's (2006) concept of resistance as the reciprocal sign of emergence, which has been significant in my thinking. The phone ringing interrupts this

line of thought, to which Matthew does not respond. I then seem to be using a counsellor-type paraphrase (*'so it's kind of confronted you with where you are?'*) but I have got it wrong, and Matthew pauses at the disjuncture, rejects my word *'confronted'* and reiterates what he was saying. This is clearly a moment of not-meeting (MNM). At the time I felt it was caused by the phone ringing, but this analysis shows that I am resistant to hearing what he means by ambivalence and intent on understanding it in terms which have previously allowed me to think more positively about it, as resistance in relation to emergence.

In the next extract I again attempt to author Matthew's voice through outside-in discourse:

*J: You're talking about ambivalence as something life-giving because it's a signpost*

*M: Signpost?*

*J: Yes.*

*M: Well, that could be one thing, yes. Yes. But it's only this morning that I'm thinking about this now, say a signpost. But, yes it could be a signpost, it could be, um, an indicator, (J mm) that something needs to be attended to as well, (J mm) so not just a way forward in terms of thinking way forward (gestures forward), but thinking (J mm) well where are we now (J yeah), in the here and now.*

Here I have heard his excitement at *'something life-giving'* but I try to explain it, and he clearly has not thought of ambivalence in this way before. The definiteness of my language is striking: *'you're talking about ... because ... yes'*. This is not the tentative exploratory tone of someone trying to understand but the authoritative statement of someone who is imposing a point of view, which requires outside-in discourse. Matthew is willing to think about my proposition but again resists my attempt at authoring him differently.

Finally I tell my story of ambivalence (quoted above, p.81). This is outside-in discourse, allowing no doubts about my therapist's meaning and intentions, and my gritted teeth and harsh tone of voice embody my anger. But I have begun to notice the difference in Matthew's perspective and my discourse becomes inside-out as I explicitly acknowledge his voice (*'But you're talking about it differently'*). At last we reach a moment of meeting and he finds his metaphor of the ambivalence seam (quoted above, p.81). This is a creative moment, which becomes possible only when I have expressed the anger and pain of my preconceptions of ambivalence and feel that Matthew understands and empathises with me. The moment of meeting (MM) is created dialogically by working through resistance, preconceptions and disjunctures.

In the IPR session we listen again to the recording of KM43 and I stop the video at the point where Matthew speaks of the ambivalence seam, telling him *'this was such a revelation for me'*. Matthew's tone of voice is quietly reflective as he describes his discovery that ambivalence is *'like the fork in the road'*. In contrast, my voice is louder and more emphatic when I respond:

*J: So, you see I've understood ambivalence as being pretty much the same as resistance and I realized watching it that was what I was taking it to be, but it's not for you, is it?*

Here I take a more a reflexive stance and so my discourse moves towards an inside-out type, but I am still authoring my own understanding and Matthew's perspective in quite a definitive way. The definite voice suggests I am still feeling the emotional quality of resistance. Then as I explore the new meaning of ambivalence, Matthew attunes to my residual resistance, therapeutically helps me to express my hurt and anger by mirroring it back, and models openness and curiosity about the meaning of ambivalence:

*J: Mm, so not just that I'm resisting doing that (gestures, hand forward) (M yeah) but that, well, why am I resisting doing that, why (M that's the question) am I wondering about it, what else is trying to be expressed?*

*M: Yes, you're ambivalent (loudly, mimicking an angry voice). It's like being bashed over the head, whacked round the head with a roll of newspaper*

*J: That's how I felt with [therapist], you know, you're ambivalent*

*M: You're ambivalent (J yes) you're being naughty (J mm). Instead of trying to work out, well just a moment, what is the ambivalence about, (J what's it telling us?) what is it telling us? Absolutely (J mm).*

It is as if we have changed roles here. The focus is on my feelings and Matthew facilitates me in marking the change in my understanding of ambivalence. His discourse is inside-out, echoing my version of the voice of my therapist, my feeling of *'being bashed over the head'*, and the new voice of curious attention to ambivalence that we are now discovering together. This is a MM that would not have transpired had we not implicitly recognised and explicitly worked with not-meeting in much of the preceding dialogue.

Following this, I refer back to Matthew's metaphor of the ambivalence seam, and he tells me about a client, a mining engineer whose job was to *'track the coal seam'* and direct the miners. This changes my understanding of the metaphor, as is evident in the surprised intonation of my responses (*'ah... right'*) and my question *'So are you the engineer as well as the miner?'* Now I see the seam differently. Not only is it a rich resource to be mined, but something to be tuned into with skill, interacted with, followed wherever it leads. Now the engineer seems to be in dialogue with the seam as he

tracks its direction and depth, and with the miners as he points them towards the richest veins. Matthew and I develop the metaphor in dialogue as he thinks about my question:

*J: So are you the engineer as well as the miner?*

*M: (sighs, pulls sleeves up, long pause) Yeah (emphatic). (J mm, both nodding) Yeah. Cos the other, the client won't be able to have enough, until they start doing it, to start doing it*

*J: And for yourself, are you the engineer and the miner?*

*M: Both (J yeah), yeah. Both, for me. With all that I've been given, through all the training and all the work and all the supervision and all the personal therapy, then I take that over myself and become the engineer and the miner as well.*

Here is another MM as the metaphor grows and gathers meaning for both of us. The video shows us turned towards each other, both speaking quietly as we think together. Then my excitement about the meanings this metaphor has for me takes over and I initiate a shift in dialogical role and focus:

*J: (smiling) That is fantastic, I love that image. I'm becoming an engineer by doing this research*

*M: Are you? (J yeah) Are you?*

*J: Yeah. I've just been battering away at a rock face up to now but I'm beginning to understand where the seams might go.*

In the video I turn slightly away from Matthew as I smile and then turn back confidently, while he focuses his attention on me. Here the roles switch; before, he was the one exploring a personal meaning, while now I seize on the extended metaphor which suddenly makes sense of my experience of doing research. My voice is louder, my intonation excited and definite, and my discourse style is outside-in since I characterise myself quite authoritatively now as '*becoming an engineer*' and dismiss my previous personal work as '*just ... battering away at a rock face*'.

Matthew responds by asking me about my research. Once again, he is responding to a dialogical shift that reverses our positions so that the focus is on my understanding. Interestingly, the way I take over the metaphor here suggests that my emotional attitude is not so much that of an engineer sensing where the seam goes, but rather that of a miner intent on exploiting the rich ore within. I have only heard what Matthew is telling me up to a point. In writing about the way we use metaphors together I again read this very fertile metaphor in my own way, and only later recognised how my reading obscured Matthew's meanings (see chapter 11). I am predisposed to interpret in these particular ways by the associations I have to the idea of ambivalence and by the dominant discourses of positivistic research which emphasise extracting meaning. I

think the theme of individuation, which runs through my research process like a subplot, is also a significant element in the way I (mis)understand Matthew. I have linked the research and individuation processes through my interpretation of the symbolism of dreams (chapter 3), and here Matthew's metaphor for personal transformation reminds me of this dual significance. I am inspired by what he says because it resonates with my experience, both in this key moment and later in our conversation. Our dialogue reflects the live shifting of focus as we change positions between facilitating each other and reflecting on experience. Because we have been friends and colleagues for several years prior to this interview, it is quite easy for us to move into this familiar conversational pattern.

### **Ambivalence and spirituality: KM44**

We have been speaking about Glasser's (1986) core complex, another concept which is salient for Matthew because it has both personal and a professional relevance for him. He links this concept to ambivalence, '*because I think ambivalence also involves the agoraphobic-claustrophobic continuum*'. Drawing on hints in his choice of language earlier in the conversation, I then ask whether this has a spiritual as well as a psychological dimension for him. Matthew feels that it does, and begins to speak of being drawn into a mystical personal relationship with God or with Christ, in which his ambivalence appears in the relational dynamics:

*M: ... the relationship is dynamic, and therefore sometimes I know that I feel, I project onto, I project onto the Christ-figure somebody who won't come in (gesturing towards himself) and get closer, he always seems to be out there (gestures out) (J yes). So, and so that's what I said, then I come to realise that actually he's probably closer to me than I am to myself. Certainly within a Carmelite tradition, he occupies, lives in the heart and works from within the heart. And so what is this about wanting to come in when he's already in? And it's me, actually, wanting to really say no, I think (gestures outward) I've got you out there, cos I think that's where it's safer. I'm wanting to say no come closer, come closer, I can cope with it.*

The confessional genre is interwoven with professional and reflective elements, and several voices are heard within Matthew's discourse. The professional genre is present in his psychodynamic understanding of projection, and the reflective in his self-questioning and self-understanding. The discourse style is inside-out, contrasting the distinct voices of projection ('*somebody who won't come in*'), growing spiritual awareness ('*I come to realise that actually he's probably closer to me than I am to myself*'), Carmelite tradition ('*he occupies, lives in the heart*'), humorous self-challenge ('*so what is this about wanting to come in ...?*'), defensiveness ('*I've got you out there, cos I think that's where it's safer*') and the desire for closeness ('*come closer*'). Matthew's emotional register here is gentle and compassionate towards his own ambivalence, reflecting the compassion he attributes to Christ who '*never pushes us*

*more than we can take*'. The emotions of wanting and not-wanting, desire and withdrawal, trust and fear, run through this key moment, and are seen as *'very realistic'* because the invitation of this mystical relationship is to *'total submission, submitting to ... something which you believe is beyond you but it's for the good'*. Fear is an understandable response, and compassion a reflective one.

The chronotope of this key moment, like KM43, again implies a threshold (Bakhtin, 1981) and the moment of hesitation or decision that it constellates. There are hardly any time references in the first few lines where the focus is on the moment of experiencing distance, closeness and hesitation. Place or space here is metaphorically experienced in the dynamic relationship with Christ, who is felt to be *'out there'* but believed to be *'in the heart'*. Matthew's reference to the Carmelite tradition implies a continuity of spiritual wisdom which suggests a quality of timelessness. Bomford (1999) argues that timelessness, the first of the five characteristics Freud (1915) attributed to the unconscious, is also characteristic of religious concepts of God and of the transitional space between conscious and unconscious in which spiritual experience occurs. Matthew's language communicates timelessness through its lack of temporal reference when he speaks of relationship with Christ, but returns back into time when he shifts the focus onto the reasons for ambivalence in this relationship. Now he uses future tenses – *'going to ... may be'* – and speaks of *'demands for change'* which imply a future orientation. The threshold leads out into a new place and a new time of life.

I am once again ambivalent towards Matthew's theme here. I am deeply interested in what he is saying because it has personal relevance for me, but I am both attracted towards and somewhat fearful of the mystical. I no longer have a specifically Christian faith, and yet I look towards Matthew as someone who might be a guide as I seek a way to live as a spiritual person with a psychological perspective within a cultural tradition that is rooted in Christian thinking, art and music. His description of wanting and not-wanting closeness to Christ resonates with me, yet I am not completely comfortable with his Christian language. This is apparent in my stillness and silence in the video, as if I am unsure and hesitant. I identify with the idea of ambivalence in relation to God or Christ or the spiritual unknown:

*J: I suppose that makes a lot of sense to me actually because it's about (pause) if you really did open up completely to this, you would be transformed in a very uncomfortable way probably (M mm). Mm, might have to do things that you'd never even thought of.*

I think here I am speaking of my own ambivalence, just as a moment later I am speaking of myself when I say:



*J: Mm, but people can get hung up and feel guilty about having this resistance and fear.*

Matthew replies that *'they need help with that'* because it is *'more neurotic'*, which silences me, and after a pause I change the subject. Dialogically, my lack of response indicates the discomfort I feel about feeling ambivalent and also about his implication that this discomfort is something I could be helped to overcome. I am not willing to step over this particular threshold at this point.

In both KMs 43 and 44 I know I am resisting something of personal relevance to me in what Matthew is saying, and I acknowledge this in KM 49 during the IPR session:

*J: ... there was this thing niggling at the edge of my consciousness and it was what we'd been talking about, and so towards the end of the week I listened to this, to our conversation, and I thought, you're avoiding something, Matthew has talked about something you need to think about, and you don't want to do it, you're resisting.*

The *'niggle'* was *'the meaning of ambivalence and [Matthew's] different meaning of ambivalence'*, the overlap of spirituality and psychology, and the realisation that I resist knowing something that is personally challenging. My conversations with Matthew *'confront me with my resistance'* in a relational context of trust and openness, so that I can start to think of ambivalence as a necessary emotion of the threshold and resistance as the precursor to the emergence of new life (see chapter 10).

### **The edges of thought: KM47**

Following a discussion of alternation between the poles of the core complex, Matthew talks about the possibility of recognising one's own ambivalence

*M: ...in the context of self-acceptance... where there's less beating up, more self-acceptance, saying this is who I am at the moment. It's not who I am for the rest of my life*

*J: No, no, it's who I am right now*

*M: Who I am right now. Oh, that feels agonizingly freeing, but the depth of pain to it as well, that the alternative has been so awful really.*

Matthew's discourse is single voiced here because its focus is quite immediate in the here and now as we think together. Yet there is a kind of double voicing which characterises reflexive thinking as Matthew moves from experiencing self-acceptance and its agony to reflecting on the earlier pain of non-acceptance. The emotional register begins calmly and reflectively but then awareness of the *'agonizingly freeing'* and *'the depth of pain'* leads to a sense of the *'awful'* alternative to self-acceptance, which I name as *'stuckness'* but Matthew describes as *'more concrete... harder ... much more disturbed'*. The images accumulate; *'concrete'* reminds me of a client *'who*

said he felt as though his feet were embedded in concrete' and we both fall silent, as if we too are immobilised mentally. The chronotope in the extract above is notable in that time is almost entirely present-focused and spatial references are to internal spaces and states (*context, freeing, depth, concrete*). This immediate focus becomes too hard to sustain. It is as if the image of concrete has set our minds in stone and it is only by using the screensaver (something external) as a metaphor that we then manage to free ourselves. The screensaver shows colourful fish swimming in and out of rocks and coral, and a starfish which appears to be immobile but after a while can be seen to have moved to a different place.

*J: (long pause) I'm finding this very hard to think about, cos it's almost as if we are at the edges of thought. (Pause) Or maybe I was just tired after lunch, but (pause) I don't know, it's as if we're trying to find a way of talking about something that's (pause) hard to think (pause)*

*M: If that screen (pointing to computer) is conscious life, what we're observing, and the unconscious is all that is beyond, and things come in and go out (J mm), can we allow, well, what am I trying to say? That screen could be stimulating, couldn't it, thought? (J mm). Well, are you the screen for me, and am I the screen for you? (Pause) So when it's hard to think, actually we can make (gestures) (pause)*

*J: We can make thought happen, between us*

*M: We can make thoughts (pause). And the idea of the therapeutic baby, and the therapist and the client producing the new, the third, (J mm) the new, the therapeutic baby, new life (pause)*

*J: So something new happens between (pause)*

*M: Absolutely. The intersubjective, that third space.*

We are 'at the edges of thought' and Matthew's turning to the screensaver as metaphor saves us from the abyss, so that a 'third' thing, thought, can be produced between us. Our focus is 'out there' on the screen, which becomes a stimulus of thought for the two of us together just as in conversation we stimulate thought in each other. Referring to the screensaver shifts the chronotope away from internal spaces that are too difficult to sustain and gives us a visual metaphor for what we are experiencing, so that we can find language for it. The intersubjective third (Ogden, 1994) emerges between us here with the help of a physical third in the image of fish appearing and disappearing on the screen.

The screensaver functions as an intersubjective barometer on several other occasions during this IPR conversation, drawing our attention when it becomes too hard for us to think or feel something. For example, early in the conversation, Matthew refers to speaking in 'little voice' in the recording, which he says is 'not having a legitimate voice,

a *false self voice*'. So he is surprised to hear himself voicing thoughts. I am taken aback by this since he seems to me to be a profound thinker. He continues:

*M: Yeah, no, I never ever used to think I had any thoughts, but anything I said was just kind of like, oh well, ptht, let's throw it away now. Oh (looking at screensaver of fish) well hello (both laugh), that's great.*

The screensaver saves him from continuing to engage with the difficult realisation that he does have thoughts. It provides an opportunity for humour which defuses the tension of thought. The same thing happens following our realisation of '*making thoughts happen*':

*M: The intersubjective, that third space. (Pause) But neither of us can know what's going to come into it, I mean unfortunately we do know what's going to come into it, cos it's (pause) (both looking at screen saver)*

*J: We do, cos it's a programme*

*M: Pardon?*

*J: Because it's a programme*

*M: Yeah, therefore we can, well we can expect, can't we?*

*J: But the starfish has moved, have you noticed?*

*M: Oh, I've noticed, yes, but it still looks like a ballerina (both laugh). I never thought they moved like that, I always thought they were flat (gestures, hands flat).*

The intensity of thought requires some relief. Our use of the screensaver changes to concrete reference ('*a programme*'), which shifts us from a reflective moment of meeting (RMM) into humorous shared thinking focused on the third object of the screen. Such changes in focus and intensity are a frequent experience in conversation, which I am able to document here through the use of IPR. In therapy settings, however, we tend to privilege moments of meeting and perhaps neglect the twinship selfobject significance (Kohut 1977) of shared interest focus (SIF). Heard et al (2012) draw attention to the importance of companionable shared interest in relation to attachment needs. I suggest that the intersubjective movement documented here in a non-therapeutic setting (which is nonetheless demonstrably therapeutic in that both participants offer each other reflective space, attention and empathy), may have relevance as a point of comparison with therapy. This intersubjective process is discussed further in chapter 9.

### **Unconsciousness: a moment of meeting? KM48**

Matthew is telling me about some joint talks given by a psychotherapist and an astronomer on the exploration of the unconscious and deep space. Both of us are excited by this implicit linking and the potential of the metaphor of cosmic space for

conceptualising the psyche. In this dialogue a new realisation, a 'third', emerges through our shared thinking. The moment of realisation strikes Matthew, and is marked by the pause below:

*M: You know our unconscious, it's not like a little box that we can dip into, and just get to the perimeters of it and that's it. It'll never, you could never do that with it, can you?*

*J: Well it's because it's not given. I mean if we're not conscious of it, it's not given (pause).*

I am unaware at this point of the significance of what I have said, and so I continue talking. The video shows Matthew suddenly move and murmur 'what, wow' and I gesture with arms wide as I say with rising tone 'it's infinity, it's the universe', which suggests that perhaps I have registered his exclamation on the edge of my awareness. But it is not until he names the realisation that I become fully conscious of it:

*M: What a thought, it's not given. It's not given, what a mind-blowing thought is that? It's not given (pause)*

*J: (surprised) It is, isn't it? And you know, if you hadn't stopped me there I wouldn't have realized it was a mind-blowing thought.*

I need Matthew to move the genre from lyrical expressiveness to reflection, and my surprise marks my recognition of the sudden shift as much as of the 'mind-blowing' quality of the thought. In the lyric genre we express the concept of infinity in negatives ('not like a box', 'not given'); as we struggle to find words for what is unimaginable, our gestures and metaphors echo Eckhart's reference to the impossibility of describing God: 'neither this nor that' (Fleming, 1995, p.4). No chronotope seems adequate or possible when we speak of no time and no place. The emotional register is one of excitement, awe and wonder, and the sudden moments of surprised recognition (Matthew's 'what, wow' and my 'it is, isn't it?') ground the feeling of wonder in a thought. Now the feeling is not just experienced, but thought about, as our reflective function (Fonagy and Target, 1997) takes over.

This short extract of dialogue appears at first sight to contain something like a MM, since we are both sharing in the feelings of wonder and excitement and thinking together towards an understanding. But it is not a MM since our focus is 'out there' on the cosmos and the unconscious; we are metaphorically looking at a third object together. The MM comes when I say 'if you hadn't stopped me there I wouldn't have realized it was a mind-blowing thought'. Here the focus comes back to the intersubjective, back into awareness of each other and how we affect each other.

There are emotionally shared moments which do not include meeting, and MMs which seem to require reflective awareness of what is happening intersubjectively. Lyons-

Ruth et al (1998) conceptualise MMs in primary intersubjectivity between infant and caregiver as emotionally attuned relating which involves the infant's awareness, but presumably not her/his reflective functioning at this very early stage of development. In therapy, the notion of MMs as developed by Stern (2004) also requires awareness, and may involve reflective functioning if the therapeutic couple reflect on what is happening between them. I suggest that these are distinct possibilities in relational conversation: moments of meeting (MM), reflective moments of meeting (RMM), and shared thinking and feeling focused on a third object (SIF). The last of these may be compared to Kohut's (1977) concept of twinship selfobject relating. Dialogical analysis facilitates the understanding of how these work, through paying attention to genre and discourse style. These concepts are discussed further in chapter 9.

### **Summary**

This chapter has presented an analysis of key moments in conversation with Matthew, centred on two core themes of ambivalence and spirituality. The metaphor of the '*ambivalence seam*' generates my resistance to hearing, resulting in not-meeting, which is gradually worked through to enable a reflective moment of meeting. The use of characteristically different chronotopes and discourse types becomes apparent in not-meeting. For example, Matthew's lively sense of ambivalence is expressed through mainly spatial metaphors and inside-out discourse, while my resistance registers in repetitive time-based references and outside-in discourse. We reach a moment of meeting through Matthew's attunement to my resistance. The dialogue reflects our changing positions as we facilitate each other and reflect on experience, and my thinking is transformed by new insights so that the research and individuation processes interweave. We move between '*the edges of thought*' and reflection via shared interest focus, enabling the new understanding and connection of the intersubjective 'third' to emerge. Distinct moments of meeting, reflective moments of meeting, and shared interest focus are identified and tracked through dialogical analysis.

## 6. Dialogical analysis of conversations with Kim

The recurring themes in my conversations with Kim are challenges to dominant discourses, the powerful presence of unconscious symbolism and my resistance to hearing it, and the use of metaphor. The dominant discourses are those of the therapy profession, which Kim questions in order to claim a more authentic position as a practitioner. Implicitly, the dialogue also reveals the operation of discourses relating to research and expectations of our roles in an interview situation, and anxiety about meeting those expectations. Secondly, the power of symbolic thought is a topic we discuss and is also enacted in our dialogue, where it challenges my resistance to hearing a significant message. Thirdly, Kim's language is highly metaphorical and often lyrical in genre, but she also uses contrasting metaphors suggesting a practical or even scientific genre. These two genres seem to correspond to two sides of her personality, the deeply intuitive and the practical. For Kim, keeping these in balance is a '*healthy*' way to live.

### Getting out of counsellor mode: KM50

This KM occurs near the beginning of the first conversation with Kim. We both use professional genre reflecting our roles as counsellors and co-researchers, and dominant discourses about the profession and research are at once evident. Kim checks if I will ask questions and says she has '*prepared*' and '*tried to suss it out a bit*'. In spite of not wishing to ask questions, I mark the conversation as one where I feel responsible for hosting the proceedings by suggesting that it might be hard to separate personal and professional transformation. I assume that blurring the boundary between the personal and the professional, and experiencing some kind of transformation, are likely consequences of being a counsellor. Kim appears to follow my lead, but interestingly she takes up a potentially problematic aspect of interweaving the personal and the professional:

*One thing I found is that it is very difficult to get out of the counsellor mode.*

That there is a '*counsellor mode*' – as opposed to just an intuitive way of relating to others – is not questioned by either of us. It seems to be part of the dominant discourse of counselling that we see ourselves as already transformed by reason of our profession into a particular way of being or doing things. The difficulty for Kim is to switch this mode off. Throughout this KM two voices alternate: that of a critically reflective experiencing self which challenges the dominant discourse, expressed in the first person, and a generic '*counsellor mode*' expressed by '*you*' or '*one*'. Here Kim outlines '*counsellor mode*':

*I feel that one can develop a high level of intuition. Even if you are in a cafe ... you pick up on things, the way they relate to you.*

Kim wants to get out of 'counsellor mode' for two reasons: first, 'just to learn to let go, switch off now', which is her way of challenging the merging of personal and professional, and is important to maintain a 'transference-free space'. She does this by valuing her 'practical' side 'where you don't need to go deep inside all the time', so she can maintain 'a good balance'. The second reason for getting out of 'counsellor mode' is to challenge her intuition because she sees both its value and potential danger:

*You have to challenge again and again and again, because what can be intuition can also be just simply assumption. Intuition can become assumptions.*

Kim challenges the complacency of becoming habituated to an intuitive way of thinking, which counsellors seek to develop and constantly run the risk of losing. This is quite a counter-cultural view, since therapy discourses typically privilege the transformative power of therapist empathy and insight. In response, my intonation demonstrates my leaning towards a traditional psychodynamic privileging of therapist insight. Maybe here, early in the conversation, my anxiety is raised by a challenge to this familiar settled position:

*J: So, are you saying then that having this intuitive stance, it gives you insights, which might be assumptions but might be insights, into the life around you?*

Kim has a double view: being a counsellor has developed her intuition and insight but it can also close down new perceptions:

*K: ... because if you're not challenging it then it becomes, oh I know everything, oh I know, and this is just not true. And again, that feeds back into your practice. I think if you practise year after year, again there can be a danger that you assume things, that you feel more secure in the way you work. This can be a problem.*

This is the core problem of feeling expert which some therapy modalities overtly challenge but at the same time endorse, simply by offering a scaffolding of theory which clients presumably do not know. As this is acquired at considerable financial and emotional cost, the practitioner has a vested interest in maintaining a sense of superior knowledge or understanding. Similarly, as an academic researcher I ostensibly ask for new information as if I do not know, while structuring what is said and what I hear according to prior assumptions, in this case a link between the personal and the professional. Implicit in Kim's challenge to therapy discourses is a challenge to both of us not to believe that we know everything that is happening in this conversation.

The chronotope in this KM is generalised so that although place and time references mark the world in which we or the generic 'you' move, the focus is on inner perceptions

rather than specific events or interactions with this outside world. Places are non-specific (*'in a crowd of people', 'in a café'*), and time itself is referenced as if it was unchanging: *'again and again', 'twenty four seven', 'year after year'*. The generalised chronotope reflects a professional commentary on accumulated experience. Kim's discourse is outside-in when talking generically (*'one', 'you'*) about the effect of the professional mode on the person in general, but inside-out when she owns her experience (*'I found', 'I feel'*), and *'I'* and *'you'* alternate in the extracts above as if *'I'* voices her critically reflective experiencing self and *'you'* voices herself in *'counsellor mode'*. My tentative summary quoted above attempts to include both these voices but I re-author them to check my understanding, a typical form of counsellor intervention. This intervention is ostensibly inside-out – letting multiple voices be heard – but authoring them into my words inevitably modifies those voices into my version. My own inner voices are heard here too, stressing the dominant psychodynamic discourse of therapist insight and expressing my resistance to the challenge Kim offers. This brief episode highlights the lack of neutrality in counselling interventions such as paraphrasing and summarising, which not only select and omit but subtly modify what is summarised from the counsellor's perspective.

### **The river: KMs 51a and 51b**

Kim continues the discussion of the need for challenge begun in KM50, using the metaphor of a river which recurs throughout our conversations. Up to this point, references to the discourses of professionalism and the unfamiliarity of an interview situation have created a slight lack of engagement between us, but here the metaphor seems to bring the conversation alive. Yet the different ways we use the metaphor suggest resistance on my part to accepting Kim's challenge to *'counsellor mode'*.

*K: But this is the beauty of being a counsellor, with this constantly shifting, moving oneself, a constant river, flowing in a way (gestures flowing)*

*J: Yeah, I love that image, this river (gestures flowing)*

*K: It's a river, and hopefully it's not just a can- a channel, hopefully it's a river where there are stones and bends and roots, and problems where you have to find your way around (gestures), and waterfalls, and by the waterfalls, (gestures falling water) that's how a river also gets all the oxygen back*

*J: Of course*

*K: And it feels, a river when it goes around a stone, it's always there where there is this foam, the white thing, and that's oxygen, it's renewed.*

I initially hear this as a poetic metaphor in lyrical genre, but Kim is not diverted by my appreciative response and switches to a genre of practical problem-solving (*'you have to find your way around'*) and then of scientific description (*'gets all the oxygen back'*).



This scientific reference is surprising, bringing me up short against just such a ‘stone’ in the flow of images, so that the way the metaphor develops enacts or embodies the challenge to my assumptions. The metaphor is embodied in Kim’s gestures of flowing, going around and falling, but it is noticeable in the video that flowing is the only gesture I mirror, as if I am not ready to assimilate the challenge. Kim’s river is not gentle but full of white water around the boulders that disturb the flow and bring oxygen in to renew its life. Difficulties (‘stones’) are life-giving because they lead to self-questioning and help her to ‘wake up’. The professional dangers of complacency, closed thinking and over-analysis are implicitly critiqued here, and with them the pitfall of adopting an expert position. The therapeutic assumption is usually that the therapist is congruent and has self-knowledge while the client needs to be challenged and transformed (Rogers 1957). Kim reverses this assumption, suggesting that for the therapist a continual process of ‘heightening’ and ‘enlivening’ is vital.

The chronotope of the metaphor is at once timeless (‘constantly shifting’, ‘always’) in reference to the ecological cycle of the river, and here and now, brought into the conversation through gestures which embody the movement of water so that it is as if we are seeing and feeling it. Movement combines time and space into process. The metaphorical place of the river is potentially a site of psychological transformation. As I begin to tune in to the various poetic, practical, scientific and interpretive voices in Kim’s inside-out discourse, we work towards a shared understanding of the metaphor that includes awareness of this transformative process.

*K: That tells of the moments when you can wake up*

*J: Wake up?*

*K: Yeah. I mean I’m not saying that I walk through the world asleep (both laugh), I’m not saying that*

*J: It’s a sort of ...*

*K: Heightening*

*J: ... become more alert?*

*K: Heightening of something, that maybe you’ve got in a habit, to challenge you, so it’s quite enlivening, enlivening? (checking pronunciation)*

*J: Enlivening*

*K: Yeah*

As we laugh together and our words overlap, teasing out an adequate interpretation, we reach an understanding that ‘enlivens’ the conversation compared with the diffident low-key beginning. Dialogically and emotionally we have found our way around some

stones in the river. However, my fascination with Kim's metaphor is such that I pursue it a few moments later and again in the IPR session, which leads to a loss of vitality.

*J: I'm really interested in that metaphor of yours of the river gaining oxygen, and how that informs all of your life*

*K: (Pause) Mm. Rivers usually have space, when the water rose (gestures) in spring time or whatever or the snow melted over the banks, and come back again, and this way would fertilise it. Water needs a certain temperature. That's why rivers are very healthy when there are trees overhanging, to provide a kind of shadow so the water can have a certain temperature (J yes), it's also important*

*J: (slowly, thinking) So what keeps the temperature then?*

*K: The trees*

*J: But for you? What keeps the temperature over your personal river?*

*K: (Pause). It's a good question. Possibly engaging with lots of different things in my life, doing lots of different things, different people.*

Engaging with different things acts like stones in the river to keep the water oxygenated and the counsellor challenged and renewed. Kim's practical side keeps her balanced as an individual, but the profession as a whole and groupings within it also need to find a balance which will bring oxygen into the water. One of the factors which makes this hard is precisely the profession's focus on individual experience without regard to the social, cultural and political environment. Kim and I enact this tendency here. The practical, scientific aspect is so central for Kim that she almost forgets for a moment that this is a metaphor for challenge leading to healthy balance, and then recalls it in response to my question about her '*personal river*'. She reflects and answers in personal terms, and we easily slip into the discourse of personal balance as if it had nothing to do with the wider context of our practice.

The loss of vitality, discernible in frequent pauses and in our attempts to use the metaphor as an analogy rather than a creative image, suggests that we have lost the balance between the personal and the professional that Kim has talked about earlier. Dialogically, the genre of Kim's description here is scientific, her discourse is single voiced, there is an absence of emotional register and the chronotope is generalised by the use of the plural ('*rivers*') and timeless statements about the ecological cycle. The metaphor has lost its power. I try to extend it by asking what keeps the temperature, and Kim complies with my request, but the vibrancy has gone. This seems to occur when I direct the conversation according to my agenda and fail to attend to subtle signals of disconnection.

### **'Rudimentary' words: KM 53**

This KM occurs in the context of struggling to put into words the impact of practice on the therapist. Kim says that '*it can propel your own development and change and transformation*', but seems to feel this statement is unsatisfactory:

*K: It's hard and what I said, it's very rudimentary, what I just said, it's rudimentary, it doesn't really ... (pause, sighs, gestures) It does say in a way what it is, but it's not (pause) ... I can't quite (gestures)*

*J: Can't quite grasp it? (Mirroring gesture)*

*K: Yeah. (Pause) Transformation is something quite transient again (gestures)*

*J: Yes. (Pause) And it's incremental as well isn't it? (K mm) It needn't be a huge event (gestures)*

*K: And it's not material*

*J: No*

*K: It's something on a different level.*

We dialogue together to build the thought of what transformation is; our pauses and gestures embody our shared reflection and struggle to find the words for something intangible. We are hesitant and uncertain as if on a threshold, and there are no space-time references as we search and wait for something to emerge between us. I try to help the process along:

*J: But I notice you said 'and it's healthy' (K mm). And you said the river was healthy too if it had oxygen in it (K mm) and it's a very life-giving image (K mm).*

Although the river image is not the one we need, it is as if by referring back to our dialogical history of using it I have reminded Kim of her symbolic mode of thinking and metaphorical style of speech. She immediately finds the metaphor she needs:

*K: It's like when you're, like a snake, I almost want to say if you're skin is too tight – how do I know, I'm not a snake (both laugh)*

*J: Shed it and get another?*

*K: But you shed it you know, and and (moving shoulders)*

*J: So there's something freeing then? (moving shoulders)*

*K: It's freeing, yeah. But also it's amazing how you can shed and how you can transform, and that gives, again that feeds back in the practice of the therapy, that people can transform, how it is ...*

*J: That clients can?*

*K: That clients can, yeah*

*J: But it sounds like, the counsellor can (K yes) as well*

*K: Yes, and because of your own experience you can trust also that it's possible (J yes), you know it is possible.*

The metaphor of the snake shedding its skin, embodied in our wriggling shoulders, frees us up from the difficulty of describing the intangible and we find the thought and the words through the metaphor. Although there are still no verbal space-time references, the chronotope is grounded in the here and now experience of moving like a snake and laughing together, so that this place now, this experience, becomes the embodied metaphor for a thought we cannot reach in the abstract. We reach it once the metaphor has done its work of freeing us from timelessness. The metaphor acts as the intersubjective third or place of meeting, enabling us to return to reflective genre as we talk about transformation. This is a reflective moment of meeting (RMM) (see chapter 9).

The significance of this KM is highlighted a little later when I refer again to her description of transformation as '*rudimentary*' and re-enact the wriggle of a snake shedding its skin. Kim responds:

*Incomplete, lacking lots of details, lacking the layers. I mean that's something one almost has to sit down for a long time and contemplate and write things down.*

She feels her description is incomplete, not exactly, it seems, because she cannot find the words or images, but because she needs to hold the experience in mind and contemplate it. Then she can recognize more of the meaning it holds for her. It is as if the transformation itself is only rudimentary at first and needs more layers to complete it, just as the description does. Thus Kim points to a concept of transformation as something gradual, experienced in moments of recognition after many '*transient*' contributory events.

This process recalls Wordsworth's practice, described in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (Roper, 1968) and in the *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* (Davies, 1975), of allowing immediate experience to settle in the mind and be transformed into thought:

*... sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration.*

*Wordsworth, Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*

It is a Romantic view, perhaps scarcely possible for earlier poets to articulate in this way, that personal affective experience may be a source not just of pleasure or pain, but through a contemplative attitude may lead to moral and spiritual growth. This belief

continues to inform some therapeutic practice, for example Jungian and other depth psychological approaches which value inner experience as potentially transpersonal. Active imagination (Jung 1960, Macaskie & Lees 2011) is a way of contemplating experience, engaging with it through practices such as art and reflection, in order to become more open to unconscious processes and new levels of meaning. Kim's Jungian background and perhaps her familiarity with a European Romantic perspective in art, literature and philosophy, predispose her to this attitude and practice. This is very different from the increasingly common practice in counselling and psychotherapy that goals should be agreed and worked on to produce measurable outcomes. This is a different kind of practice. The practice and values implicit in Kim's words require time, willingness to wait, and a commitment to reflexivity. Not all therapists have these qualities, but even those who have may find it harder to bring them into their work when prevailing models are time-limited and the requirement for evidence-based practice involves the diagnosis of a defined problem and the application of a specified treatment. Inevitably, therefore, contemplative waiting becomes harder to practise. Of course, Kim is speaking of her personal reflective practice rather than her work with clients, but as the value accorded to such a contemplative attitude in many practice settings seems to have diminished for the reasons indicated, it may become harder for practitioners to maintain the level of personal reflexivity she describes.

### **Unconscious commentary on conscious dialogue: KM 56**

This KM occurs in the IPR (K2) session when I play a section of the K1 video in which Kim talks of counselling as a vocation '*which just takes the whole life, informs the whole life*'. She asks me to stop the video at this point, which I had not previously noted as a key moment. In the table below the first column contains the recorded passage we are hearing (the context), the second contains our exchange about this passage (the text), and the third represents my construction as I write now of my inner voice then (the subtext), audible only in the pitch of my voice but evident in my avoidance of something Kim wants to make known.

<b>Initial conversation (K1): context</b>	<b>IPR (K2): text</b>	<b>Inner voice: subtext</b>
<p>K: <i>But I think there are jobs like, or vocations, not a job exactly counselling, it's more like a vocation, where it really accelerates or fertilizes your own development. And I think with counselling it cannot be different changes, they work</i></p>	<p>K: <i>Can you stop here? Vocation, 'cos counselling is vocal, isn't it, vocation?</i></p> <p>J: <i>Of course, yes (soft voice)</i></p> <p>K: <i>And to invoke</i></p> <p>J: <i>Yes, it has that meaning as well, doesn't it? (Louder) But this seems very</i></p>	<p>J: <i>This is interesting and I missed that association</i></p> <p>J: <i>I don't want to explore these associations right now.</i></p>

<p><i>hand in hand. Similar to a priest, I think a priest, he can't be spiritual and not trying to be spiritual, it's something which just takes the whole life, informs the whole life.</i></p> <p>J: <i>Vocation is an interesting term, isn't it? You feel that it is, for you?</i></p> <p>K: <i>Yeah. And although I do it only in evenings, I don't do it full time...</i></p>	<p><i>strong for you, this feeling that whatever it is about counselling, it is inseparable from how you are as a person, it runs all the way through (K yeah). So actually becoming a counsellor has been really important for you?</i></p> <p>K: <i>Yeah. Mm. (Laughs, pause).</i></p> <p>J: <i>Why? What is it, about counselling?</i></p>	<p>J: <i>Let's get back to her experience</i></p> <p>J: <i>I'm having to work hard here</i></p>
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This is a moment of not meeting (MNM) (see chapter 9) in the IPR session (K2) and recapitulates my apparent reluctance in the initial conversation (K1) to explore what Kim means by 'vocation'. My comment in K1 that it is '*an interesting term*' seems to close down further associations. When we stop the playback in K2, I am interested at first but then fail to follow up Kim's word association '*vocal*'. I think my resistance here is partly because I want to return to the river image she used in the first conversation (KM 51, p.95), and I make two further attempts to do so within this key moment, but it is also clear that I avoid using her word '*vocation*' and its cognates when I paraphrase what she has said ('*it is inseparable from how you are as a person, it runs all the way through*'). Kim's laugh and pause suggest that in effect I have silenced her. There is something here that I am not voicing, not even letting it into my awareness, though the inner voice is troubling. It seems that I am resistant to the idea of vocation and the possible implications of '*invoke*'.

Kim's discourse in K2 as she goes on to describe how she came to recognise her vocation is inside-out, allowing her chronological self at different times in her life to be heard: '*when I was a child I always observed people, and there was a time when I wanted to become a ...*' (here she pauses, searching for an English translation of the concept) '*... behavioural observer*'. This is difficult to translate into English and she has to explain the concept to me. So she finds a way to let her first language voice adapt to English here. This linguistic negotiation lays the foundation for a dialogical power move which I make later in this KM by correcting her pronunciation of the word '*metaphor*'.

My discourse, in contrast to Kim's, is outside-in as I refer back in conversation K2 to her mention of Jungian therapy in K1:

*K: And then, in England somebody told me ‘why don’t you do counselling?’ Well I said ‘what is this?’ When they explained it to me I thought, oh that’s what I always wanted to do.*

*J: Mm. But you said somewhere that you knew about Jung and Jungian therapy.*

Again I fail to respond to the sense of vocation in her words. I think at this point I must have connected unconsciously with the meaning of calling associated with the words ‘vocal’ and ‘invocation’ and I resist hearing it, though I only recognised this when analysing the dialogue. In the IPR session I continue to resist this connection of ideas. In response to my mention of Jung, Kim talks of her affinity with Jung’s approach to symbols but I attempt to hijack the conversation in what now seems a blatant refusal on my part to listen to Kim:

*J: I’ll move it on just slightly cos you talk again about the image, or at least I ask you about the image of the river (starting to search on video)*

*K: May I just say something? (laughs)*

*J: Of course (stops video)*

*K: It’s with the symbols, the metaphors (J metaphors – correcting pronunciation) metaphors, what did I say, metaphors? Metaphors. Um, there is a level, unconscious level, which I think is very important in counselling (J mm), whether you work with symbols or not, it’s still there.*

Kim has to be assertive to get me to stop and listen. The formal phrase (*‘May I just ...’*) and little laugh both disclaim the force needed to resist my persistent wish to go back to the river image on the video. Reflecting on this passage now, I think my correction of her pronunciation of ‘*metaphors*’ is an assertion of my power and expertise as a first language speaker of English, and a reassertion of my unconscious desire to control the dialogue by blocking out an uncomfortable message. What Kim says here (*‘whether you work with symbols or not, it’s still there’*) is an unconscious commentary on what is happening between us; the message is still there, whether I am willing to listen and work with it or not. My association now is to the inscription Jung had carved over the doorway of his house in Küsnacht: *Vocatus atque non vocatus, deus aderit* (called or not, God will be present) (Shamdasani, 2012). The rhythm of Kim’s sentence and the contrastive structure *‘whether ... or not’* echoes Jung’s inscription, suggesting a correspondence between the ‘*unconscious level*’ and God or the gods. This correspondence is implicit in Jung’s (1968a) theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes, and is made explicit by Bomford (1999) from a psychoanalytic perspective inspired by Matte Blanco’s (1998) conceptualisation of unconscious symmetrical logic.

In K2, Kim continues to try to get me to listen and I still refuse to engage:

*J: So are you saying you might not overtly work with it, you might not explore the symbols with the client, but nonetheless they are still having an effect?*

*K: Whatever is underlying symbols is also underlying other unconscious, the unconscious level, mm*

*(Pause, J searching for place on video)*

*K: It's like, I think counselling to a certain point is like alchemistic*

*J: Yeah, well that's a very Jungian concept, yeah. (Pause, switching on video) This is this river image.*

This is such a startling example of my not listening that it has been quite hard to overcome my resistance to even analysing what is happening. Our whole exchange in this KM is a metaphor for an unconscious dynamic process between us. The chronotope of Kim's talk of metaphor and symbolism is timeless, with no temporal references but metaphorical spatial references to 'deeper', 'hidden' and 'underlying' levels of the psyche. She is concerned with the symmetrical domain of the unconscious and its metaphors of eternity and omnipresence (Bomford, 1999). My persistent search for the recorded example of a single image, however, continually limits us to there and then – the actual time and place when Kim used this single image in the first recorded conversation K1. Unconsciously I am resistant to entering into dialogue at the deeper level she is referring to; I do not call the gods or the symbolic into relation with me (*non vocatus*), yet it keeps returning (*deus aderit*) in Kim's persistent references to this level of the psyche and to Jungian concepts. The alchemical process of my own transformation is blocked because I am still refusing metaphorically to get into the water which could dissolve the polarities of the psyche. To use another metaphor of Kim's, Nataraja must continue dancing to break open the earth so that it can be renewed.

Once we have watched the section of video where Kim (at my request) develops her image of the river, she returns to a question I asked in that section: '*What keeps the temperature over your personal river?*' She again complies with my implicit insistence on exploring this image as an analogy, suggesting that perhaps the river represents the unconscious while overhanging trees offering shade stand for consciousness. This feels rather artificial. The metaphor has lost its imaginative potency as a result of my refusal to engage with the archetypal power of symbolism.

### **Visual images and loss of imagination: KM57**

This key moment again reads like an implicit commentary on our dialogue. The genre is reflective and has the conviction of argument as Kim gestures emphatically with her glasses to make her point; in contrast I seem distant and not fully engaged. Kim explains why in Steiner education children are given books with only minimal illustrations, so that visual imagery does not constrain their imaginative response to fairy tales:



*So when they hear those stories, every child will be creator, will create his own inner picture. You know, if you tell them of Hansel and Gretel, each child will have its own Hansel and Gretel.*

She describes her own experience of seeing a film before reading the book and being unable to override the film images. The emotional tone is regretful as she talks of the loss of freedom to make our own imaginative responses and becomes more definite and emphatic in the extract below as she says that visual imagery can ‘*brainwash us*’ so that we ‘*believe it’s ours*’.

*J: So a visual culture can actually limit our imagination in a sense?*

*K: It can, yeah. And brainwash us*

*J: (distracted, looking away) Sorry, they’re pigeons, they’re sitting outside the window. Yes, we can actually be quite flooded by imagery (K mm) that’s not ours*

*K: Then we believe it’s ours (J mm). Then we believe it’s ours.*

*J: Yes, when it’s not. (Pause) OK, I’m going to move on a fair bit I think, just to get to the next bit. You talk about culture quite a bit, but then you begin to talk about particular events that have been significant to you in therapy practice.*

Kim’s greater emphasis here is necessary because I am resisting hearing what she says. Something has limited my imagination and brainwashed me into believing that I am listening. So I am easily distracted by pigeons sitting outside the window, which may be why Kim repeats ‘*then we believe it’s ours*’ in an attempt to keep the conversation on track. But my unengaged response takes us no further and I try to move the video on to something I have previously decided is significant, rather than staying with the here and now. Kim, however, is centred in the present and paying no attention to my insistence on watching the video. She tries to re-connect with what we have been discussing by linking the pigeons with a fairy tale:

*K: It’s in Cinderella when the pigeons come (pointing to window) to the window and help her pick out the piece*

*J: Oh is it? I don’t remember any pigeons in Cinderella (both laugh)*

*K: Maybe it’s a different type of bird, but I think it’s pigeons. Now they sit on the ... (indicates window ledge)*

*(Pause, J searching for place on video)*

This is like a transference dialogue in which the references to films, visual images and the pigeons outside form an implicit commentary on our interaction. Kim has something to teach me about what is happening between us. It is as if she is telling me not to be so fixed on the video or on a particular image I remember from viewing it (the river image I tried to revisit earlier in KM56) because it will kill the imagination, just as seeing a film can block our creative response to reading a story. Staying attuned to the here

and now, represented by the potential message of the pigeons at the window, will help us *'pick out'* what we need to find. The chronotopes in this KM are revealing. The specific time references of Kim's past experience (first seeing a film, then reading the book) and of our present experience (hearing pigeons at the window) stand in contrast to the absence of time references when she speaks of the imaginative and symbolic level of the psyche. Fairy tales are timeless, and as the work of Marie-Louise von Franz (1996) shows, can be understood as an expression of that symbolic level. Part of the context here is my unspoken resistance, apparent in the previous KM (56) to engaging with the symbolic or archetypal. Kim is continuing to challenge me implicitly to be more open to this level as it presents itself in our dialogue.

### **Not listening as part of the process**

This series of KMs highlights my persistent failure to listen to the dialogical voices that recall unconscious and symbolic meanings or to hear Kim's attempts to steer our conversation back on track. As a therapist and interviewer, it is easy for me simply to think of this as poor practice. However, I think it has more significance since it points to the conversational processes which express resistance (see chapter 10) and is linked to my resistance to the individuation process constellated by engaging with research (see chapter 3). It is also a clear example of the over-generalisation of *'counsellor mode'* in which I assume that I understand but actually fail to question my supposed intuitions, so that the danger Kim warns of in KM51 is enacted in our conversation.

Re-listening and analysing the dialogue has provided a key to my personal difficulty in getting into the water, symbolised in the dreams discussed in chapters 3 and 7. This is one way in which the connection between the autoethnographic account of my research process and the research conversations with participants is evident. The connection is reciprocal: my trajectory impacts on what I hear and fail to hear and how I interpret what people say, and what happens between us in conversation offers indications for understanding my own process as well as the intersubjective processes of dialogue.

### **Summary**

Kim emphasises that *'counsellor mode'* runs the risk of over-valuing therapist intuition and insight, which may turn into unquestioning assumptions if not challenged. The dominant discourses of the profession and of some theoretical modalities have a tendency to rely uncritically on apparent therapist intuition. My assumptions are evident in the research conversations where I think I know what is happening and miss the challenge contained in the different voices of dialogue. Our dialogical use of the metaphor of stones in the river highlights how easy it is to misread and mishear what is

being said. Although we discuss maintaining a good balance between the personal and the professional, we lose the balance implied by the metaphor, which then loses vitality and we collapse into a one-sided focus on the personal. The use of metaphor, including embodied metaphor, as a vehicle of symbolic thought enables us to think thoughts that are hard to put into words. Words are felt to be sometimes *'rudimentary'* until contemplation and reflection deepen our awareness of experience. The implication for therapy is that a goal-oriented approach may not allow the contemplative waiting that deep transformation seems to involve. The dialogical blocking of intimations of symbolic thinking outside immediate awareness is enacted in our conversations as I persistently fail to hear Kim's attempts to engage with the symbolic. These are MNMs and provide striking examples of the power of assumptions and of researcher resistance to the symbolic or archetypal.

## **7. Autoethnography (2): A railway junction, two saints and a queen**

This chapter explores ways in which symbolic images appearing in a dream and amplified through active imagination (Jung, 1960) provided significant pointers for my reflexive work and connected with themes arising from conversations with research participants. The dream was separate from the sequence described in chapter 3 and was so compelling that I could not forget it; it was clearly a 'big dream' (Jung, 1960, para 555). Eventually, I followed the dream by taking a railway trip which led me to two saints and a queen. The 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2006) of the dream, the trip and my encounters with living and historical people are everyday experiences in particular contexts, yet they acquired psychological and spiritual significance for me as I learned through them to attend more deeply to sources of wisdom other than rational thought. This account therefore suggests a dialogue between conscious and unconscious, between what I was consciously seeking at the time – a way of gathering and understanding research data - and sources of wisdom and inspiration of which I was not aware. The account describes a literal journey to Medina del Campo, a small town in north-central Spain, and a metaphorical journey via some of my own history and the presences of historical figures to a new place of awareness. In making these journeys, I have discovered in the writings of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross a lens through which some of the experiences described by research participants can be viewed, and which enables me to recognise both the universality and the particularity of their mystical dimension.

My perspective is dialogical, drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of polyphony, a multiplicity of internal voices, and heteroglossia, a multi-languaged self. Polyphony is recognisable in self-talk and writing that expresses more than one perspective, position, or voice. In the example below, the dream-I is aware at once of conflicting desires and fears, and so may be considered multi-voiced. The various figures in the dream may also be thought of as different voices within the dreamer. This view of dream figures coincides with what Jung (1960, para 509) refers to as 'interpretation on the subjective level', which for him was at once valid and partial, since it did not take sufficient account of the collective level of the psyche. This subjective view of dreams is supported by a dialogical perspective which 'considers the self as a multiplicity of parts (voices, characters, positions) that have the potential of entertaining dialogical relationships with each other' (Hermans, 2004, p.13). Mageo (2003) suggests that through a heteroglossic understanding of dreaming,

... the presence of alterity in subjectivity is exposed. Dreams continually splice self with other, complicating "me"/"not me" recognitions. Dream characters are composites of people we know or have known in life and in tales, but also our

feelings/thoughts in other guises and those of others about us that we have interiorized. In this regard, dream symbols are at once about the subject and the social world; everything in them has both allegiances. (Mageo, 2003, p.9-10)

Although Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia seem to be elided in this discussion, Pollard (2008) argues that heteroglossia is a concept which goes beyond polyphony and implies that not only voices but different ways of speaking, different 'tongues', can be heard both inter- and intrapersonally. Not speaking the same language is an interpersonal phenomenon not confined to those who literally require an interpreter, or situations where neither partner really shares the other's framework of thinking. Interpersonal communication always involves negotiation of meaning, and even intrapersonal dialogues involve the interaction of self and accumulated cultural discourses. This is suggested by Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossic conception of self-talk or inner speech in which some discourses dominate so strongly over others that the sense of the submerged discourse is hard to grasp. This has significant implications for psychotherapy and by extension for an intersubjective understanding of conversational processes in general:

From a psychotherapy perspective, heteroglossia forces us to look beyond the duality of client and therapist to the immense plurality of languages, points of view and sectional interests in society as a whole and to think about how they are reflected and refracted in the therapeutic space, in the speech of therapist and client. (Pollard, 2008, p.78)

In this study I attempt to distinguish a plurality of perspectives and interests in dialogue, both in conversations with research participants and in my intrapersonal talk, which is sometimes dramatised in dreams. Metaphors and symbols carry this plurality since by their nature they refer to an experience or unconscious potentiality in terms of another experience, interweaving the emotional resonances of one with the other. In dreams the dramatic and often ironic play of events may be thought of as the communication of other perspectives normally hidden from the dreamer's awareness (Bollas, 1987; Grotstein, 2000).

Jung (1960) argues that expressions of the unconscious mind typically arise in consciousness in the language of symbolism, suggesting that in dreams, myths and ancient practices such as alchemy, symbolic forms constellate or make present both personal and collective levels of the psyche. Jung (1967, para 20) specifically suggests that there are 'two kinds of thinking', that of the conscious rational mind and that of the unconscious, which may find expression in dreams, artistic creation and intuition. Matte Blanco (1998), a mathematician and psychoanalyst, similarly proposes a bi-logical view of the mind. Consciousness in his terms relies on asymmetrical logic, which notices differences and categorises experiences, while unconscious processes such as dreaming depend on symmetrical logic, which sees similarity and identity. I suggest

that heteroglossia provides another conceptual tool for thinking about this double capability of the mind. It is as if we speak different languages within and among our plural selves, and to understand our symbolic or symmetrical language(s) we need the patience and empathic focus of someone acquiring another language which is both strange and familiar at the same time. In the account below, I gradually begin to acquire my second (or third, fourth, etc) language with the help of inner voices and real other people.

How do non-linguistic symbols such as visual or imaginative images interact with word-based language? McIntosh (2010) offers a way of bringing Bakhtinian dialogics into dialogue with the ways we use and understand visual imagery. While critiquing conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) for its exclusive focus on linguistically-based metaphors, McIntosh (2010) presents an example of a picture plus a written text which interactively communicate layers of meaning between themselves as a composite work and 'force us to relate to it ...engaging us in a dynamic of movement, feeling and cognition' (McIntosh, 2010, p.162). Multi-voicing and symbolism permeate the work as a whole and resonate with the viewer/reader in distinctive ways according to their own perspective. However, visual metaphor and dialogics are distinct, giving rise to a potential for confusion if we wish to apply the analysis of visual imagery in a dialogical context:

In other words are we searching for what is symbolic through visual and literary metaphor, or what is intersubjective in relation to its social action; and this is where a tension arises, for as social scientists or reflective practitioners we are not viewing these as purely scholarly disciplines, we are searching for application to the ontological world. (McIntosh, 2010, p.167)

The potential for confusion of the symbolic and the intersubjective is inevitably present in the account which follows. I believe it is only partly resolvable by the person producing the narrative and visual imagery, since you, the reader/viewer, also have a dynamic relation to the work and a choice of focusing on the resonances of its metaphors, or on the intersubjective nature of the many voices of intra- and interpersonal dialogues it contains and which arise as you interact with it. One way of holding the tension of this choice is through recognising the functionality of the work. The composite narrative and visual work I present below acts as a metaphor for a psycho-spiritual journey, in the same way that for Jung (1966, 1968b) alchemy acts as a metaphor for the work of psychotherapy and individuation. But both alchemy and the work presented here are functional for the worker. They have 'an application to the ontological world' (McIntosh, 2010, p.167). Jung (1966) argues that alchemy enabled the transformation not only of chemicals but of the adept. Similarly, working with the experiences described here was functional for me in several ways; first, by inciting

action, literally to travel to a specific place, learn what it had to teach me and thus discover a new lens through which to view the dream material and research conversations. Secondly, sharing the experiences with research participants contributed to shaping the dialogical form and thematic content of a workshop and some of the subsequent one-to-one research conversations. Thirdly, working with these experiences helped me to develop a deeper reflexive awareness of what I bring into dialogue with research participants, and to dialogue with the resistance in myself which I encountered at various stages of the research process. Functionally, the multi-layered experiences and reflections presented here challenge the assumption that researchers and research participants each speak with a single voice and that data have an unquestionable ontological status as a snapshot of reality.

### **Medina del Campo: a composite account**

I will now describe a dream (a linguistic rendering of a dynamic visual experience) and present drawings based on the dream imagery, followed by a narrative of a dream-led journey and further drawings inspired by the place visited and its associations with historical figures and texts. In late 2009, I dreamed of arriving by plane in the railway station of Medina del Campo in Spain. I had never visited this place, though I recalled having once passed through the station on an overnight train from Madrid to Santander. I knew it was a railway junction. The dream left a strong impression of symbolic meaning which I felt was significant for my research project.

#### **Dream 11: Medina del Campo**

*I was on a plane with a group of friends. We were going to watch a film and a small screen showed an animated drawing of the plane rising vertically as the film loaded. I thought if I cancelled the film the plane would crash, so I had to let the film load first and the plane would then be horizontal and it would be safe to cancel. An official came to check us and we all pretended we were in the middle of the flight. She said she knew I was there as a reviewer, and I felt relieved that I didn't have to pretend. The plane turned round to go back. This seemed to be connected with me being a reviewer. I was surprised the plane was now travelling along the ground and it pulled into the railway station at Medina del Campo. There were old-fashioned steam engines with funnels and humps on the boilers. We all got out and set off for the town, but I turned back to check how much time we had and found the train had gone without us. I told my friends I'd once spent a weekend at Medina del Campo but couldn't remember anything about it except that it was a railway junction. It was grey and misty around us. We walked through a covered mall or colonnade which contained modern apartments. I heard a man in one of them talking about the cellar. Looking down a wynd or ginnel between the apartments I could see the river had overflowed below the buildings and I knew this was what he meant by the cellar.*

#### **Discussion**

The dream begins with an image on screen of the plane in which I am travelling, seemingly a progress indicator of a loading film. The dream-I does not want to watch

the film and yet fears to cancel it, because it equates the screen image and the actual plane. Cancelling the ascent of the screen image would amount to magically destroying the plane, a self-inflicted catastrophe. There is a sense of unreality about the flight and we have to pretend it is real. However, the official's recognition that I am 'a reviewer' seems to give permission to turn back and I feel freer and more truthful. It is as if the dream-I cannot go forward because something needs to be re-viewed first; perhaps established beliefs and assumptions need to be seen in a new light. The descent to ground level and the glimpse of the cellar imply the possibility of going deeper into the research data and psychologically into aspects of myself. The journey takes me unexpectedly to a place that is not familiar and yet somehow feels as if I have fleetingly been there before. The old railway engines suggest a historical past, reminding me of my father's love of steam locomotives. I am with friends in the dream, including an old school friend, two friends I met at a Carmelite retreat centre and a current student with a strong interest in spirituality. Different aspects of my life are linked up: family and growing up, spirituality, living in Spain, academic work and different relationships. Some images in the dream stand out, mainly the station and the old-fashioned steam locomotives, the colonnade, and the water below the buildings. This suggests a need to get into the water of the unconscious, to trust the processes of research and reflexivity enough to risk not knowing the answers, or even perhaps the questions, but to immerse myself in the unknown. This dream again seems to relate to the immersion in the water of *Rosarium Philosophorum* picture 4 (p.42) and the *coniunctio* of picture 5 (p.52). Using active imagination (Jung, 1960; Schaverien, 2005), I drew the pictures below, suggested by the dream images of locomotives in the station, water in the cellar below and between the houses, and the lighted window where a man was standing talking. I noted in my journal a 'strange emotional feeling while drawing the water, as if I am finding myself in it already'.



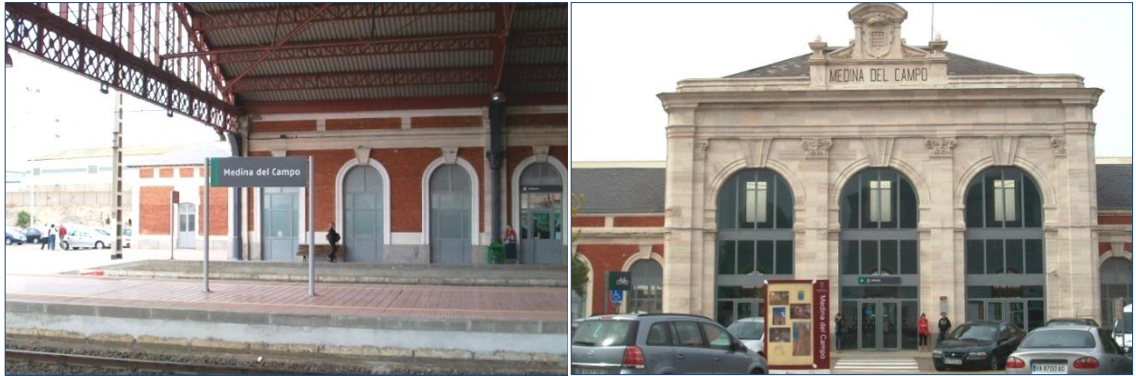


**Figure 7 Active imagination drawings**

This dream helped me get on with plans for a workshop which was the first stage of data gathering with research participants. I described the dream at the workshop to demonstrate my perspective that the process was inseparable from the content of research, and to invite participation by means of reflection on dreams and experiential awareness in a group setting. Edgar (2004, p.71) states that dream narration is 'a social act which both expresses and creates social affinity and meaning', and that is what then occurred. One of the participants (Matthew) exclaimed in surprise at the name Medina del Campo, but chose not to say more in spite of the interest of the other group members. He later told me it was significant to him as the place where St Teresa of Ávila met St John of the Cross and they began the joint reform of the Carmelite religious order. I had no prior conscious knowledge of this, though it is possible I had read it at some time. Another group member (Natalia) associated the image of a plane in my dream with a recurring dream of her own, which she then narrated. In her dreams flying planes threatened to land on her house or car but the dreams stopped when she became less anxious. The cessation of the dreams marked a major transformation in her worldview. Discussing the use of dream imagery as research data, Edgar (2004, p.139) points out that 'validity in imagework refers to the authenticity of the attribution of cognitive meaning to visual experience, rather than to the authenticity of the reported dream image'. Through the dynamic process of dialoguing with images, whether one's own or those of others, cognitive meanings emerge and their authenticity is felt as a satisfying resonance of recognition at that time and in that context. New authentic meanings may continue to develop and emerge.

### **A train trip**

I was intrigued by the specificity of the place named in the dream and decided to visit it. Medina del Campo is a small town in the province of Valladolid in Castile. We arrived by train from Madrid in the fairly grand but deserted railway station, where there were no steam trains but only an old fashioned diesel locomotive parked in a siding.



**Figure 8 Medina del Campo railway station**

As in the dream, the station was some way outside the town. We crossed a bridge over the dry course of the River Zapardiel, which I was told had been canalised to allow for seasonal floods when the river is in spate. The summer of 2011 was exceptionally dry and even in October 2011 when I visited Medina del Campo, there was no water in the river bed.



**Figure 9 Dry river bed - Rio Zapardiel**

On entering the Plaza Mayor we saw a colonnade (*soportales*) along the right hand side. The resemblance to the dream image was mainly in the position of the colonnade

on the right and in the mixture of old and new buildings.



**Figure 10 Soportales**



**Figure 11 Casa de los Arcos**

At the far end of the Plaza Mayor, the Casa de los Arcos again reminded me of the dream images of arcades.

Near here, set back from the plaza, is the Palacio Real Testamentario of Isabel la Católica, Queen of Castile, in which she made her last will and testament and died in November 1504.

The court of Isabel and her husband Fernando, King of Aragón, progressed through their kingdoms from town to town, including Medina, which was one of the queen's most important commercial and military centres, defended by the massive castle of La Mota.



**Figure 12 Isabel la Católica**



**Figure 13 Castillo de la Mota**

I was interested to learn that Medina del Campo, although situated in the middle of the arid Castilian plain and at the time of my visit suffering from drought, has a *capa*

*freática* or phreatic zone below the water table, which causes rising damp in many of the town's buildings. 'Phreatic' is defined as:

Describing [groundwater](#) below the [water-table](#). The phreatic zone is permanently saturated. (*Oxford Dictionary of Geography*, 2009)

There really is underground water in Medina del Campo which, while not visible as it was in my dream, leaves tangible evidence of its presence.

The series of apparent coincidences between the dream and my visit included the grand railway station, the walk into the town, the fact that we missed the train back to Madrid, the colonnades on the right of the Plaza Mayor with a mixture of old and new buildings, and the presence of underground water. The dream could be said to depict a fairly typical small Spanish town of which the dream-I constructed an image from elements of many other such towns I have seen, and yet when I saw the actual colonnade and heard about the phreatic zone, I had a sense that it was all as I had dreamed. There was a numinous feeling of recognition. Jung (1960) suggests that dreams may fulfil a prospective function, though he warns against overestimating this. I am hesitant to accept this suggestion, but nonetheless this dream has led to some curious coincidences and intriguing psycho-spiritual connections, as well as perspectives relevant to my research. Although Jung's (1960) concept of synchronicity refers to non-causal juxtapositions in time rather than space, the notion of chronotope or space-time which Bakhtin (1981) derives from relativity theory allows us to extend the concept of synchronicity to apparent connections between spatial as well as temporal referents. The chronotopes of my narrative include a place that is both objectively real and metaphorical, a series of pasts represented by dream images and people in history, and the different presents of the dream and the journey to Medina del Campo. I do not attempt to explain the resonances between these, but rather accept them as dialogical phenomena that bring together personal, historical and cultural perspectives in my construction of psycho-spiritual and social meanings in this study.

### **St Teresa of Ávila, a dialogical writer**

Although I did not know about the Carmelite connection with Medina del Campo until it was mentioned by Matthew, this then struck me as significant. I was already familiar with the poems of St John of the Cross and had some years ago spent time at a Carmelite retreat centre, where I met two of the friends travelling with me in the dream. Now I began to read the writings of St Teresa of Ávila. Teresa reformed the Carmelite order in the face of considerable opposition from within and outside the order, founding seventeen convents which followed what she believed was the original or Primitive Rule of the Carmelites and became known as the Descalced (unshod). The first of



Teresa's new convents was St Joseph's in her home city of Ávila. Initially she had no thought of founding more, but was encouraged to do so by the Father General of the Carmelites, and by a sense acquired through prayer that this was God's will (St Teresa of Ávila, 1946). The second foundation was St Joseph's in Medina del Campo.



Figure 14 Carmelite convent, Medina del Campo

In her *Book of Foundations*, Teresa describes her arrival in Medina at midnight with six nuns, to find the house they had been promised was almost a ruin. This made her question herself and her belief in her new foundation:

I thought that, as the beginning of our enterprise had gone wrong, I must have been mistaken in supposing that the Lord would help us. To all this was added the fear that what I had learned in prayer might have been an illusion; and this was not the least of my distresses, but the greatest, for it caused me the most terrible fear that the devil might have been deceiving me. (St Teresa of Ávila, 1946, p. 12)

Teresa's references to what she learned in prayer and the possible deception wrought by the devil present an interesting blend of orthodox sixteenth century Catholicism with a subversive element of personal insight. Her texts continually seek to conceal this subversion by appealing to male clerical readers (confessors and religious superiors) to cross out anything they think 'wrong' as she is 'unlearned' and a woman. Spain in the sixteenth century had recently been consolidated under the Catholic Monarchs Fernando and Isabel through the Reconquest of Granada in 1492, the expulsion or forced conversion of Muslims and Jews and the institution of the Inquisition to root out heresy among the *conversos*. In this context, the claim to spiritual insight unmediated by the church on the part of a woman with Jewish ancestry amounted to a challenge of massive proportions (Pérez-Romero, 1996). Teresa was subverting the dominant discourses of church and society by daring to believe that she could have a direct relationship with God in mystical prayer, and her writing both acknowledges and deflects the power of these discourses (Weber, 1990; Slade, 1995). Teresa's *Life* (1957), written at the behest of her confessors, appears to follow the genre and format of a judicial confession but 'uses dialogized heteroglossia ... as she substitutes words with the inflection of the various first-person genres in which she would have a chance of defending herself for those of a genre in which she could only confirm her guilt' (Slade, 1995, p. 14). Teresa was a woman engaged in the socially disturbing activity of

transforming her religious order. She did this against the opposition of many Carmelites, of people in Ávila who thought she was 'mad' and that 'this folly would soon come to an end' (St Teresa of Ávila, 1946, p. 9), and against the wishes of civic and religious authorities in Medina del Campo. The project itself was both a spiritual endeavour and a hard practical task, as Teresa conducted the business of making the house habitable for the community, appeasing civic and religious opponents and negotiating the uncertain terrain between obedience to the church and loyalty to the insights she learned in contemplative prayer. Her writing in the *Book of Her Life* (1957) and the *Book of Foundations* (1946) demonstrates the internal and interpersonal dialogues she was engaged in between the official church doctrine and policy that she declared as her faith, and which led her to question her interpretation of experience, and the authority of that experience as the source of courage to continue in the face of opposition. A dialogue is also being conducted between her awareness of her social position as a woman with little education and no money and her sense of being called to set in motion reforms which would challenge the vested interests of many powerful people in church and state.

Teresa realised the importance of spreading her reform beyond the Carmelite women's houses to include friars as well, and just after establishing the house in Medina she met Juan de la Cruz, a young friar who was keen to embrace a more austere life. He and a companion later established

the first Descalced Carmelite monastery for men in a little tumbledown house in the village of Duruelo, between Ávila and Medina del Campo (St Teresa of Ávila, 1946). The importance of the Carmelites to the town of Medina del Campo is indicated by the commemorative sign outside Teresa's convent and a statue in honour of St John of the Cross, located in the Plaza de San Juan de la Cruz outside the church of the Carmelite Fathers. Their significance in the context of my research into transformational experience lies partly in relation to the spiritual issues discussed by one of the research participants (Matthew) and partly in the implicit connections between the contemplative journey described by Teresa, John of the Cross and other mystics, and the psycho-spiritual transformation which Jung (1966, 1968b)



Figure 15 Commemorative sign at Carmelite convent



Figure 16 Statue of St John of the Cross

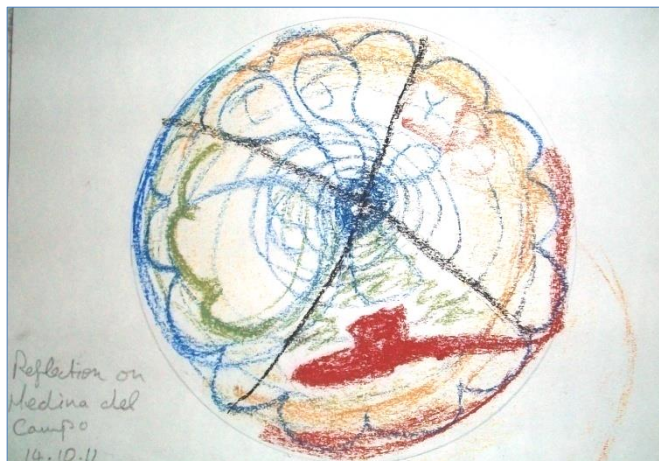
described in terms of alchemical processes. This association has been made by a number of writers (see, for example, Bryant, 1978, 1983; McLean, 2003; Welch, 1982) and makes possible a more holistic understanding of inner growth and transformation as both spiritual and psychological, thus bringing together these sometimes polarised aspects of experience.

Since visiting Medina del Campo I have reflected on its implications for me as I research therapists' transformational experience. The place was not exactly as in the dream, not an experience of *déjà vu*, but it resonated profoundly with the dream experience. I could not get into the water in any easy way; the river bed was dry, but the water was literally there underground and the psycho-spiritual depths I needed to enter were there waiting for me to descend. These depths represented aspects of conversations with research participants as well as personal areas that needed to be challenged and integrated. However, after going to Medina I experienced a great resistance to engaging with the data and with what lies below the surface of consciousness. I wrote in my journal: 'My research is stuck because I have lost heart – because my heart river has run dry' (3.12.11).

### **Imaginative elaboration**

Following Jung's (1960) practice of active imagination, I drew mandalas in an attempt to find a medium of expression for the unknown and to concretise it visually so that I could begin a dialogue with the symbols I drew. The act of making a mandala as a meditative or therapeutic practice involves drawing disparate elements into a single whole, bounded by a circle or a square. It enacts the psycho-spiritual work of bringing polarities in the mind or personality together and holding the tension between them. The aim of the practice is to work towards transcending a binary opposition so that a third perspective can ensue.

The first mandala, dated a few days after visiting Medina del Campo, shows the colours of a desert around the right hand side. The reddish brown object which stands



out near the bottom suggests a heavy block of dryness, perhaps a rock of resistance like the Castle of La Mota. It also suggests the shape of a submarine. Perhaps taking my resistance seriously would offer a means of getting into the water and submerging myself in the

**Figure 17 Mandala 1**

unconscious. It is noticeable that the arid colours are most intense just where green lines flow down from the centre, as if resistance is strongest just where the pressure of emerging awareness is felt. The blue and green lines emerging from the blue core suggest water flowing from a source at the centre and creating fertile green areas. The blue encircles the mandala though it is hard to see this where the desert colours predominate, as if I lose faith in its presence when my 'heart river' runs dry. Within the blue lines I have written 'T' and 'J', since the wisdom of Teresa and John of the Cross seems to me to connect with the deep unconscious and the spirit, which I associate with water and renewed life. There is also a letter Y, recalling the old spelling 'Ysabel' which appears on facsimile documents and signs relating to the queen in the Palacio Testamentario in Medina del Campo. It is also the initial of Juan de Yepes, later Juan de la Cruz, who grew up in Medina del Campo. Teresa and John, spiritual visionaries, are symbolic figures whose presence I understand more readily in the mandala than that of Queen Isabel; yet thinking of her extraordinary challenge to contemporary social expectations of women, even of a royal woman, her presence also speaks of the courage and vision to transform her world. Isabel was a learned woman at a time when learning was the preserve of clerics. She was a ruler in her own right, and did not concede that right to her husband in her hereditary lands. Although her ruthless determination to impose Christianity throughout the multi-cultural society of late fifteenth century Spain today seems fanatically intolerant, it offers a significant psychological reminder. This is that spirituality is not immune from polarised thinking, since we inevitably think in the categories of our cultural contexts and contribute to shaping the dominant discourses of our time. Spiritual vision is not a passport to a culture-free zone. Neither is research. In particular, this study of transformational experience is vulnerable to my own potential for polarisation – psychological/spiritual, conscious/unconscious, personal/cultural. In the mandala, rough black lines indicate differentiated aspects and the circular shape holds these together in a quaternity, a symbol of wholeness. Yet the apparent disconnection between the contents of each quadrant and the attempt of the red colour to escape from the circle to the right suggest that the effort to contain these disparate elements is unsuccessful; they are not yet integrated.



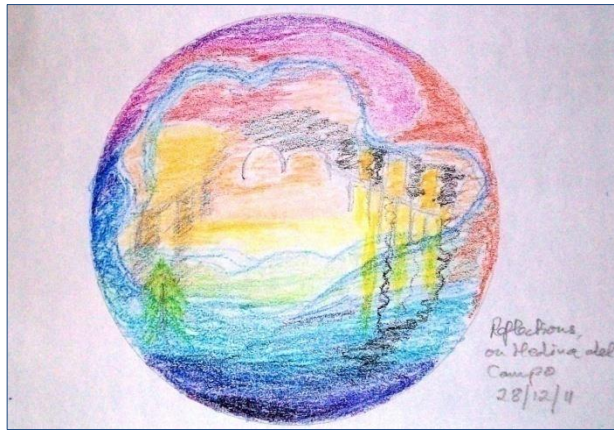


Figure 18 Mandala 2

The second mandala is luminous at its centre, where the faint outline of surrounding arches suggests the *soportales* along the Plaza Mayor in Medina del Campo. Around the centre is flowing water, rising from below (underground) and encircling the light. The colours form a spectrum from dark bluish black at the base to violet at the top, passing through the centre where the refraction ceases and they are integrated into white light. The blocks of colour are contained within the circle, unlike the erratic lines of the first mandala, and the colours themselves are both more separated and strongly contrasted. This mandala suggests greater harmony and greater clarity. When I drew the first mandala, I felt unable to make progress, but in the intervening time the underground water of unconsciousness appears to have begun flowing, irrigating the desert so that a green conifer is now visible on the left. This evergreen tree hints at a hope that the desert will not take over again. Yellow light reaching down on the right recalls a yellow light mixed into the watery grey in the active imagination drawings (Figure 7, p.112); it is as if something is beginning to illuminate the water. The centre of the mandala is empty or invisible, which suggests that the white light here is not yet accessible. The process is far from finished. This refers, I think, both to research and the individuation process. This second mandala presents a visual problem, since the colours do not follow the usual order of the rainbow: violet is at the top and indigo-blue at the bottom, as if they blend into one another round the back of the sphere. This suggests that the wholeness of the spectrum is out of sight, in the Shadow.

I then drew a third mandala, consciously focusing on the colours of the rainbow. It has



Figure 19 Mandala 3

the look of a planet, perhaps Jupiter, with encircling reds and yellows in the upper hemisphere. A railway line makes its way round the lower left and faint black trails suggest smoke from a steam engine like the ones in Medina del Campo station in the dream. The railway line leads from the blue-black area through violet-pink and

disappears into reddish-orange, a fiery colour. In earlier dreams the element of fire appeared to be missing (Macaskie & Lees 2011), though earth, water and air were symbolically present. Here the train enters the colours of fire, suggesting that whatever this element represents (not only energy and passion but the purifying fire of *calcinatio* in the alchemical *opus* (Edinger 1985)) is becoming more available to the psyche.

Again the spectrum is split up into blocks of colour and these are clearly demarcated in the lower two thirds of the circle. Although the colours meld into one another as in a rainbow inside the blocks, there are clear sharp contrasts between primary colour groups. The thick black curving line across the mandala is traversed by red, and a small area of blue appears above it with some flashes of yellow and green. Thinking of this line as a marker of consciousness and unconsciousness, it seems that the water of unconsciousness (blue) is beginning to rise into consciousness, like the rising damp in Medina del Campo, but a large reservoir remains hidden from consciousness. But the train has set off from the edge of the blue and links this colour with the fiery red. The railway line seems to disappear into the unseen reverse of the circle, suggesting once again that work on the Shadow is needed. I sense that this task will involve exploring my resistance and ambivalence towards research and psycho-spiritual development.



**Figure 20 The Shadow**

### **Alternative readings**

I have told several stories in this chapter, not only in the narratives of the dream and trip to Medina del Campo, but also through the visual form of mandalas and in the Jungian and Bakhtinian interpretations I have made. Alternative readings occur to me as I revisit my text. One is that when I awoke from the dream, I immediately identified Medina del Campo as a junction. At a junction, things come together and new possibilities open up. Like a crossroads, it seems to be an archetypal symbol of choice. However, the notion of transcending polarities as a means to transformation implies a

different attitude to the junction. Transcending, in Jung's (1960) sense, involves *not* choosing one or other of the dichotomised alternatives, but moving beyond them to a new or third position. As I discuss in chapter 11, this is implicit in the symbolic and metaphorical references to transformative experience made by some of the research participants. I now read the stories in this chapter, written about half way through the study, as an attempt to articulate the process of transcending polarities as it happened. Medina del Campo for me is a junction of height and depth, present and past, Teresa and John, old and new, and the elements of air (flying), earth (coming to land), water (underground) and fire (railway engines), which are apparent in the mandalas. Even the place name joins concepts and languages together, the Arabic *medina* (town) and Castilian *campo* (countryside). A junction is like the *coniunctio* in the alchemical process, where what was opposite and separate is joined together so it can be transformed into a new thing. However, what is joined may prise apart again under pressure or through choice, and a railway junction is certainly a place where different directions open up. The *Rosarium Philosophorum* offers a story of transcending the polarities of male and female, sun and moon, through their coming together and eventual death before their new birth as a unified figure. However, I have not reached that stage and the clear message of Medina del Campo to me is still to get into the water, because I have not gone deep enough. Subsequent dreams of rising water levels (not discussed here) continued this symbolic commentary. The experiences described in this chapter enabled me bring together aspects of my past history and present focus, to link my own experience to that of the research participants through recounting the dream to them and sparking off their associations, and to find a connection between transformation as a desired psychotherapeutic outcome and the spiritual journey towards mystical union described by Teresa and John of the Cross. In the process, I have become aware of multiple voices and perspectives in dialogue. None of these is definitive, but all deserve to be heard. A transformation is occurring in my attitudes as I carry out this study, so that I no longer ask which voice is true, but recognise different truths in all of them. The process and experience of doing the work are themselves the subject of the study.

Visiting the place named in a dream could be understood in psychoanalytic terms as acting out (Sandler et al, 1992) the symbolic in a concrete way rather than seeking insight into its meanings. I do not think this is what I did. Actually going there enabled me to deepen my awareness of the various (con)junctions the place symbolised to me. Nonetheless, I felt a pull towards uncritical wonder at the synchronicities and apparent coincidences of physical detail between the dream and the place. In the preface to his essay *The Transcendent Function*, Jung (1960) warns of the power of dream images to

attract us by their curious or aesthetic qualities and emphasises the importance of facing up to the 'moral demands' (p.68) that the unconscious psyche makes upon us to be integrated within the personality. I think in going to Medina del Campo I could have been just a psychic tourist, but the active imagination practice I did after the visit was an attempt to engage with images of place and dream in a way that helped me to integrate more of what was unconscious into my awareness. The stories about Medina del Campo that have come into awareness through my visit and practice, both my own stories and my versions of the stories of Teresa, John and Isabel, all contribute layers of meaning that crystallise in the notion of this one place, so that it becomes symbolic of joining together for transformation. The particularity of a place in relation to its stories is part of the existential meaning it holds for us and this is one reason why a place of pilgrimage functions as the material site for encounter with the spiritual or transpersonal (Wynn, 2009). However, in visiting the material site of my dream image, I was not a pilgrim in the sense of seeking out a place associated with venerated historical figures or attributions of spiritual significance. I was, however, engaging in a practice which arguably is a key aspect of pilgrimage, though my purpose was not religious:

Pilgrimage is a matter of encountering certain meanings, by placing oneself in a relevant relationship of physical proximity, and is a matter of achieving an embodied reference to God (one which is not mediated simply by experience or description of God). (Wynn, 2007, p.146)

Replacing 'God' with 'dream imagery' in this sentence would align it with my intentional practice in visiting Medina del Campo. I did not associate the dream imagery or its physical referent of place with God, but with an archetypal symbol of the transpersonal, in other words with unconscious collective human potentiality not limited by personal experience or history. In going there I was drawn to explore the symbolic and so discovered and created stories of transformational experience. The symbolic imagery was an initial attractor that encouraged me to 'encounter meanings' in different ways and so learn more about them.

My project in this study is to collaborate with others in bringing stories of transformation into awareness by facilitating participants including myself to tell and hear our own stories, and readers to hear not only the teller's story but resonances of their own as they respond to the text. The stories multiply, weaving together into a fabric with many shades and textures, which rather than a finished product may be an ongoing project for whoever wishes to engage with the work as writer, reader, teller or listener. In Salley Vickers' novel *Where Three Roads Meet*, the blind sage Tiresias tells the dying Freud:

But Dr Freud, stories are all we humans have to make us immortal. (Vickers, 2007, p. 174)

Perhaps our desire for immortality expresses our longing for meaning and purpose beyond the limits of our own immediate circumstances, a desire to transcend ourselves and reach towards transpersonal and spiritual dimensions of human existence. The stories we make, like the tales Tiresias tells of his encounters with the human and divine, give form to our experience in particular ways that contain diverse truths and may seem paradoxical when truth is conceived of as single or static. Tiresias says:

We who come into the world of being seem one; but in potential we are many. So the words in which the divine truth was revealed had to embrace, as best they could, the diverse possibilities coiled into any one moment. Choices which might point different ways. (Vickers, 2007, p. 57)

Tiresias articulates poetically the impossibility of interpreting experience once and for all, as the possibilities 'coiled' into the moment open out in diverse ways each time we review them reflexively. Thus telling and re-telling stories is an ongoing process of discovery, emergence and transformation.

## **Summary**

This chapter has explored a dream and its subsequent amplification, and has included several interpretations in story form pointing to the significance of the concept of (con)junction, both for this study and for my trajectory of individuation. Medina del Campo as a symbolic form is a place of meetings between meanings, and in the context of this study represents a chronotope of deepening, linking and transcending. It is both a real and an imaginary place that brings together the symbolic and the concrete, the personal work I needed to do in order to engage more deeply with the research, and a lens through which to view the emerging data. I found there the means to go more deeply into the water and transcend some of my own binary oppositions so that I could begin to interweave the dialogical and the autoethnographic strands of the study more explicitly. Specifically, this chapter has demonstrated the importance in this study of paying attention to my own experience, following its lead, and listening to the unconscious, while seeking to maintain a critical stance towards my own interpretations.

## **8. Transformation and transcendence**

This chapter explores how transformation is experienced by research participants and the meanings they attribute to it. It touches on four questions from table 7 (appendix 1).

1. Are there transformational moments in the research conversations?
2. Does reflecting on experience/belief change it?
3. What meanings do participants give to experiences they find transformational?
4. Is there a connection between psychotherapy and spirituality?

In exploring these questions it became apparent that the participants' understanding of their experience was fluid and open to revision and refinement. It invariably evolved through reflection, often in conversation, for example with me in the research conversations. The first and second questions are therefore closely connected and are discussed together. Several key moments are presented to illustrate the process of transformations in understanding, integration and relationship. The nature of these transformations and some implications for understanding the therapeutic process are then explored. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of meanings attributed by participants to transformational experiences, including spiritual meanings.

### **Transformation and reflection**

The experience of talking together was sometimes felt to be transformational both by the research participants and myself. While the process of such moments is explored more fully in chapter 9, here I focus on their impact. Conducting the study as a whole has been transformational for me, as I demonstrate in the autoethnographical chapters 3, 7 and 12, and certain key moments show how talking with the research participants transformed my self-understanding and integration; a notable example is KM 43, (p.79) with Matthew. It is apparent that some participants also felt our conversations had a significant impact on them. All the participants reflected on our interaction, particularly in the IPR sessions, and some of their reflexive comments illustrate an emotional shift or greater integration in relation to a past experience brought about through shared reflection. All the participants described transformational experiences, often with a sense of calmness and awe as they reflexively considered highly-charged emotional events and realisations in the past. Sometimes the research conversation was the occasion for becoming conscious of a felt sense of transformation that had perhaps never been fully articulated or had remained 'on the edge of awareness' (Gendlin, 1981) until now. Examples are KMs60 and 61 (Christine) and 69 (Maria) discussed below.

First, however, participants' impressions of the impact of the research conversations are presented here in brief 'sound bites'. Three participants explicitly describe greater awareness of their own thoughts. Christine found that she refocused her ideas:

*It's funny isn't it, funny to me, ideas that are somewhere in me anyway come in a different way and they all seem a bit new again.*

Maria also commented on the development of new perspectives:

*So I came away quite enlightened really, there was quite a bit of learning for me in that, what's been going on for me in counselling really, and also about life in general and working with clients, which was really nice.*

Specifically, Maria felt 'free' after articulating her implicit thinking about theory, art and language:

*I think it's after we said about finding and linking those three together, it's kind of set something free in me.*

For Matthew, listening to the recording was an opportunity to hear his words differently:

*I heard them in a different way, cos I was listening to my own voice. I think that makes a huge difference, doesn't it, compared to (pause). Yes, the disparity between saying, how it might be heard, and how I would hear it back. Did I really say that? kind of moment.*

Others felt the conversations offered reflective space to deepen awareness of changes in their lives. For example, Gwyneth said:

*It's made me particularly aware of how we're on a journey.*

Natalia thought the conversation helped her reflect on her changing relationship to her world:

*I think the space has given me an opportunity to think about a lot of different things, from my worldview and how I fit into the world, how I use myself in the world in the work that I do, and how I've changed I think with this training.*

These 'sound bites' suggest that mutual openness to reflection and reflexivity made the conversations a 'facilitating environment' (Winnicott, 1965) for self-awareness. In this general sense, taking part in research was transformational for the participants. More specifically, moments arose in which the emotional quality of the interaction brought about changes that registered in a non-cognitive way reminiscent of therapeutic contexts.

To illustrate such transformational moments, I will focus first on Christine, with whom the shared focus of conversation was predominantly on processing in the moment. This felt to me quite similar to the counselling process. After our first conversation I made the following note:

I think my hope is for an experience of connection. There was such an experience in the interview with C – both moved, filling with tears. A connection between us, and also an internal connection for both of us separately and experienced together: a ‘meaning moment’. (Journal, 9.2.10)

It was on the basis of this experience of a ‘meaning moment’ (Nolan, 2008) that I clarified my hope that the research process might create the opportunity to witness the very thing I wanted to study, the moment of connection between persons and between aspects of self that can enable a profound transformation. In our second conversation I again noted the connection and a striking sense of processing in the moment:

She was working things out as she went along and coming to understandings as she spoke. It was emotionally charged for both of us because it was real-time – happening in the moment. She brought herself in a state of unravelling knots, teasing out threads, then drawing some of the threads together and weaving a different fabric. Not showing, more like spinning threads and weaving. (Journal, 8.3.10)

Both conversations with Christine embody the tenet of relational therapies that meanings are intersubjectively created and information is communicated in a context-dependent way. Christine discussed this explicitly as her theoretical perspective. She talked about the transformation she experienced through training in Gestalt therapy, learning to ‘*stay with what is*’ in a way that is more than just accepting it. This changed her as a practitioner, enabling her to be more aware of her own experience as well as that of her clients. What happens on the boundary between the two is the focus of therapy, and interestingly also of our research conversations, as the key moments below demonstrate.

#### **KM60 Christine: Support and self-sufficiency**

This KM shows that an emotional experience in our initial conversation, while apparently transformational at the time, is not fully integrated until there is space for recollection and reflection in the IPR session. Christine is speaking of learning to accept support, a concept she has already worked on, but the unexpected emotional impact of this moment brings her a sudden realisation of its meaning.

*C: That asking for support, doing things together, if it's what makes it work, then that's how it is.*

*J: Mm, there's a sort of calmness about that.*

*C: Yeah. It is quite a change believe me from being really (pause). I'm a bit tearful about this (pause). Well maybe there was a kind of should about it, I don't know, being self-sufficient (pause). Bit of a hard one (tears). I don't think I've quite put it in those terms before so that's why it comes a bit kind of unexpected, but yeah (pause). It's a bit difficult to talk about it. Maybe that's what I'm changing from, from being self-sufficient to not needing to be. I can't put it into words quite yet at the moment (pause), but yeah, that's a really old one, the needing to be self-sufficient.*



*J: So letting go of that is very profound.*

*C: Yeah. (Pause) That's quite a, that feels quite an apt way of putting it. Mm. This reminds me of (pause), sorry I can't (pause). You said new things might come up and it's not new, it's the way of putting it that is a bit new, so I'm just letting that sink in (pause). Mm (turns to me and smiles).*

Christine's smile seems to express gentle acceptance of this intersubjective experience. The emotion comes from a new 'way of putting it' which carries it from the head to the heart. Christine has already recognised a change in her attitude but suddenly this change registers experientially. Listening to this extract again in the IPR session, she is again impacted by recognition, though less emotionally. A moment of meeting in the first conversation becomes a reflective moment in the second:

*C: Yeah, that term self-sufficient suddenly hit me a bit there, yeah*

*J: Yeah. How does it feel to watch this now?*

*C: Well I'm first of all quite surprised that I'd really forgotten about it. And it's a bit emotionally removed now of course, so it's different, so it's more of interest now and I'm actually really pleased that I'm seeing this again because ... this being self-sufficient is really quite a feature of me, not that I feel I am particularly self-sufficient but sense that I need to be.*

In spite of the emotional impact, Christine has forgotten this episode in the intervening weeks but reflectively revisiting it in IPR enables her to become not just participant but participant observer of her own experience. It is as if the realisation, which has already moved from head to heart, now moves back and integrates cognitive and emotional knowing in reflexive awareness. This is what makes the experience transformational rather than simply cathartic. This KM demonstrates the double power of voicing an idea so that the speaker experiences it emotionally, and moving to a third position where she can reflect on the experience and fully integrate thought and feeling. As Christine says, '*that's also Gestalt, to really realise, become aware of what I'm experiencing when I'm there and what's happening between us*'.

Kim and Matthew also express the need to reflect on experience in order to integrate its emotional and cognitive meanings. For Kim, ideas, feelings and words remain '*rudimentary*' unless she contemplates them over time (see KM53, p.98), transforming a '*transient*' experience into something she can use. Matthew feels that

*We have to reflect on the experience, otherwise it would be dead.*

Both in practice and personal development these therapists see the need to transform experience into meaning. Yet the transformation may be blocked if cognitive insight has not touched the heart, or if the heart's experience has not been integrated by reflection. In KM60 above, Christine works through both these temporary blocks.

Matthew understands difficulties in reflecting through Bion's (1965) notion of –K:

*This is where I find Bion so helpful in thinking about thinking, and you see what he says, it makes so much sense to me, like knowledge is dangerous, so we have minus K, because it's so potentially dangerous ... so therefore thinking about thinking, and thinking I have thoughts, might be something which is very undesirable. So it's a protection.*

Bion (1965, 1970) understands thinking as a series of transformations mediated by an emotional link between patient and analyst, which may be loving, hating or knowing. The emotion may be actively present, signified in the case of knowing by K, or negated, leaving an almost tangible absence signified by –K. Through the lens of Bion's (1965, 1970) theory of transformations, we can attend more to the experiential quality and effect of mental processes, as distinct from the reciprocal relation of dominant and submerged discourses which the dynamics of emergence and resistance bring into focus (see chapter 10).

#### **KM61 Christine: Having a right to exist**

The discovery and integration of new understanding in the research conversation continues in KM61 with Christine. Here she teases out the paradox of *'trying to be my own little unit and very much not able to relate to people... and so then I've ended up in a job, in a profession where relating is the essence of it'*. In the extract below Christine is thinking in the moment and her thoughts gradually clarify into a cognitive insight. However, it is when she integrates an emerging feeling with thinking that she reaches a profoundly transformational realisation.

C1	Commentary
<p>C: <i>And so I'm thinking these things now that counselling was for me at some stage a way of – well it gave an opening to relating to people, in a kind of structured way so I didn't have to (pause). It was obvious that you were going to be there and you were going to talk together so it was a justification almost, that's a bit crude but something on those lines. I didn't have to justify being there, I guess, because it was my job and (pause) so I didn't have to justify trying to relate to somebody, was pretty much like that.</i></p>	<p>The pauses indicate Christine's reflective process. This is not something she has thought out in advance. She finds her account <i>'a bit crude'</i> because although the general idea of counselling as relating is not new to her, this way of articulating her experience of it is. Phrases like <i>'I guess'</i> and <i>'pretty much like that'</i> suggest that she has taken up a reflective third perspective to consider the adequacy of her account. The dialogue is double-voiced with her present reflective voice commenting on past implicit thinking.</p>
<p>J <i>As if your kind of default was well I wouldn't be relating to you unless...</i></p>	<p>I paraphrase the gist, encouraging Christine to go on.</p>
<p>C <i>Yes, indeed. So I would isolate unless, because that was all I was able to and I felt (pause). So it</i></p>	<p>She cannot yet say how she <i>'felt'</i>. The</p>

<p><i>feels maybe that, it's getting, it's different, it's (pause). I'm not quite sure about this yet because I'm beginning to see it's kind of clarifying by the minute, but then I'm not just, no, I don't know how it is yet (pause). Something to do with that justification bit (pause). I'm beginning to not need that. But actually I think I mean that even as a therapist, I'm there as me, and that's got to be useful, or that's what I work with anyway. So (pause) something to do with not being there as me when I'm there as a professional.</i></p> <p><i>J So is it that at first being there as a therapist gave you a justification for being there, I mean as a professional (C yeah) and now that's becoming (pause) it's becoming more whole, you don't need that kind of façade, or persona?</i></p> <p><i>C Yeah. Yeah, there's something, yeah. There is something in that area.</i></p> <p><i>J But you said something like, I'm there as me, and that's useful.</i></p> <p><i>C Mm, yeah. So what did I mean by that? I think ultimately it goes back to – don't know whether I'm bringing in too much here, but that went through my mind so I'll say it – it goes back to having a right to exist, to being (pause), yeah, God (pause). So I don't need to isolate (pause) because (pause) it's OK to be and to (pause) be in contact with other people, something or words like that.</i></p> <p><i>J Mm, yes. And you can just let that be.</i></p> <p><i>C Yes, that's becoming all a bit more real I think.</i></p>	<p>pauses indicate the unfolding of feelings into awareness, at first just that now it is 'different', then a little clearer, and then the realisation comes that she doesn't yet know 'how it is'. The new feeling cannot be put into words yet.</p> <p>Christine continues reflecting on the change in how she is as a therapist. She is no longer struggling to find words for an inchoate feeling, but speaking from a familiar and strongly reflective third perspective. She is on the edge of a new insight, expressed as a contrast between 'being there as me' and being 'a professional'.</p> <p>Although my paraphrase is not inaccurate, it only captures 'something in that area'. Something more is needed.</p> <p>I try again.</p> <p>This time my intervention seems to help Christine take up a reflexive rather than reflective stance. By asking herself what she meant, she opens a door for an unthought feeling to emerge into awareness. The striking phrase that goes through her mind gives words to her feeling before she is conscious of its meaning. The pauses indicate strong feeling and growing awareness as she finds words that feel right.</p> <p>I sense her calm wonder as thought and feeling integrate, making the new understanding 'more real' for Christine.</p>
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When we listen to this extract in the IPR session, Christine confirms my impression that its impact comes from the movement from head to heart and the integration of the two:

*When I first said it I could just, it was sort of cerebral, I could just say it, and then (J: It hit you), it hit me what I was saying. But also how, how accurate that is really. This right to exist thing came up in my first therapy when I started doing the diploma, that idea, anyway. It really struck such a chord at the time, and still does.*

The idea is not new, but experiencing its emotional power is a long and continuing process. As in KM60 above, there is a need to reflect again on a profound insight so that it can be more fully integrated, and it is clear that the transformation in Christine's personal understanding and way of working as a therapist is brought about by a process of re-experiencing and re-reflecting.

*However much I'm familiar with it, the rightness of it, or how it strikes a chord, can still hit me.*

This KM illustrates the importance of reflecting and talking about experience to transform it into a something usable in the present. It is a matter of going round another turn of a spiral to a changed perspective where thoughts and feelings are more fully integrated. Therapy is not the only forum where this may happen, and these research conversations also provide a context for transformative integration.

### **KM69 Maria: The triangle**

This KM also demonstrates the power of shared reflection to integrate emotion and cognition. Maria has talked of three significant elements which contributed to her learning and development, art, language and theory.

*M: That's made me think. (Pause) Theory, that's knowing it, knowing it, feeling it, they need to come together don't they? EMDR<sup>8</sup>, what I love so much about it – that's really interesting, (makes a triangle with her hands) that's the triangle really, because EMDR makes you feel it (indicates each point on her fingers, counting), theory, the attachment stuff is knowing it and the language is communicating it, so it's like integrating (J: That's your triangle ...), yeah, that's how I've got into it*

*J: ... communicating it*

*M: Yeah, they felt quite separated really. That's really interesting. And I wonder if that's, counselling is the journey and that's kind of made that possible.*

Maria's triangle of hands embodies the connection between separate elements, and our conversation creates an opportunity to become aware of the connection through reflection. When we watch this extract again in the IPR session, we notice how this sense-making is co-created:

*M: It's making sense of it all, isn't it? So we spoke about all the other deeper things I suppose at the beginning and it's making sense of the whole thing.*

*J: You seem to be drawing it together (M: Yeah) with this image that you're making with your hands, of the triangle (demonstrating).*

*M: Yeah. I thought you had done that somehow for me.*

*J: But you'd done it first.*

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<sup>8</sup> Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (Shapiro, 2001)

*M: How interesting that is, because that's the feeling I kind of got from it, that you must have held me in order to kind of connect that for me.*

*J: If you go back (gesturing at computer) you did that first (demonstrating triangle).*

*M: You said something to me earlier on about three things that I hadn't heard myself, I may have been saying it but I hadn't heard that myself, and you made that connection for me (indicating triangle with hands).*

Maria notices how similar this is to the counselling process where 'it's not till you hear it back that you, oh yeah, you may have been saying that all along, it just didn't hit the spot'. It is as if my reflection back to her of her own words has registered as a visual image which she then embodies in the triangle gesture:

*M: You made a triangle in my head, because I saw it first, that's what's happened, I saw it, and then I did it, but you made me see it, yeah. So thank you Jane for that, yeah.*

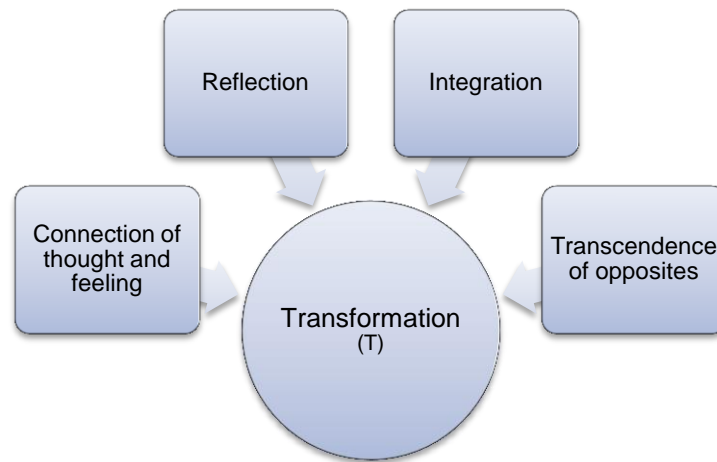
This discovery of how we arrived at a meaning makes us conscious of the transformational potential of moving from moments of meeting to reflective moments, discussed in chapter 9. Therapy, it seems, is only a particular instance of the kind of conversations where we really explore together.

In this KM there is a hint of double voicing indicating both reflective and reflexive positions. The former is signalled by Maria's comments on what is coming into mind ('that's really interesting'; 'I wonder'; 'that's the feeling I got from it') and the latter by a more active conjunction of experiencing and thinking leading to a sense of satisfaction with the newly understood meaning ('that's how I got into it'; 'I saw it and then I did it, but you made me see it'). This feeling of rightness arises when cognitive and emotional knowing become integrated and transform intellectual insight into holistic knowledge.

### **The nature of transformational experiences**

The KMs presented above demonstrate transformational (T) experiencing through the coming together of emotional and cognitive knowing in facilitative conversation. For all participants, T experiences were ones that surprised or challenged them and facilitated an integration of cognitive and emotional knowing through reflection. The cognitive and emotional elements may be experienced and their connection understood but not yet integrated until a safe intersubjective space for reflection occurs, as in KMs 60, 61 and 69 above. Clearly, integration may also occur without the immediate presence of a conversational partner, though even alone and while dreaming we are arguably engaged in relating with internalised others as aspects of the self. A Jungian perspective would also suggest the presence of a transpersonal domain that interacts with the personal, giving rise to powerful experiences of integration through

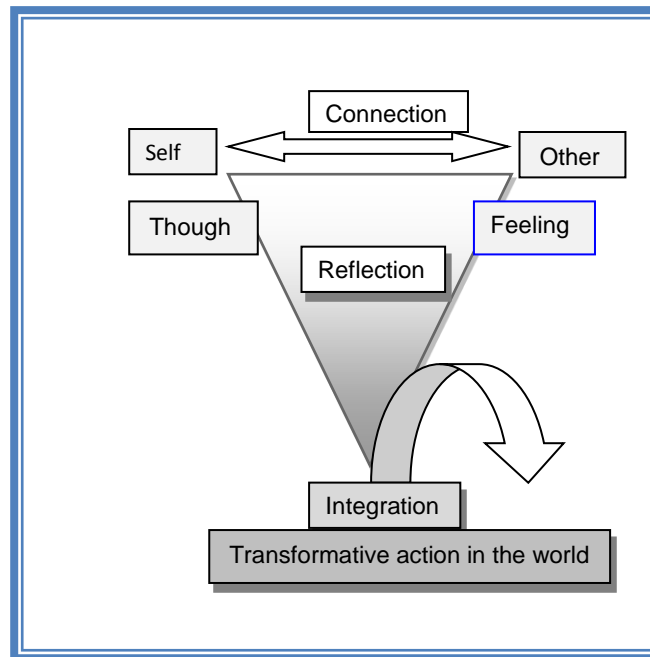
transcending binary opposites and conflicts. Figure 21 presents a schematic view of these elements of transformation.



**Figure 21 Transformation**

T experiences in the research conversations were accompanied by a feeling of rightness, satisfaction or wholeness, and a movement to a new perspective or relationship to past experience. However, there are also incomplete realisations where the process has not yet reached this outcome. Christine's emotional response in KM60 and her '*cerebral*' insight in KM61 are still incomplete even though she has made a connection between an idea and a feeling. She is able to revisit and reflect on the connection and integrate it further in the IPR session, leading to a sense of rightness and a potentially transformed perspective.

In therapeutic contexts there may also be incomplete processes. Some therapies focus predominantly on either emotional catharsis or intellectual insight without integrating the two through reflection, and these are likely to leave unresolved issues. A therapeutic approach which involves reflective moments of meeting (see chapter 9) that help clients to gain a third perspective will facilitate integration leading to transformative action in the client's lifeworld, as Figure 22 illustrates.



**Figure 22 A reflective therapeutic approach**

The connection between thoughts and feelings is facilitated by connection between self and other in both therapeutic and research relationships, and between the reflexive and experiencing aspects of self. These connections create the context of reflection indicated within the triangle in figure 22. The integration of thoughts and feelings about a particular area of experience may then lead to transformative action. This may include changes in perspective, ways of relating or behaviour.

### **Negative experience: minus T**

However, some of the participants also mentioned experiences which produced an absence of transformation, a stuckness or impasse, which by extending Bion's (1965) notation, I refer to here as  $-T$ . My interest in transformation arose from the personal experience of letting go of an expectation that therapy would bring about a desired transformation in me. I was disillusioned, a state that can lead to renewed development (Jacobs, 2000). I was also dissatisfied with the way I practised as a therapist and felt that something more than insight was needed to help clients effect a transformation in their lives. In effect, I was asking 'what works?' though not in Roth & Fonagy's (2005) sense of evidence-based treatments. Rather, I sought to understand the nature and sources of transformation experienced by other therapists. As noted in Chapter 1, I questioned the discourse of the therapy profession which associates the action of the therapist with transformation in the client and thereby reinforces professional assumptions of expertise and power. I was curious about the contexts of transformational experiences. All the participants in this study mentioned professional

contexts of both T and –T experiences as shown in Table 1. None of them named personal therapy as transformative, though this does not mean they did not find it so.

**Table 1: Professional contexts of T and –T experiences**

Context	T	-T
Training	Maria Christine ( <i>Gestalt training</i> ) Natalia	Maria Christine ( <i>previous training</i> ) Louise
Practice	Maria Christine Natalia Louise Gwyneth Matthew Kim	
Supervision	Christine ( <i>Gestalt training</i> ) Gwyneth	Christine Kim
Therapy		Maria Louise
Professional discourse		Natalia Louise Kim
Research conversations	Maria Christine Natalia Gwyneth Matthew Louise ( <i>specific moment</i> ) Kim	Louise

It is apparent from Table 1 that training, supervision and the research conversations provided both T and –T experiences. Practice, on the other hand, represented a source of positive transformation for all participants. It certainly included experiences of feeling stuck with a client, but where participants mentioned this, they also described creative reflection and new ways of working which helped them move on. For example, Maria mentioned that it was ‘*very frustrating and demotivating*’ to work over several years with a client who felt her issues remained unchanged, but having subsequently trained as an EMDR practitioner, she noted a hugely transformative impact on herself and her work. Practice does not therefore appear here as a context of –T experiences. However, training and supervision provided both T and –T experiences, while therapy and the discourses surrounding the therapy profession were clearly identified by some participants as contexts for –T that could be painful and demoralising. The research conversations were felt by most participants to be opportunities for reflection and new ways of understanding, but Louise experienced the situation as ‘*not pleasant*’ until we talked about perceptions of social class that created a barrier between us (see chapter



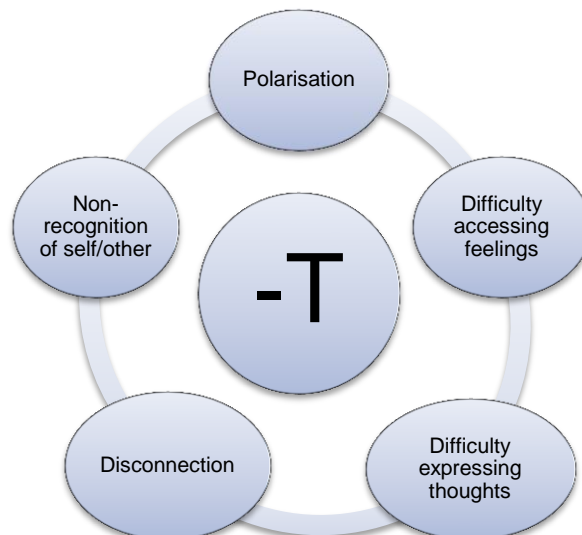


Figure 23 Minus T

10). Until then, we both experienced the conversation as disconnected and not quite real without being able to remedy the situation; for both of us this constituted –T.

When participants experienced -T, they felt frustrated, misunderstood, coerced, or subjected to preconceptions that hindered the recognition of their particular experience. In –T situations others often failed to acknowledge the co-creation of problematic intersubjective dynamics. Such failures in relating were sometimes due to dominant discourses which prevented connection. It seems that –T experience involved submerging the participants' knowledge and wisdom by the dominant assumptions in therapy theories and other professional discourses. They were then unable to make their perceptions known and so felt unseen and unheard, or felt their perspective was not respected or understood. The polarisation of opposing perceptions or splitting between self and other could then occur. The emotions generated by –T experiences included anger, frustration and loss of confidence, and conversely the determination to resist, resulting in growing confidence. This can change the experience from –T to one of accepting difference without loss of integrity, demonstrated in the following example from Kim.

### Supervision and -T

Kim was allocated a supervisor in her work setting and discovered that he could not tolerate challenge to his theoretical position.

*Of course challenge is very important in supervision, and to be challenged to some new approach, but it can also work both ways, it can also work from a counsellor to a supervisor. And if it's challenging, waking up and encourages growth, but that you are allowed to go a different way, then it's fine. But if it's, this is the right way and your way has to be cut off, then it's not. And I have experienced the other one. It's been, try to cut off, to be chopped into something. Pressed in something.*

She resists being ‘*chopped*’ and ‘*pressed*’ by standing up to her supervisor and trying to understand his rigidity.

*So to put also a foot down, not to drop it, to be strong, to think about it, always to think about it, why you think it's important. Not out of opposition or whatever, this is not the right attitude because it's about clients, but why you think it's important. And also try to understand, yes, for my background, the way I think, it makes sense and to also try to understand that the supervisor cannot integrate it in his theory because the theory maybe doesn't allow it, but still do it. Still stay with it. And still say it. The danger is that you say, oh I just keep it, do it and keep it to myself and don't talk about it, that's a danger, but to be brave enough and to say yes, and I do it this way, I know you don't agree with it, but.*

The power of the supervisor's role may reinforce his or her dominant theoretical perspective, but this power does not merely act oppressively, since it also activates Kim's resistance. Power/knowledge and resistance operate as reciprocal dynamic forces (Foucault, 1980a). Kim's –T experience of being ‘*chopped*’ is redeemed through her resistance.

A further example of –T in the context of supervision comes from Christine, who feels ‘*there's something about supervision that restricts me*’. This can be a disempowering experience where she loses touch with her feelings and ability to say what she means:

*The anxiety gets in the way and all sorts of shame-based crap comes in.*

It is as if the discourse of supervision conveys an expectation that she will think about clients in a particular way that temporarily prevents her from knowing what she means. However, supervision is ‘*another transformative-ish thing*’ that is gradually changing as she tries to resist this internalised discourse.

*And it's such a small little circle, the confidence just comes when I can get in touch with feelings again, when I can get in touch with me, and if I can just let my thinking come from inside rather than trying to collect it from what I should know, then it's fine. If it comes from inside, then I've complete understanding of what I mean. If I try and understand it from outside, I'm thrown quite easily because ... I lose the page in the book (laughter). Yes, that's it really, whereas if I know it from inside then it's there. It's a different kind of learning and it's kind of, like a dye ... it's bodily and it's everywhere.*

Supervisors hold power in relation to supervisees, particularly in a work setting where it is not possible to choose supervisor. The power of the supervisor's professional role is reinforced by his or her place in the structure of the employing agency. The theory represented by the supervisor may become a ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault 1980a, p.133) or ‘*what I should know*’ in Christine's words. This seems particularly problematic when single model approaches are strictly adhered to, especially psychoanalytic theories which may interpret contrary opinions as signs of resistance or defence by the

supervisee. These discourses become internalised, so that supervisees may lose confidence in practice-based and experiential knowledge.

Practice-based knowledge belongs to

... a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 82)

The disallowing of such knowledge and its re-emergence in attempted dialogue is what these research participants describe here in the professional context of group supervision. There is a reciprocal relationship between their –T experiences of professional impasse and the activation of their resistance to oppressive discourses. According to Foucault it is

... through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these popular local knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (Foucault, 1980b, p.82)

Three participants also felt other kinds of professional discourse could become a source of –T experience. Kim, for example, felt that *'getting out of counsellor mode'* was important to remain *'healthy'* (see KM50, p.93). For Natalia, the *'white western'* normative assumptions of therapy need to be challenged to encompass Asian experience, and her aim in participating in this study was explicitly to help me understand therapy's cultural limitations. Louise also challenges the privileging of middle class cultural expectations in counselling and language that excludes people whose experiences do not fit. These therapists recognise and seek to challenge dominant professional discourses by speaking of their excluded knowledge and the –T experience of marginalisation. This is an implicit critique of the limitations of the therapy profession.

### **Meanings attributed to transformational experience**

The third question above, relating to the meanings given to T experiences, brings into focus the thematic content of the research conversations. Table 2 shows the general categories of meaning the participants (including myself) attributed to transformational experiences. For some there was a clear impact on practice which was also bound up with personal change, so that therapeutic practice could become an opportunity for personal development and this in turn could transform practice. Transformation for some participants specifically included becoming free from felt constraints, and sometimes a transpersonal or spiritual dimension. It is apparent that meanings can be hard to articulate and are often communicated metaphorically, as if profoundly significant experiences cannot be thought of in linear terms but require symbolic forms

and images to communicate their quality. The participants' use of metaphor is discussed in chapter 11.

**Table 2: Meanings attributed to transformational experience**

Changed way of practising	Invitation to personal growth	Becoming free of constraints	Transpersonal dimension
Gwyneth	Kim	Gwyneth	Kim
Maria	Matthew	Louise	Matthew
Christine	Christine	Natalia	Louise
Jane	Gwyneth		Natalia
	Louise		Jane
	Natalia		
	Maria		
	Jane		

### **Practice and personal growth**

Several participants felt that personal and professional experiences could not be separated and their impact and meaning could be felt in both domains. As Kim put it,

*It's not a job exactly counselling, it's more like a vocation, where it really accelerates or fertilizes your own development.*

Personal growth was felt to emerge from deep reflection on practice and its relevance to the self. For example, Matthew's awareness of ambivalence as a key idea for his own development (KM43, p.79) and Christine's greater capacity to 'stay with what is' emerge from their practice, and the personal development it stimulates in turn leads to developments in how they work with clients. Maria, on the other hand, notes the direction of transformative influence from personal growth to practice:

*It's interesting how you develop and then you can help another person.*

There is a reciprocal relation between personal development and practice which can operate in both directions and spread to a wider context. Gwyneth, for example, feels her therapeutic work has led to a transformation in other social relationships:

*It's all round, it's socially as well as professionally. Because you're doing something slightly different socially of course, it is different, but it is nevertheless how I might be attached, engaged.*

However, she has an ethical anxiety about gaining something for herself from practice:

*The panic is, have I spent my whole life working on my development rather than my clients'? But I know that's silly, it's just a kind of checking: do I use my clients for my own ends? You know, we have to check that. And we do to a degree, but that's how life works.*

Life works in a joined up way, so personal, social and professional transformation inevitably interweave. This is the case even when the stimulus of growth is traumatic, as described by Maria. The effect of being with clients who are 'very damaged' can

reactivate Maria's own trauma of isolation and disconnection while living in England before she learned English. She picks up her clients' internal fragmentation and 'lose[s] the language' herself, a 'scary' situation that she is learning to understand and manage. Yet the original trauma propelled her into personal exploration and development and has contributed to her skill as a therapist:

*I think I'm a lot more attuned to a client's feeling ... I think it's also the language, not being able to speak the language when I first came to England, so I think I'm a lot more attuned to what's going on, on a non-verbal level and I pick that up really quickly.*

### **Becoming free of constraints**

The transformation experienced through therapeutic practice and training carries for some participants a sense of becoming free of outworn assumptions. Gwyneth comments happily, 'what a distance from all those rules!'

Natalia similarly feels she can let go of rules from the past:

*I think we can live in our own worldview and our little nutshell of this is how it's supposed to be and these are the rules and regulations and we've got to comply with them, but actually this training for me and this worldview, the counselling worldview, I think my thinking has changed and direction in life has opened different windows for me.*

This changed worldview is enabling her to overcome the cultural constraints her parents experienced, while deeply empathising with their experience. Her counselling training was 'an eye-opener' because:

*I think it brought my childhood to the fore, and my upbringing, how difficult it must have been for my parents to maintain an eastern culture in a western environment. How hard it must have been for them. Plus they had huge language barriers. But how they protected us as well, perhaps. You know, I think as a parent you do protect your children. But in a way protecting us, it could – I think sometimes it was damaging.*

Natalia is 'more relaxed' now with her own children and 'respect[s] what they say as well', and this shift delights her. Working as a community counsellor in a culturally diverse area has also helped her let go of the fear of other ethnic groups which she inherited in the quite isolated cultural environment of her upbringing.

*What is different, I think for me, is that we're all human beings and for me perhaps there was a differentiation of people, and perhaps that's the way I've been brought up.... So I was quite frightened of black people as a child, and I think a lot of Asians are frightened of black people. But actually doing this work with the diverse cultures and feeling that you're able to fit in and accept these people for who they are, not because of the colour of their skin and not because of their culture, we all share something that we are human and we have one purpose in life and that is to survive. And to be heard and to be loved and to be accepted and to belong.*

This declaration of faith in humanity is a testimony to the profound meaning Natalia's changed worldview has for her. It is a statement of the ethical values inherent in the counselling project at its best, undiminished by the Shadow of its frequent over-emphasis on individualism. Transformation for Natalia is about having and giving to others the freedom to be fully human.

### **The transpersonal dimension**

The freedom to be fully human can be thought of as a transpersonal dimension, since it is concerned with the ultimate values of human life. It transcends individual experience, yet is also deeply rooted in what it means to be an individual person, to become individuated or whole. Natalia's words point to the impossibility of becoming a whole person in isolation from others. The domain of the transpersonal encompasses all that is beyond the personal, and so includes the social and spiritual. Both of these domains tend to be neglected by therapy theory and thus a Shadow side of the profession is constituted (Page, 1999). The unintegrated Shadow creates defensiveness, factionalism and conflict within the profession (Lees, 2010), opening it to attacks vitiated by polarised thinking from other disciplines (see for example, Morrall, 2008). Louise feels that the therapy profession needs to integrate neglected areas:

*Maybe by confronting the Shadow we'd find that it's more workable than we thought. And more acceptable, and not as frightening as we thought, which is a bit like our own Shadow isn't it?*

What is too often absent from the therapy profession is the integration of wider social and political awareness (Samuels, 1993) and spiritual competence (Mott, 2013) into its focus on individual psychology. These concerns are central for some participants in this study. For them, transformation means integrating the values of social concern, human dignity and spirituality into therapy practice. Natalia, for example, is quite clear that her transformation involves not only deepening awareness of herself and relationships within the family, but also engaging with a widening sphere of concern through her community work.

*Now having this awareness, there's so much out there and you want to learn more and you want to be more involved ... you're holding other people's lives, you're holding them, but you've also got to balance holding yourself and your immediate family. But there's this need to I think branch out... I do feel a richness within me and I do feel that I'm available.*

She reflects on the value of this wider engagement:

*And sometimes I think, is it a good thing? Is it a good thing that I've done this training and become more aware? Or should I have just been in that zone that I was? I do question myself. And I think it is a good thing.*

Some participants feel the transformation wrought in them verges on the domain of faith and spirituality. Whether or not there is a connection between the practices of psychotherapy and spirituality is directly addressed by Matthew and Kim. My own experience, discussed in the autoethnographic chapters, leads me to the view that psychological transformation may lead to spiritual deepening but that this has no necessary connection with psychotherapy practice. Psychotherapy is only one instance of a potentially transformational intersubjective context, and sometimes fails to realise that potential. The burgeoning literature on psychotherapy and spirituality (see, for example, West, 2004) witnesses to a contemporary wish to link the two, but sometimes this seems to reflect a tendency to generalise the meaning of spirituality to encompass anything felt to be of value or to involve transformation. For me, spirituality is connected with what is unrealised in us or beyond our current limitations, and offers an invitation to be more whole and more fully human. For Trede and Titchen (2012, p.15) 'spirituality refers to the search for meaning at the edge of the known', which implies that the forms of spirituality will vary as 'the known' varies. Wilber (2000) for example, suggests that 'pre/trans' confusion may arise if spirituality at a pre-personal stage of development is confused with the transpersonal. Transpersonal spirituality takes us beyond the personal and issues in compassionate work with others, as can be seen in the work of St Teresa of Ávila, St John of the Cross and indeed in some of the participants in this study. However, in this study transformational experiences are described in terms that suggest the spiritual only by those participants for whom spirituality is a significant dimension of praxis, or for whom the language of spirituality is readily engaged in interaction with me, since the intersubjective context affects the naming and perhaps the meaning attributed to the experience discussed. Matthew, Kim and Louise give examples which suggest a spiritual meaning of the transpersonal dimension of transformation.

For Louise, it is trust that transforms existential anxiety and fear of death:

*One thing that really staggered me was that, actually, trust, because when I've really got near the edge, I've always been all right so just trust. And a bit like trust the process when I'm with clients and I think, I just don't know what to do. And it works. And yet I still doubt it.... If you can feel empty, if I could empty myself, then trust is easy. It's when I get full of everything else that it's hard.*

Making space to receive something indefinable and trusting this process, are also implied by Kim's description of the 'third' in KM55 below. In this KM my question about a possible transpersonal dimension may shape her response but Kim evidently thinks carefully before speaking. I ask the question because there are many hints during our conversation that this is indeed an element of Kim's practice and experience. For example, she has already referred to working with fairy tales with clients and in her own

Jungian therapy, implying engagement with collective symbolic forms, and I also remember a Biblical reference she made during a workshop, which she repeats here.

**KM55 Kim: The transpersonal and the third**

K1	Commentary
<p><i>J: Does this go beyond the immediately personal for you, does it go into the transpersonal?</i></p> <p><i>K: (long pause) I think it does. I think it does. And maybe that's where the single, all the single drops become one, flowing. (Pause) Yes (pause). When you say transpersonal, do you mean like on a spiritual level?</i></p> <p><i>J: It might be, or it might be the collective unconscious, I guess it depends...</i></p> <p><i>K: Yes, yes it does</i></p> <p><i>J: ...how you think about it</i></p> <p><i>K: It does.</i></p> <p><i>J: But not purely individual and personal.</i></p> <p><i>K: Yeah, it does, you know it does. Images come up, whether one is religious or not, or one believes in the Bible or not, but there is this one scene in the Bible where Jesus says when there are two of you, two or three of you are gathered in my name, I will be there. And I have very often experienced in counselling, you know, one to one, that there is something third happening. There's something third coming in, some synchronicism. And I very much trust that. That's my Jungian part, that I very much trust that third thing, that something on the unconscious level which can also link to other people. I believe very much on a level where we are connected, unconscious, that something gets energized, it's movement, it's like impulses, something is happening. And I, consciously or unconsciously, how much can you be conscious of it, but on a certain level, I trust that level (goes still, holds eye contact)</i></p>	<p>Kim's immediate response is to reflect in silence. Her reply moves between lyrical and reflective genres. First she uses a recurrent metaphor of water to express something that cannot easily be put into linear thought, and then she seems unsure and clarifies what I mean. My intention in referring to the collective unconscious is to link to material already discussed and to indicate openness to however she wishes to define the transpersonal. Her quick affirmative response implies reassurance that we understand each other and she is comfortable with this topic.</p> <p>Although Kim disclaims a specifically religious meaning, the religious texts and symbols of our cultural traditions inform our thinking, making available the Biblical connotation of the 'third'. Kim's Jungian references are themselves situated within this broad tradition. The space designated by people 'gathered' is relational and intentional and invites a connecting energy or presence.</p> <p>The 'third' is activated by the relational process, but creates a link beyond the one-to-one relationship. Kim's description implies this happens at the collective rather than personal unconscious level in Jungian terms.</p> <p>Kim trusts the process. At this moment, I am aware of intense connection between us signalled by our sustained eye contact and stillness.</p>

This key moment is an example of subtle negotiation of how we can talk about a transpersonal dimension of transformation. We share several assumptions, firstly that therapy is not only personal but reaches beyond in some way that is difficult to define, and yet we try to define it and believe that this attempt is helpful. Secondly, we find that the transpersonal, the spiritual and the collective unconscious are shared familiar concepts and do not strike us as illegitimate in the context of our discussion. Thirdly, we have a shared vocabulary of symbols for discussing these things. This negotiation



suggests that the 'disciplinary boundary' (Mills 2003, p.60) of counselling and psychotherapy can flexibly include the notion of the transpersonal but that this inclusion is not necessarily beyond question, and we need to check out with one another whether and how it can be 'inscribed on ...[the] theoretical horizon' and thus be 'in the true' (Foucault 1981, p.60). We are both familiar with the concept of the third in contemporary Jungian thinking and relational psychoanalysis, and which is discussed further in chapter 11.

For Matthew, transformation in himself and many of his clients has a spiritual dimension involving 'a conversion of heart':

*I think it is the heart looking in a different direction from the way it has been, wanting something more. So yes, and so I see the clients I work with as wanting the same, they want to be, they want a conversion of heart. And they might not put it in those terms, but I think that's how I see it, they want a conversion of heart, to maybe stop doing something they're doing or to feel less of something they're feeling.*

Matthew understands this conversion symbolically as the return of the prodigal son to the father in the Biblical parable (Luke 15:11-32). This perspective highlights the effort of turning away from a familiar but unsatisfying way of life towards the heart's deepest desire; hence the ambivalence that Matthew sees as inevitably part of the human response to the invitation to conversion. Accepting the invitation means letting go of many obstacles including pride:

*But there's a humility to it, yes there's certainly a humility in returning, isn't there, in finally yielding or submitting or giving in, say ok, ok, ok, I'll go that way, the way my heart's taking me, even though I'm resisting it like hell.*

The resistance that can get in the way of conversion or transformation can be understood both psychologically and spiritually. I ask Matthew about his understanding.

*J: It's almost as if we're saying that this kind of psychological manifestation is like a spiritual condition (M nods), that acts as a block. (Pause) Or am I reading that into what you're saying?*

*M: I think St Teresa would say that, and St John of the Cross would say that. St John of the Cross talks about the humours, which I think Freud spoke of as melancholia, but John of the Cross spoke and wrote of it as the humours. Yeah, I think they both would say that the, well Teresa specifically speaks about what Freud called the ego, and for her the third mansion is about actually relinquishing some of the ego to the other, in her language to God or to Christ, letting Christ take over and make of us, each of us what he will.*

*J: You said in her language God, and before that you said the other.*

*M: Yes.*

*J: So what is that in your language?*

*M: In my language it would be God, the Christ. But I guess, but I would want to also, I'd be very interested to hear what other people would say, what is the language they would use.*

Matthew understands that his Christian and specifically Carmelite perspective is a '*language*' that may not be shared by others, but nonetheless points to a human experience of conversion or transformation that transcends particular descriptions. St Teresa's (2008) account in the *Interior Castle* describes the soul's journey through seven 'mansions' to the centre of the castle where God is. Here, the soul paradoxically becomes free to act in the human world without relinquishing the presence of God. The mandala-like symbolism of Teresa's castle (Welch, 1982) invites a Jungian psychological interpretation of this transformation as becoming whole through integration of the archetype of the Self. Similarly, the experience described by St John of the Cross (2003) in *Dark Night of the Soul* can be read as psycho-spiritual dislocation and perhaps depression contingent on 'a pervasive re-definition of the self and its habits of desire and perception' (Wynn, 2012, p.108). These Carmelite descriptions of spiritual life inform Matthew's '*language*' but also address a human experience that at least in part may be described psychologically. For Matthew, transformation is the path towards God and the fulfilment of human potential, and the obstacles along the path are psychological phenomena which have spiritual consequences. Discussing the relationship of psychotherapy to spiritual direction, Matthew takes the view that psychotherapy may be a necessary step in clearing barriers to spiritual development:

*Where are the differences, if there are any? And I think there are differences, and I think I was stuck or blocked, I think there were very substantial blocks in place, and any amount of spiritual direction wouldn't have made any inroads into shifting them a millimetre.*

He suggests that the psychological and spiritual are different but closely connected domains, and that the practice of spiritual direction increasingly recognises the need for transformation in psychological terms to open the way for spiritual growth.

## **Summary**

This chapter has highlighted the following points:

1. Transformational experiences arose in the research conversations, particularly when reflection was fostered by the IPR process.
2. Contributing elements to transformation are a connection between thinking and feeling, reflection on the connection within a relational matrix, leading to integration signalled by a feeling of rightness.
3. This has implications for therapeutic practice shown in figure 22.
4. The antithesis of transformation (-T) may occur in some professional contexts.

5. Participants noted a reciprocal influence of personal and professional transformation.
6. For some participants, transformational experiences promoted freedom from rules or constraints.
7. Transformational experience may have a transpersonal dimension which some participants thought of as spiritual.

## 9. Processes in relational conversation

In this chapter I aim to describe the intersubjective moves and fluctuating connections made by people as they seek to establish emotional connection with each other and with the object or focus of their attention. This kind of relational conversation is quite different from depersonalised interactions in which the personhood of the other is not recognised or engaged, such as the kind of exchanges that Buber (1937) describes as I-It mode. It is the kind of conversation that relational psychotherapy aims to facilitate (Macaskie et al, 2013), and yet in spite of many theoretical developments of Rogers' (1957) concept of the necessary and sufficient conditions for genuine meeting in psychotherapy, it does not always happen in that context. When conversation that facilitates connection and change fails to happen in therapy, either the client or therapist is often subtly blamed; the former for being resistant and the latter for not being skilled or empathic enough. Sometimes the most therapeutic of conversations do not happen in therapy but elsewhere, between friends, students and teachers, or even researchers and participants. My experience is that profound connections can happen in these contexts, while therapy can sometimes lead to a prolonged impasse that I have called –T (see chapter 8). In this chapter, a dialogical analysis of processes in research conversations is presented to identify some of the variations in connection and attention which occur between participants in a focused non-therapy situation, and to throw light on their disconnections without pathologising or blame. The aim of this analysis is to explore how integrative and potentially transformative experiences occur in relational conversation, and how failures in connection leading to –T may also occur.

The idea of relational conversation developed here is process-oriented and includes shifts in attention and degree of connection between people, including failures in connection. The dialogues analysed in this study are for the most part examples of Buber's (1937) I-Thou mode, but even within I-Thou mode, they demonstrate variations in the capacity of the conversational partners to engage with each other at depth and to communicate effectively. Some of the reasons for this variation seem to arise from the interaction of the personal histories of the interlocutors, some from the dominant cultural discourses surrounding the dialogues, and some from the emotional rhythm of the dialogue itself as intensity grows and fades. Relational conversation continually moves between 'moments of meeting' and 'moving along' (Stern, 2004, p.149) in which several other kinds of intersubjective experiences can be identified. In some of these, which I call moments of not-meeting, there is a mismatch of aims or expectations leading to a communicative failure which may not be explicitly noticed at the time, but nonetheless has an impact on the dialogical partners. There are also experiences I call reflective moments of meeting in which a triangular or third space (Britton, 1998,

Ogden, 1994) opens up between the participants, who then experience emotional connection and the capacity to reflect on that experience together. These moments are slightly different from what I refer to as shared interest focus, in which the attention of the participants is focused on a third object. Examples of shared interest focus in the dialogues include objects present in the room such as Maria's art journal (KM66, p.157) and the laptop screensaver which becomes a metaphor for consciousness in my conversation with Matthew (KM47, p.88-89). There are further examples in all the dialogues where the object of attention is a concept or story.

### **Different kinds of moment**

Stern (2004) identifies a present moment as a subjective experience of *now* as it unfolds. Time understood as *chronos* does not allow for this experience, since it refers to the irresistible forward movement of time that swallows up the present into the next moment, making it already past. Time as *kairos*, however, is time experienced:

*Kairos* is the passing moment in which something happens as the time unfolds. It is the coming into being of a new state of things, and it happens in a moment of awareness. It has its own boundaries and escapes or transcends the passage of linear time. Yet it also contains a past. It is a subjective parenthesis set off from *chronos*. *Kairos* is a moment of opportunity, when events demand action or are propitious for action. (Stern, 2004, p. 7)

Stern's concept of the present moment is of a *kairos* full of experiencing, subjectively felt to be a single now. Drawing on Husserl's (1964) idea of a three-part present, entailing an immediate past-of-the present and future-of-the-present both felt within the present-of-the present, Stern (2004) imagines the present moment 'in some kind of dialogic equilibrium with the past and future' (p.28). It involves consciousness of what is happening now, has the psychological function of organising and enabling us to respond to what is happening, and involves the sense of an experiencing self. However, the interest of present moments for the study of relationships and relational psychotherapy lies particularly in intersubjectively apprehended present moments that involve 'the mutual interpenetration of minds that permits us to say, "I know that you know that I know" or "I feel that you feel that I feel"' (Stern, 2004, p. 75). Within the intersubjective matrix that includes conversation, proto-conversation such as mother-infant pre-verbal dialogue, and embodied non-verbal communication, we read each other's minds with greater or lesser degrees of attunement. The achievement of attuned connection leads to a significant shared awareness that Stern (2004, p.169) calls 'a moment of meeting'. Such moments are potential points of change, 'nodal event[s] ... that can change a life' (Stern, 2004, p.176). Moments of meeting constitute special events arising from the process of 'moving along' through 'the everyday dialogue that moves a therapy session forward, at least in time' (Stern, 2004, p.149).

The concept of moving along can also be applied to the everyday dialogical negotiation of non-therapeutic relational conversations, such as research conversations. It involves 'sloppiness' and 'repair' (Stern, 2004, p.156), is actively co-created by both participants, and may lead to unexpected 'now moments' that provide 'a novel interpersonal and intersubjective situation' (Stern, 2004, p.166) which may be acted on, leading to a moment of meeting. Not acting on a now moment, on the other hand, may lead to therapeutic impasse or, in the case of a research conversation, a dialogical disconnection or frustration. This is what I refer to as a moment of not-meeting.

The dialogical analysis of key moments below illustrates the occurrence of a variety of such intersubjective experiences in relational research conversations. Like the therapeutic process described by Stern (2004), these conversations involve moving along together and the emergence of now moments which are sometimes acted on and sometimes not, giving rise to moments of meeting (MM), reflective moments of meeting (RMM), shared interest focus (SIF) and moments of not-meeting (MNM). These also serve dialogical purposes such that the disconnection or misunderstanding of a MNM is sometimes resolved, opening up a new now moment.

My focus here is on the dialogical and intersubjective flow between different kinds of moment and the dialogical negotiations that move conversational partners from one kind of moment to another. A dynamic perspective is thus offered on the questions identified in table 7 (appendix 1) relevant to relational conversational processes:

1. What happens intersubjectively when MMs and MNMs occur?
2. How do we get from one kind of moment to another?
3. What happens when a MM includes explicit reflection as well as mutual connection and understanding? (RMM)
4. Is there a difference between RMM and SIF?

From this analysis it becomes clear that RMMs and SIFs are different, but both have a mediating function in moving between different kinds of moment. RMMs in particular play an essential role in the integration of thinking and feeling that may lead to transformative action, as discussed in chapter 8. While a MM may be felt to be a high point of implicit connection, RMMs make explicit the implicit and facilitate its integration.

### **Moving between moments**

In this section I present examples of moving between MM and RMM (KM32), MM and MNM (KM61), MM and SIF (KM42) and SIF and RMM (KM71). The dialogical use of objects to mediate connection between conversational partners is explored in KMs 37,

66 and 67. Finally, I discuss how these conversational moves underpin the integration-transformation process described in chapter 8.

### KM32 Natalia: moving between MM and RMM

This KM is an example of a MM between Natalia and me in our initial conversation, mirrored by another MM in the IPR session, this time interspersed with reflection so that our process flows between MM and RMM. At the same time, in the extracts from both conversations, Natalia reflects on the impact of MMs between her and her client. The context of this KM is the contrast Natalia makes between ‘*the counselling worldview*’ and the quite rigid expectations of ‘*our little nutshell*’. She illustrates this contrast further with reference to the powerful impact counselling has on a client in the community setting where she works, and the impact on herself of doing this work. Shading indicates MMs and RMMs.

N1	Commentary	N2 (IPR)	Commentary
<p><i>N: And you know working with this client and finishing after just seven sessions, which has really made a shift in this client's life (hands together). Especially the last couple of sessions. There's a huge awareness. So I think that's why I love what I do. When you're able to work with people, you enable them to challenge the conflicts, the pros and cons of what they've got to lose and got to gain, that they don't have to suffer, that they can communicate their concerns, and I think when they've been heard, when they've been heard, I feel (pause) they're able to do that with others. Mm. (Pause) I'm rubbing my hands, I'm noticing,</i></p>	<p>Natalia is smiling, happy and satisfied with the changes in herself and now in this client after very few sessions. The client's presence is almost tangible in the joining of hands and Natalia's gaze as she remembers MMs between them. Then Natalia moves from the wonder of this remembered past to the present. She puts the memory into a new context by reflecting on the meaning of her work. There are multiple emotions here, quiet contentment, wonder, empathy and compassion for her clients, delight that her work in hearing them ripples outwards to others.</p>	<p><i>N: And we've both got our hands similar. J: Yeah we're mirroring. I really noticed the way you had your hands then when you were talking about the client, I wondered what you were feeling at that point. N: I think peace for the client. She'd come to a stage where she'd really dipped and I thought something fatal was going to happen and I'd taken her to supervision several times and two attempts she'd tried, before I'd seen her she'd tried to commit suicide and whilst I saw her she tried, so I was very concerned about her, but there was a holding going on, and a huge concern that, is she going to manage,</i></p>	<p>Natalia stops the video to comment on our mirroring each other's gesture. [MM]</p> <p>I ask her to name the implicit feeling we both embodied. [RMM]</p> <p>'Peace' suggests the wholeness that we sense when thoughts and feelings are integrated in relationship with another (see chapter 8).</p> <p>Now Natalia tells the story of her anxiety for the client...</p> <p>her compassion and reaching out towards her ...</p>

<p><i>which for me it's comforting (smiling).</i>  <i>J: It's this (smiling, rubbing hands).</i>  <i>N: Yeah (pause). I don't often play with my hands, I think it's comforting, the togetherness.</i>  <i>J: Working with this particular client has been quite moving for you.</i>  <i>N: Mm, quite definitely, yeah.</i></p>	<p>Now she notices her hands embodying 'comforting'. I mirror the gesture. We are together, feeling something not quite expressible in words. [MM]</p> <p>The 'togetherness' is perhaps both with her client and with me. I feel the emotional impact this client has had on Natalia, and her quiet voice suggests that the emotion is becoming integrated with reflective thought [RMM]. This impression is confirmed in N2.</p>	<p><i>just survive, not just survive coming to counselling but is she going to survive, and cos I just felt she was so isolated, but she hung on in there, she really hung on and although she really dipped, and she really fought on, and she found her voice, she found voice, and that was really enlightening.</i>  <i>J: This client, this is the client that had the same birthday?</i>  <i>N: Yes.</i>  <i>J: Is it?</i>  <i>N: Yes it is.</i>  <i>J: Yes. So it clearly impacted very much on you working with her.</i>  <i>N: It did because I didn't feel, I don't think I've ever felt that low. I have felt low on one occasion when I left home, I moved to Coventry, I talked about that in the session as well and it was isolation...</i></p>	<p>her increasing anxiety for the client's survival ...</p> <p>her admiration...</p> <p>and her own learning from being with her client.</p> <p>I check, since Natalia began by telling me of her profound connection and identification with a client who shared her birthday.</p> <p>By reflecting on the impact, Natalia separates her own experience from the client's. It is close, but not the same. [RMM]          (She has talked of her isolation before 'in the session' of N1).</p>
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In this KM we see the fluidity of a remembered past and the present integration of feelings through reflection, as we move through MM and RMM together. These different moments are enabled by the shifting chronotope of there and then with the client, here and now between us, and the generic present of Natalia's reflection on the meaning and value of her work. The genre too shifts, encompassing reflection, reflexivity (for example, deepening awareness of our hand gestures), adventure-wonder (the client's 'shift') and adventure-ordeal (Natalia's rising anxiety about the client) in recounting some of the client's story. Natalia's account is inside-out in that different voices are heard carrying her feelings of anxiety, identification, pride in the client, satisfaction in the work, quiet reflectiveness and warmth and acceptance in our meeting. In this KM I am attuned to Natalia as the mirrored gesture suggests. The implicit emotional connection is felt as a MM and we then move into RMM by



recognising and reflecting on the flowing voices and emotions. Interestingly, this then facilitates Natalia's separation of her own experience from that of her client. The reflective space of the IPR session is like the triangular space described by Chapman (2011), which enables distinction rather than identification and empathy rather than enmeshment.

**KM61 Christine: from MM to MNM**

MNMs occur when one of us fails to be empathically attuned to the other. In KM61, Christine and I experience a MM but then move without my noticing to non-meeting. It is only while watching the video together that she points out what has happened. The re-written dialogue below places the outer dialogue (our actual words) in juxtaposition with an inner dialogue of my re-constructed understanding at the time. The third section of dialogue shows how far apart we are, and my reluctance to acknowledge not-meeting. Shading here indicates three sections of dialogue.

### KM61 Christine: From meeting to not-meeting

#### a. outer dialogue

C reflecting: It goes back to having a right to exist (strong tone, explaining)

C feeling: Yeah, God, what am I saying?

C reflecting: so I don't need to isolate ... because ... it's ok to be...be in contact with other people ...

J empathic: mm, yes, and you can just let that be

C realising: yes, that's becoming all a bit more real I think

#### b. inner voices

J: It feels to me as if you're saying that it's becoming seamless, more all the way through

*J inner voice: I think I'm tuning in here*

C: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Mm.

*J inner voice: She feels heard*

#### c. IPR

C: *(laughing) Hesitant there ... I haven't got there yet Jane, so I think that's what that means*

J: *So I'm not quite right there actually*

C: *The 'I have no right to exist' thing is still too strong*

- a. This is a MM towards the end of KM61. Christine has reached an insight which she begins to explain in quite a strong tone, as if confident of her new understanding. Suddenly she feels the impact of her words, pauses, her face crumples as tears come, and she hesitantly finds the words to reflect on what has now become an emotional understanding. I mirror her emotion and she seems to experience a sense of its reality, perhaps of its truthfulness for her.
- b. I think I am attuned to Christine here but I interpret rather than reflecting her feeling, so I miss the hesitation in '*becoming a bit more real*'. I am a step ahead, wanting her to reach completion of the process of becoming. This is a moment of not-meeting. However, I do not recognise that and hear her repeated '*yeah*' as confirmation that she feels heard. The video shows Christine's gaze settle gradually in the middle distance, which should perhaps have alerted me to a miscommunication and a MNM.
- c. In the IPR session at this point Christine starts laughing and we stop the playback. Her tone of voice is humorous as she tells me she hasn't yet got to where I imagined ('*seamless*'), and her use of my name here seems to emphasise the discrepancy. I am surprised and reluctant to say I got it wrong; '*not quite right*' softens the admission. The role power shifts from me to Christine. We are still in a MNM.

**KM24 Gwyneth: from MM to SIF**

The research conversations involved a degree of mutuality between the participants and me, arising from our shared history and personal engagement with the topic of transformation. This sense of mutuality and my conscious wish to be a researcher-participant led me at times to disclose my own experience in response to that of the participants, thus engaging them as listeners. In the KM which follows, a MM is created by Gwyneth's intense emotional recollection resonating with my own experience and by our shared awareness of similar states of mind. This emotional connection is then dispelled by a story that takes the focus away from the present moment. In so far as the story functions as a third object between us, it represents an attempt to substitute SIF for MM. Shading represents MM and SIF.

<b>G2 (IPR)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>G: <i>Sorry, but I'm, it's interesting, I want to, you know it's big stuff and I'm revisiting it again I want to...yeah. (Gestures for me to play video)</i></p> <p>J: <i>What's it like hearing it now?</i></p> <p>G: <i>Um (long pause) I suppose it reminds me how big it was, yeah, how hard it was. Yeah, yeah. Cos sometimes you doubt, you know you think, it's a long time ago I think, but you</i></p> <p><i>can revisit the feelings, you can feel them again.</i></p> <p>J: <i>You're reminding me of how I felt when I started teaching actually.</i></p> <p>G: <i>Yes.</i></p> <p>J: <i>I remember being on a teacher training course and the absolute terror, the sinking feeling in my stomach.</i></p> <p>G: <i>I knew I could never be a teacher.</i></p> <p>J: <i>And I discovered I couldn't.</i></p> <p>G: <i>I, that was one level I was more, more aware I knew that I could never stand up or,</i></p> <p><i>I actually had to, I applied to the Rotary Club to, I'll tell you very quickly, to get some funding for a child that I was working with to go on holiday, have a break, he lived with his family and it was very rough and they said, yes, we'll give you the funding if you come and do an after-lunch talk for us (groans, rolls her eyes and flops her arms, then smiles and laughs) And I, that was even more frightening than this.</i></p> <p>J: <i>Than this.</i></p> <p>G: <i>Yeah, exactly, which is the lesser of two evils.</i></p>	<p>Gwyneth is describing her defensive ritual before going to work (see chapter 10) and relives the terror of that past experience. My question invites reflection on revisiting the experience now. She is re-experiencing rather than just remembering. The inner 'doubt' about remembered feelings is silenced by the intensity she now experiences.</p> <p>Her re-experienced feelings impact on us both, triggering my experience, and this becomes a MM in which we both know a feeling of terror. We connect through recollection of our inability to manage our separate terrors.</p> <p>As Gwyneth suddenly remembers having to give a talk, she is diverted from our connection. Almost in parenthesis ('I'll tell you very quickly'), she seems to mark this story as an interpolation. The confessional genre we shared switches to a narrative with qualities of adventure-ordeal in which she has to face a scarily testing situation. Her body language (indicated in brackets) turns this into comedy to defuse and control the feeling of fear. Double voicing and laughter distance her from her narrative and imply that the 'frightening' situation is now safely in the past. Our attention is on the story [SIF], not the moment. The story functions as a defensive manoeuvre when the MM becomes too intense. I reflect back 'than this', but Gwyneth does not return to the intense emotional focus of the earlier exchange.</p>

The moment of meeting here arises both from emotional intensity and the effect of my self-disclosure, which enables us to recognise similarities in our experiences. However, the self-disclosure also creates an opening for Gwyneth's new story of giving a talk, which leads us into SIF. In a SIF moment we stand side by side as it were, gazing together at the third object of her story. This could be seen as a defensive strategy warding off the troubling intensity of recollected terror or perhaps the relational intensity of a MM.

### **KM71 Maria: from SIF to RMM**

This KM occurs in the context of looking together at Maria's art journal and discussing the use she makes in it of her own language, Dutch, and English. The journal is a space for playing with visual images and both languages. Now she has put the journal in her bag so it is not in front of us and we are reflecting on it at a remove. The space for reflection is wider. Both the art journal as a physical object and language use as a concept operate as third objects on which we have been focusing (SIF). Now the conversation moves from a side-by-side focus on third objects to more direct connection between us in a RMM in this wider reflective space. The emotional quality of the conversation changes from shared interest to engaged curiosity. Shading marks SIF, MM and RMM.

<b>M1</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<p><i>J: It's interesting that because the language is so central for you actually your restoration is coming non-linguistically.</i></p> <p><i>M: Yes, and the words are not really there at times, cos they don't quite fit yet, something doesn't quite fit yet, but it's coming</i></p> <p><i>J: Doesn't quite fit yet?</i></p> <p><i>M: No. You know in my art work it comes visual first, I suppose I can put it on paper, but I can't put the words with the feelings. I can do that with Dutch and there are some things there I can't yet quite do it in English because they're just not quite right, not quite, because if you can think about the old feelings that you had, they're Dutch (J: they're Dutch feelings) yeah with Dutch words.</i></p> <p><i>That's what's interesting in the EMDR as well because there is that part that kind of goes back to being little, so I start to speak Dutch, start to think in Dutch, and those feelings are Dutch language feelings. So some of those feelings I suppose are old feelings so</i></p>	<p>I notice the paradox of using art to heal linguistic trauma. My predominant feeling is one of interest [SIF]</p> <p>Maria begins to move out of SIF to experiencing now, a sense of <i>kairos</i>. The excitement of growing realisation and discovery is indicated by breathy voice on 'yes' and the repetition of 'don't quite fit yet'. She is listening to herself now, aware of something 'coming' to awareness.</p> <p>She is teasing out the experience of putting words to feelings, fine tuning the precise way the words feel. English words feel 'not quite right' yet. The switch from 'I' to 'you', addressed to herself, comes as she thinks now in English of 'old feelings' and realises they were Dutch. Again there is a breathy voice quality and rising tone of excitement on 'they're Dutch', and I reflect this realisation back. We share the discovery experience [MM].</p> <p>Then Maria steps back from the immediacy of feeling to reflect, and we are in a RMM. She clarifies for herself the</p>

<p><i>the words aren't quite right there. If I put something in English, that doesn't quite fit</i></p> <p><i>J: So the words... the words are the words of those feelings and if you were to use English words, they wouldn't, they could not be the words in those feelings</i></p> <p><i>M: No, no. I think that's the 2% isn't it, that's not kind of quite, yeah (J yeah). It will never fit, that's never going to fit I don't think</i></p> <p><i>J: It will never fit to that part of your life, will it?</i></p> <p><i>M: No, no. ... Gosh, I'm learning lots about myself (laughter). It's kind of quite amazing. Yeah.</i></p>	<p>meaning of her discovery, integrating feeling with thinking.</p> <p>Our joint reflection is in English. This is the language of reflection for Maria, but not of the remaining 2% of feelings which need Dutch. In this way, feelings are heteroglossic.</p> <p>The RMM is complete. Maria's humorous delight in learning expresses a sense of integration and wholeness.</p>
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### The dialogical use of objects (KMs 66, 67)

Physical objects in the room and mental objects such as ideas and stories serve dialogical purposes in mediating the connection between conversational partners. When the attention of both people becomes focused on an object, the nature of the exchange is initially SIF but sometimes this blends into RMM, as in KM71 (Maria) above. SIF may also function to dispel the emotional intensity of a MM, as in KM24 (Gwyneth) above. In the following examples, SIF is introduced by the research participant and has the effect of placing us side-by-side, gazing at a third object which carries meanings that at that moment seem not to be communicable in other ways. It creates a triangular space in which we may reflect on the meanings of the object, and our attention is companionably directed elsewhere rather than directly focused on here and now relational events.

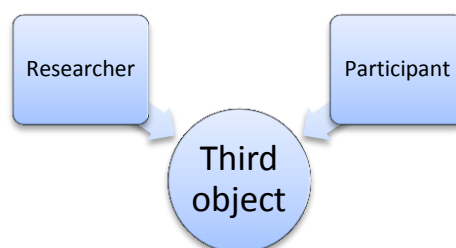


Figure 24 Shared interest focus

SIF moments may be transitional between other kinds of moment, and they may have an active part to play in developing RMM and MM. They therefore contribute to integration and potentially transformational experience. In KM47 (p.88) for example, the

screensaver functions as a SIF object to relieve intensity and help us think, and so brings us back into RMM.

In KMs 66 and 67 at the beginning of my conversation with Maria, she shows me her art journal and sculptures. Our shared focus is therefore on these objects. Maria presents them as a means of self-disclosure, explaining how she is '*rescuing [her]self with art*' from the residue of traumatic experiences. The art objects also seem to serve the purpose of making safer the uncertainty of a new relational situation configured by a research conversation. Maria tells me stories about her art practice and what it means to her, while we literally hold the journal between us, creating a triangle between our hands and the page on which we focus. She comments critically on the development of her painting style, her use of images and the two languages written into the pictures, and these topics provide her with a source of control over the degree of emotional intimacy. The following extract from KM66 demonstrates how SIF prepares the way for greater connection realised in RMM.

#### KM66 Maria: art journal

M1	Commentary
<p>M <i>I'll show you the latest. It's a self portrait, just let go, I've just let go and been myself.</i></p>	<p>We are holding the art journal between us, turning the pages from a recent self-portrait to an earlier one. I feel slightly bewildered by the speed of flicking through the journal. This is SIF, but for me it entails some uncertainty.</p>
<p>J <i>That's this January.</i>  M <i>Yes. Just being myself, it's a big transformation from what I did at the beginning which was very child-like, I'll show you, very child-like.</i></p>	
<p>J <i>(laughing) It's lovely.</i>  M <i>It is, isn't it, it's finding different parts of yourself really, because the different paint effects as well, you can have look through that, do you want to look?</i></p>	<p>She invites me to compare the pictures and I don't know how to respond. My comment '<i>it's lovely</i>' is banal. I am uncertain how to focus on their emotional quality. Maria hints at the significance of the difference in the pictures but focuses on '<i>paint effects</i>'. Our shared focus turns very hesitantly towards the emotional significance of the pictures.</p>
<p>J <i>I'd love to, yeah.</i>  M <i>That's about my dog dying, it's like a Dutch, well they send these envelopes when someone's died and it looks like that as well. Yes, that's me.</i></p>	<p>When we reach a picture of grief, Maria explains the cultural references and then simply acknowledges '<i>that's me</i>'. We are getting closer to the emotional meaning of her art. I notice the tears in the picture, but Maria seems to seek safety in commenting on the '<i>child-like</i>' technique again. It is as if she shows me herself and her feelings in pictures but shies away from words. I notice she has written in English while other pictures had Dutch words. Now she laughs, but mentions a deep-rooted fear of losing English ...</p>
<p>J <i>There's tears everywhere.</i>  M <i>I know, it was just horrible. Anyway, a bit child-like again.</i></p>	
<p>J <i>You're writing in English here.</i></p>	
<p>M <i>I know. (Laughter) I don't know what my language is any more. I'm afraid I'll lose English language at some point...</i></p>	

It is noticeable that the pictures almost absorb the emotions that arise between us. The ‘*big transformation*’ is glossed over, the complex relation of ‘*different parts of yourself*’ is not taken up, and the ‘*horrible*’ grief over her dog is distanced by a slightly dismissive comment on the ‘*child-like*’ quality of the picture. The pictures introduce chronotopes of other places and times, situating emotion there and then, but these emotions seep into the present as we observe their representation on the page. SIF is working here to introduce big emotional topics that later we will talk more about, the transformative effect of artwork and Maria’s anxiety of losing English, but she is not yet ready. A few lines later, referring to English, she says:

*M: That’s a big thing, that’s what – when I first came I think that was - in my work as well - I need it, maybe talk about that, I don’t know if you want to look any further?*

She is now almost ready, and here there is a definite suggestion that we are moving towards a RMM with a reflective focus on feelings about language experiences, but again Maria’s offer of the art journal re-focuses us on this third object. It is not quite time to engage directly with the emotions stirred up by the topic of language.

Throughout this extract, Maria is in charge of what happens between us. She chooses the pictures, comments on the techniques and translates Dutch words for me, and her tone of voice is confident as she focuses on her art work. There is almost a withdrawal of engagement as she closes the journal and hands it to me at the end of this KM. This distancing continues in KM67 which follows almost immediately. This is another SIF episode where Maria presents sculptured heads which convey ‘*scary*’ feelings. It is as if the heads speak for different voices within Maria, and allow her to stand back, look at them and share them at a slight distance. I experience the distance and feel at a loss what to do. However, this is a process Maria evidently needs in order to get ready to reflect on the profound topic of language.

#### **KM67 Maria: sculptures**

<b>M1</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<p><i>M: Shall I show you something else because I do sculpture as well?</i>  <i>J: Do you?</i>  <i>M: Mm, I do. There’s something I think about knowing when you’re younger, it’s something like using your head, I find that very interesting, using your head, because you see it as it is, and that’s not how it is. And then you get the theory and it becomes a bit different, and I’ve been trying to put that together with counselling. These are heads, I’m going to show you this</i></p>	<p>We are in SIF still, and perhaps significantly the shared interest here and in KM66 is one that Maria has thought about and chosen in advance. She has chosen objects that will allow her to bring herself a bit at a time into our conversation. They present aspects of herself, almost as if it is they, not her, who presents them. Yet it is her, and art is the language she chooses. The heads link to ‘<i>using your head</i>’ and counterpoint intellectual ‘<i>knowing</i>’ with other ways of knowing that she is ‘<i>trying to put together</i>’.</p>

<p><i>one, that's something I did when I was in my 20s, which is quite, I don't know, scary in a way.</i></p> <p><i>J: Yes, a huge ...</i></p> <p><i>M: Yes, but that's maybe how I saw things. And there's a lot of detail. (Pause) That's a very recent one.</i></p> <p><i>J: How do you make these?</i></p> <p><i>M: It's just clay, yeah, that's polymer clay I think.</i></p> <p><i>J: Do you have a model?</i></p> <p><i>M: No. No, I think it's just whatever comes up.</i></p> <p><i>J: I'm going to hold it up to the camera (laughter). Can you tell me, not how you make them in the literal sense but how you make them emotionally? What's that process like for you?</i></p> <p><i>M: I think it frees something, once you've got it on paper and you've got a record, it frees something. And that's a kind of monster I suppose (laughter). When I first came to England, it was a bit scary really. So things weren't what I thought they were any more, with the language as well, so (pause). I'd kind of like to talk about that a little bit and about the client work, shall I wrap them up? (J Mm)</i></p>	<p>This is what she is doing at this moment too.</p> <p>The scary head brings traumatic feelings into our space but it is neutralised a little by the past tense ('<i>how I saw things</i>') and the reference to '<i>detail</i>'.</p> <p>I am at a loss, as is evident in my question about how she makes them. The material is safer than the possible emotional meanings.</p> <p>When I hold the head up I make a triangle of the camera, Maria and me. The camera becomes the focusing eye and our enactment of shared interest becomes its object. I am aware of something elusive that we cannot put into words. Then I find a way, by asking Maria to reflect on the process. This is familiar ground for counsellors and her response is immediate, as if the question itself '<i>frees something</i>' here and now. Now we move into RMM, Maria's words flow more easily, and she wraps up the sculptures as if she no longer needs them. Now she can talk about the trauma associated with language.</p>
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These two key moments show the dialogical and relational importance of SIF in preparing us for the greater intimacy of RMM. The objects we focus on allow us to turn our gaze away from each other and from the emotionally-charged topics that the objects embody. We shift our relational gaze between art, the emotions it conveys and the present moment of our conversation. Dialogically, we shift between the outer negotiation of looking and commenting and the pressure of inner dialogues. These are discernible in the way we approach and turn aside from direct engagement with emotions on the edge of awareness. SIF enables us to explore how far we will go together in languaging the topic of language that is complex and fascinating for us both. We finally find a shared idiom through which we can reflect, and we move into a RMM.

### **How do relational conversational processes underpin experiences of integration and potential transformation?**

I have shown in this chapter how different kinds of moment mediate the emotional intensity and attuned focus of partners in relational research conversations. In chapter 8 I argued that potentially transformational experience is generated through the



integration of thinking and feeling in the reflective space of intersubjective dialogue. The relationship of conversational micro-processes to integration and transformation is now explored.

Nolan (2008) identifies intersubjective processes of moving in and out of focused attention in supervision and research interviews which create the possibility of a 'meaning moment' emerging in dialogue. This is 'perceived as a bright "gem" of embodied insight (a "fourth" element) from within the Analytic Third, created through mutually focussed attention when interacting in a "moment-of-meeting"' (p.171). The complex frames of interaction described by Nolan (2008) are influenced by the presences of 'others' brought by each conversational participant both consciously and unconsciously into their dialogue, and these impact on their degree of focus and connection. Recognising these processes can illuminate understanding of the flow of emotional intensity and sense of meaningfulness in interactions, and serve as a tool for reflective practice. Nolan and Walsh (2012), for example, show how the concept of the intersubjective web can aid reflection on the emotional labour of nursing and help to make sense of the relational and organisational dynamics impacting on interactions between nurse and patient.

Nolan's (2008) concept of the meaning moment captures the almost numinous sense of significance felt in a MM as both people register their connection, resonate with the intuited feelings of the other and focus attention on that experience. I suggest that this may develop into a RMM, which can occupy a longer moment, and that it is through experiencing the intersubjective connection which underlies MM, RMM and meaning moments that integration of thinking and feeling can happen, felt as wholeness or satisfaction of a need for resolution. This, as outlined in chapter 8, may generate transformative action in the world. However, reaching moments of close connection with another, or indeed with oneself through reflexive awareness, is mediated through shifts in focus, awareness and degrees of connection. *We 'cannot bear very much reality'* (T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton* (Eliot, 1959)) and sometimes have to look away from the bright light of connection. We also need these mediating processes which build up towards a critical point at which a new state, integration, emerges into awareness (see chapter 10).

## Summary

An intersubjective account of the processes leading towards integration and transformation in conversation clarifies the following points:

1. MM, MNM, RMM and SIF flow into each other in the process of moving along in conversation.

2. MM shades into RMM to enable integration of feeling with thinking through reflection.
3. SIF shades into RMM when emotions are engaged.
4. SIF may function as a relief from emotional intensity.
5. MNM may be due to failures in attunement and also lack of cultural understanding.
6. Repairing MNM may strengthen the intersubjective connection, leading to new MMs or RMMs.

Dialogically, a MM as illustrated here is typically 'inside-out' so that feelings arising in the moment are voiced and heard. The account from which a MM arises often interweaves confessional genre with adventure-wonder or adventure-ordeal, all of which tend to have story form and typically engage the interlocutors in SIF or RMM. Thus the focus moves from a third object to the space created and shared by the dyad, and the genre of such a focused interchange is typically reflexive.

This perspective on conversational processes is based on research conversations between therapists, and may be applicable to other relational situations. An analysis of therapeutic conversations using the four kinds of intersubjective moment identified here would be useful to cast more light on movements within the therapy process.

## 10. Ambivalence, resistance and defence

This chapter focuses on the interplay between the different but related concepts of ambivalence, resistance and defence. Key moments with four participants, Louise, Gwyneth, Matthew and Kim, have a bearing on the questions from Table 7 (appendix 1) which are relevant to this theme:

1. Are there instances of resistance in the research conversations?
2. How does resistance intersect with emergent new perspectives or developments?

Aspects of ambivalence and resistance are discussed by Matthew and Kim and also appear dynamically between some of the participants and myself. In conversation with Matthew and Kim, I am often the one who resists hearing what they are saying (see chapters 5 and 6), while with Gwyneth and Louise, it is often the participants' defensiveness towards something in their story or resistance to an aspect of the present interactive situation which can be traced in our dialogue. It is the case therefore that there are instances of resistance in the research conversations, and a Jungian understanding suggests that some of these indicate Shadow functioning. An example of this is KM56 (p.100) where my reluctance to hear what Kim is saying springs from my resistance to integrating unconscious aspects of the self. This resistance to getting into the water is symbolised in the dreams discussed in chapter 3. The intersubjective process of resolving resistance sometimes happens in the research conversations, for example in KM43 (p.79) and KMs 49 and 16 discussed below, and sometimes in my later dialogue with the recording and written text, for example in KMs 56 and 57 (p.100-105).

### Clarifying concepts

Defence is often thought of as the wider term, of which resistance is 'a specific subset of defence measures where the 'X' that seems to pose a danger for the participant(s) in therapy (or a related interaction such as supervision) is actually something about the therapeutic/supervisory process or encounter itself' (Davy & Cross, 2004, p.16). The research conversations in this study constitute just such 'a related interaction', with an intense focus on personal experience, reflexivity and interpretation of meaning between people who are familiar with therapeutic and supervisory encounters and alert to the similarities and differences in our research encounter. Therefore, it seems appropriate to think of our reactions to perceived dangers in conversation as resistance. The topic of defences and their uses is discussed by Gwyneth, and their enactment as resistance in our conversation is illustrated in the exploration below of KM19. As this KM

demonstrates, we are sometimes able to understand what is happening reflexively through IPR.

The second question above concerns the intersection of resistance with new perspectives, and here the distinct nature of ambivalence and resistance needs to be clarified. In KM43 (p.79) Matthew speaks of the transformative potential of becoming aware of ambivalence as a personally significant concept. It is not that ambivalence in itself is transformative, but rather that it has suddenly become '*a very live issue*' for him, which opens up an opportunity of transformation in his work with clients and in his own life. This is captured in his metaphor of the '*ambivalence seam*', which suggests a rich source of new understanding that he intends to explore. In KM43 I initially equated ambivalence with resistance, and teasing out the difference led to a transformative moment of new understanding for me.

A significant feature of the experiences captured in this and other KMs is that of standing on a threshold; whether or not to cross the threshold may engender either ambivalence or resistance. Threshold moments may last quite a long time as we weigh the opportunities and risks that might lie beyond, either cognitively or through instinct and feeling, a process which is not confined to human beings.



**Figure 25 Threshold moments**

These photographs suggest an ambivalent cat ('Shall I go out now or just look?') rather than a resistant one ('I won't go!'), and eventually the ambivalence is resolved by deciding the opportunity outweighs the risk. However, resistance is a force that keeps us from crossing or even approaching the threshold. In KM43 (p.79) for example, I was aware at the time of resisting engaging with Matthew's talk of ambivalence, and the reluctance and discomfort I felt are evident in my silence and defensive gesture. The topic of ambivalence represented for me a re-engagement with painful and unproductive experiences in therapy and so I resisted exploring it. However, KM43 offered me an opportunity to understand ambivalence more creatively, and so it

constituted the threshold of a new perspective. In contrast to resistance, ambivalence is an emotional attitude which invites us to inquire more deeply, and Matthew describes it as '*an indicator that something needs to be attended to*' (p.83). In KM44 (p.86), Matthew is concerned with his own ambivalence as he stands on the threshold of deepening spirituality, and understands it as an intelligible attitude that indicates a point of potential growth.

### **Resistance transformed into ambivalence: Louise, KMs13 & 14**

These KMs occur during the IPR session with Louise, who was quite uncomfortable with seeing herself on screen. Although the speech genre is reflexive in that she is trying to understand what she said and her present emotional reaction to it, Louise's strong feelings of boredom, irritation and frustration distract her and she becomes quite dismissive of herself.

*L: Don't know what I'm talking about. Did I say I did a course?*

*J: (Stops video) Mm, you said you did a diploma on body work.*

*L: Oh yeah, that's right. Do you know what I'm noticing that's happening, Jane now, I'm just, I'm totally not listening to me. I'm bored with it.*

*J: Are you?*

*L: Mm, yeah. Yeah, I am, let me just think about what's happening (looks out of the window and puts her hand to her face). It's, it's (long pause), I don't why, I've just noticed I was trying to read down the side instead of listening to what I was saying. I don't find what I'm saying particularly (pause) rich.*

The practice of IPR invites us to reflect on our interaction, but Louise is unable to do so just now because she cannot listen to herself empathically. Although her practitioner self attempts to '*think about what's happening*' as she notices her reaction, she is distracted by the transcript and criticises what she has said as not '*rich*'. She seems very resistant to hearing herself. This also happened earlier in the conversation and so now I try to make sense of it:

*J: I'm wondering (pause) well, is it what you were saying before that, 'well this is obvious', is it that feeling, or (pause)? I don't know, I wonder if you're frustrated with something about the way you're saying it, or...*

*L: (Nods) Probably, probably. Yeah, I think it is probably the way I'm saying it, I'm not articulate enough or eloquent enough for me, I think that's beginning to frustrate me and irritate me about her (indicates herself on screen)*

*J: About her, not you*

*L: (Shakes her head and points at screen) Her. I don't know who she is.*

Multiple voices are heard in this dialogue, marked by Louise's use of '*I*' and '*me*' and disowning of '*her*', the image of herself on the video. I reflect back '*about her, not you*', but Louise resists this invitation to reflect on the splitting and disowns her screen self

completely. She tells me the difficulty is not seeing herself on video but the length of the interview, 'like a feature film', and then appeals to me as if she feels hurt and constrained:

*L: I don't have to watch this one do I? (pointing at the camera)*

*J: No. You don't have to watch anything. If you really don't want to, we won't.*

*L: No, I'm not enjoying it but I also, it's opening things up, isn't it, and I want to discuss what we've discussed and so I don't want to miss that really.*

The hurt underlying her resistance to watching is revealed. Louise's defence measures of frustration and distraction give way at the sudden thought that I might ask her to watch the IPR video as well, and I am shocked to realise that she feels she might 'have to'. Louise is very aware of an imbalance of power here. However, perhaps because I do not insist on watching the video, Louise's professional and intellectual curiosity enables her to re-engage with the process. Now she is no longer resistant, but ambivalent: 'not enjoying it' but still wanting to explore what is 'opening up'.

This KM demonstrates how difficult it is to identify reasons for resistance and that attempting to do so cognitively is not particularly fruitful. Louise's resistance to the interview situation and IPR process is only reduced when her underlying sense of vulnerability is expressed and I implicitly acknowledge it. Then she is freed up from its grip and can make a choice to continue while fully aware of ambivalent feelings. A little later, in KM14, she reflects that doing IPR is uncomfortable because the recording challenges the familiarity of not feeling heard.

*I think it's because it feels like it's there now, it's on tape ....because it's on tape it feels almost like it'll stay.... Which would highlight my process actually, of not feeling heard, wouldn't it? You know, that from somebody who's not heard, words vanish, and I think that's why I'm cringeing with this, you know, it's a bit of a paradox isn't it? ... It's the old swamp that's safest, well worn path.*

The emotional tone here is gentler because Louise is listening to herself now, making sense of her feelings and able to take up an empathic reflective stance towards them. Being ambivalent about doing IPR has facilitated a spirit of inquiry.

### **Resolving resistance: Matthew KM49 and Louise KM16**

When resistance to hearing or connecting with each other becomes conscious, it is sometimes possible to resolve it and allow a new perspective to emerge. This happens in KM49 towards the end of my second conversation (IPR) with Matthew.

*J: There was this thing niggling at the edge of my consciousness and it was what we'd been talking about, and so towards the end of the week I listened to this, to our conversation, and I thought, you're avoiding something, Matthew*

*has talked about something you need to think about, and you don't want to do it, you're resisting (both laughing)*

*M: What was that?*

*J: Oh it was all of this, it was the meaning of ambivalence (M oh right) and your different meaning of ambivalence.*

My speech genre is confessional as I reflect on my response and voice the inner dialogue between avoidance and self-challenge. We laugh ironically at the recognition of resistance, as we both know our propensity to resist self-knowledge and the hard work of working it through. Matthew accepts my somewhat chastened admission, '*I say I'm doing research but I don't actually want to know something*', and thoughtfully clarifies the emotional attitude this demonstrates:

*M: But that's also ambivalence, isn't it? And isn't that the human condition?*

Matthew's acceptance of the inevitability of this human trait resolves my resistance to knowing about ambivalence and facilitates the integration of self-knowledge.

In KM16, noticing a moment of greater connection between us in the recording (L1) helps Louise to understand and so resolve her resistance to the research conversation process. We watch a section of video in which she talked of the lack of thinking about social class in counselling training and the failure of the therapy profession to reach working class people. Louise spoke with passion from her own experience and I felt that we both engaged emotionally with the topic and with each other. Watching this again (L2/IPR), we focus on the shift in our dialogue.

*L: It was definitely different that segment and it was about feelings, right. I think the rest of it up, up to there, what we have seen I think is you asking a little question maybe and me bombarding you, not relating to you*

*J: Yes, and there we started to relate more*

*L: Definitely, definitely, yeah, yeah. I can't find the words. What do I mean?*

*J: It felt to me like we connected more*

*L: Connected, it's as simple as that isn't it? I agree, I agree. And I think the reason we hadn't connected before, I think I'm really anxious. I think it's, yeah, I'm completely out of my comfort zone doing this. But it felt like there we could both, there was a meeting there.*

Louise is intensely interested in this change in a conversation marked by discomfort and difficulty in connecting. Her feelings are engaged as we tease out an understanding of what happened. Although she feels '*out of [her] comfort zone*' in this situation and hence has '*bombarded*' me at times, when she talked about class it

mattered to her so deeply that this outweighed her resistance. She notices that it mattered to me too, and therefore:

*L: I think maybe I felt that you might not know more than me and we might be able to discuss this equally*

Louise's resistance is grounded in her perception of inequality, and it is changed by hearing me acknowledge the limits of my capacity to understand. In the video recording we are watching (L1) I said:

*J: I know I can't understand the experience of people whose lives are so very, very different from mine*

Although we are both aware of disconnection in the research conversations, we are unable to resolve it until Louise feels we can talk more equally and then she names what was happening. This transforms our relationship and facilitates a more genuine exchange.

### **Resistance as an intersubjective and dialogical phenomenon**

Sometimes resistance remains unconscious, for example in KM56 (p.100) where I am so resistant to the symbolic level of my interaction with Kim that I did not recognise it until I had transcribed the conversation and begun the dialogical analysis. Resistance is discernible in defensive moves which block out information and challenge in an attempt to maintain a familiar perspective unchanged or ward off disturbing emotional consequences. This is a traditional psychodynamic view in which intrapsychic dynamics are the main focus. The psychoanalytic literature in particular uses resistance as a technical term referring to the ways in which patients seek to avoid the emergence of unconscious material into consciousness (Freud, 1973; Rycroft, 1972). However, resistance is also a dynamic process at the interpersonal level of the analytic interaction, which Cullin (2008) suggests could be understood from a cybernetic perspective as a tendency towards homeostasis in the dyadic system of analyst and patient. A contemporary relational view of resistance would highlight ways in which it is co-created or co-activated intersubjectively, and seek to understand it as an aspect of the ongoing therapeutic relationship. There are at least two ways in which resistance might be co-constructed intersubjectively that are relevant to the dialogues presented here, firstly as a reciprocal aspect of power dynamics set up by dominant discourses, and secondly as an indicator of the pressure of some emergent phenomenon, such as new insight or a new relational organisation generated by the interaction.

### **Power, resistance and dominant discourses**

The impact of power dynamics is illustrated in KM16, discussed above (p.166). Louise recognises that her resistance to the interview situation is activated by her perception



of an inequality of power between us, based on a difference in social class and my role as a researcher and teacher. While a classical psychoanalytic account would consider this perception to be intrapsychic, an intersubjective perspective would also note my contribution to the situation. Our conversations took place at my invitation to serve my research purposes, and although my intention was to facilitate a mutual exchange, inevitably my agenda structured the conversation. My question about transformational experience seemed to become a stumbling block for Louise, as if she frequently felt what she said was inadequate. She alternately describes experiences and then dismisses their relevance:

*It's as if I'm trying to describe something, it's as if I'm trying to fit an experience, a description into something else actually, the other way round. (Pause)  
Because I'm not sure that what I'm talking about is transformational.*

*It's not what I understand to be transformational. Something transformational is, it (using hands dynamically to find the word) changes...it transforms and actually I think what I'm describing there was always me, I just learnt to do it, and I just fine tuned what I'd already got inside, that makes the work, work, or not, but usually works doesn't it? So that's not transformational is it?*

Louise's difficulty with the idea of transformation arises because I have asked her about it, so it is contingent on feeling under pressure to come up with an answer. She does not treat the research conversation as an opportunity to explore the topic together but as a situation where she feels pressured to perform by producing a particular sort of account and is dissatisfied with her performance. My experience of writing is sometimes constrained by a similar pressure to produce a conventional academic text rather than a reflexive account, and by imagining there is something to be said already existent, waiting for consciousness and thought to turn it into words and polish it into a performance. Both Louise and I are constrained by an assumption that there is a right answer if only we can find it, although we also know from our therapeutic practice that understandings with the ring of truth emerge in exchanges between people in genuine contact. We cannot claim a singular transcendent truth value for any account since it is necessarily generated 'in the true' (Foucault, 1981, p.60) of its universe of discourse, that is, within the constraints of what is thinkable and intelligible in its time and culture. Louise's account of her experience, like my account of our conversation, is co-created in a particular context where powerful cultural discourses constrain us. We have more chance of recognising them when the pressure of the situation generates resistance which leads us to inquire further.

This example illustrates the power of dominant discourses about academic research that are entwined with perceptions of social class and status. I am positioned as powerful because I am a university teacher and researcher and perceived as middle

class. Louise is positioned by this discourse as lacking in power and constrained by expectations of what a research participant should say, and perhaps by the expectation that her experience will not be understood by a middle class academic. She talks of her clients at a women's centre, young working class women who remain beyond the empathic capacity of counsellors who expect them to save the money for the bus fare or to leave an abusive relationship against the advice of their mothers who see any relationship as better than none. Louise understands their dilemmas and is empathic because she grew up knowing that her experience did not make sense to her middle class school teachers. The unspoken discourses operating here are about the difficulty of crossing or perhaps even naming the class divisions, the low expectation of empathic understanding across this divide, and the familiar designation of the researcher (and perhaps counsellor) as a non-participant observer of a culture she does not share. What is startlingly transformational is that Louise and I eventually understand this reflexively and make a genuine emotional connection.

Foucault (1980a) conceives of power as the force necessary to fuel an operation and resistance as an element inherent in power, since a force encounters contrary forces and becomes visible only in relation to them. This implies that power is a practice, and that 'we should think of power not as an attribute (and ask 'What is it?'), but as an exercise (and ask 'How does it work?') (Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p.50). How it works is a reciprocal event, and when resistance is activated the practices of power become more visible. Louise's resistance makes visible the hidden discourses surrounding class and research that position me as more powerful, and so together we are more able to question them. The practice of power in therapy is often unremarked, though it is acknowledged by narrative therapists.

Therapists must always assume that they are participating in domains of power and knowledge and are often involved in questions of social control. On this view, therapists must work to demystify and unmask the hidden power relations implicated in their techniques and practices. (Besley, 2002, p.134)

These comments apply equally to researchers. In each interview situation a new dynamic is in operation which mediates our interaction through perceptions of power, relevance, truth and meaning, as well as the emotional states generated in each person during the dialogue. Our conscious intentions and thoughts are constrained by what we unconsciously embody and enact as given in that context, until at least one member of the dyad resists the power of social discourses and makes them visible.

### **Resistance and emergence**

A second aspect of resistance that may be understood intersubjectively concerns its relation to whatever it attempts to prevent from emerging into awareness. Jung's

theories of compensation and transcendence depend on his view of the psyche as the container of polarities whose binary opposition gives rise to the need for self-regulation:

The psyche is a self-regulating system that maintains its equilibrium just as the body does. Every process that goes too far immediately and inevitably calls forth compensations, and without these there would be neither a normal metabolism nor a normal psyche. (Jung, 1966, para 330)

Wholeness or individuation can only emerge, in Jung's (1960) view, through the principle of transcendence according to which a third state or position becomes possible which includes the polar opposites within its wider domain. This involves the integration of Shadow aspects of the personality which have hitherto been denied. A Jungian perspective on resistance therefore locates it in the tension between opposites which intensifies as the need to reach a third position increases. Drawing on the concept of emergence in complexity theory, the Jungian analyst Cambray (2006, p.4) describes it as 'self-organization into a system of complexity beyond what can be explained by study of the individuals involved'. He gives the example of the synchronous flashing of fireflies. Another easily observed example in nature is the moment when a flock of stationary geese takes flight. In these cases a collective movement has emerged at a point in time, which we can theorise has up to then been building towards a critical threshold or 'phase transition' (Cambray, 2006, p.8). Cambray (2006) applies the notion of emergent processes to the therapeutic experience of 'aha' moments arising from negative capability, the quality of waiting in uncertainty described by Keats (Bion, 1970). Such moments also occur in research conversations, for example in KM16 (p.166) when Louise recognises '*that segment changed us*'. What precedes this emergent and exciting realisation is resistance. The reciprocal relation of resistance to emergence is apparent when the third position is reached, transcending the previous state of stuckness and discomfort in our interaction.

The intersubjective nature of resistance and emergence is clear in psychotherapy, where the experience of resistance may communicate a need to attend to the therapeutic relationship to facilitate movement. In research conversations this is also the case. My resistance to Matthew's discussion of ambivalence (chapter 5) and Kim's focus on unconscious processes (chapter 6) is evidence of 'the transference field between the researcher and the work' (Romanyshyn, 2007, p.133) and it is made conscious through shared exploration in IPR and through my interaction with the text while doing dialogical analysis, both practices which rely on understanding the intersubjective matrix. Romanyshyn (2007) believes that attending to the transference field in research is an ethical imperative, since not to do so would amount to not withdrawing one's projections and so failing to move beyond perceptions skewed by the researcher's desires and fears. However, letting go of projections leads to

confusion and loss, ‘the sense that one no longer knows what the work is about’ (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 137). I think I resist determinedly the intimation of such disorientation in conversation with Matthew and Kim, particularly in KM56 (p.100). Not knowing is uncomfortable but necessary if new perspectives are to emerge.

### Defences in research conversations: Gwyneth KM19

Throughout our conversations, Gwyneth addresses the topic of her own defences in relationships and work situations, and in the IPR session she sometimes notices how defences are activated as we talk together. In KM19 defensive strategies are very active and the dialogue demonstrates a gradual movement towards reflexive understanding that de-activates them and enables us to reach a RMM. This KM is divided into two extracts to facilitate discussion.

#### Extract 1

In G1 Gwyneth is talking about a stressful former job as a social worker and the opportunity it gave her to ‘*learn about defences from the inside*’. In G2 we watch this extract.

G1	G2 (IPR)	J inner voice
<p><i>But it was very weird. So these kind of things stretching me, I discovered a lot about my own defences about how I managed and I recognised that I found the job exceedingly stressful but that how I'd manage it was by, in the morning I didn't want to get out of bed so I thought right, if I get just on the edge of the bed that's a start ...</i></p>	<p><i>(G grabs her notebook and begins making notes)</i>  <i>G: Do you want to stop it just for a moment while I tell you something.</i>  <i>(Jane stops the video)</i>  <i>G: Um, I have a friend who, um, I just wonder if, if she would, if she might be willing to, to meet you because, we worked together at this time which is why it reminded me of her and she's coming to stay with me in, um, September, and I haven't seen her in thirty-six years or thirty-five years, but she's fantastic at writing a note at every Christmas, and I write a note back every Christmas, but she was a psychiatric social worker and she went to work at Broadmoor for the women, the women's part of Broadmoor, all her life and she just might, and she's on, I think she works on some government committees now but she might, she might be really interesting to talk to about this. Shall I ask her?</i>  <i>J: Oh please, yes.</i></p>	<p>What's going on? This must have sparked something for her.</p> <p>What's the connection? Why are you offering me someone else?</p> <p>Writing? Not talking?</p> <p>But I'm researching therapists, not social workers...</p> <p>It feels churlish to refuse...</p>

Gwyneth's sudden grab for her notebook is striking. In view of the references to writing which follow, I wonder if writing notes here functions as a defence against the emotions stirred up by hearing herself talk of a very stressful time. Something has indeed been sparked for her, but what she wants is to stop feeling it rather than tell me more about it. Her offer of a friend as a research participant is strange on several counts. They have not seen each other for many years, she emphasises their occasional writing as opposed to talking, and the friend's profession is not counselling. It is as if Gwyneth is creating a diversion from her own experience and trying to substitute writing for talking. She seems quite unaware of the defensive quality of this manoeuvre. Her speech is hurried and her words seem to tumble over each other. My inner voice indicates my puzzlement and sense of something here and now to be understood, yet I do not try to explore it with Gwyneth. Instead I feel slightly irritated and ignore this sign of my own resistance to inquiry. Then I simply accept her offer in order to be polite, abandoning my curiosity about the interaction. We implicitly join together in resistance to uncomfortable emotions.

The second extract from this key moment comes a few moments later when we resume the video playback. Gwyneth's narrative in G1 continues from where we broke off in extract 1 above. She continues to describe her preparation for the working day:

### Extract 2

G1	G2 (IPR)	J inner voice
<p><i>... and I could feel the defences growing through the, through the ritual of getting up (movements demonstrate getting up) and the last bit was that I lived ten miles away from where I worked, the last bit was driving, and by the time I got to the end of the ten mile drive I was ready to walk in. So very interesting, so learning about defences.</i></p>	<p><i>G: Did you recognise that? (re-enacts getting out of bed and sitting up with her feet on the ground. J stops video.) That's getting out of bed in the morning? That's my set...</i>  <i>J: Yes, you were re-enacting it. Yes.</i>  <i>G: Yes, cos I'd learned that if I threw the sheets off and went like this (re-enacts same movement) then I was one step up, you know, the defences were (indicates a level with her hands) just a fraction up and then (indicates the level getting higher and higher).</i>  <i>J: So you literally...</i>  <i>G: Made myself.</i>  <i>J: ...built them up.</i>  <i>G: Built them up.</i>  <i>J: To make yourself strong for the day.</i>  <i>G: I went through the ritual knowing that the next step in the ritual I would feel a little bit better,</i></p>	<p>And you're re-enacting it again now, as if it's too hard to think about</p> <p>Maybe we can start to wonder about what you're doing...</p> <p>Oh, I didn't understand how concrete the building of defences was</p> <p>Now I understand the terror more</p> <p>And the bravery</p>

	<p><i>and a little bit better. Cos it's that waking up in the morning with that whole, you know that we've talked about it, that half-sleep when the thing is so exposed (expansive gesture, serious expression) what am I...you know. Sorry, but I'm, it's interesting, I want to, you know, it's big stuff and I'm revisiting it again, I want to...yeah (gestures towards the video for Jane to resume playback)</i></p> <p><i>J: What's it like hearing it now?</i></p> <p><i>G: Um (long pause). I suppose it reminds me how big it was, yeah, how hard it was. Yeah, yeah. Cos sometimes you doubt, you know you think, it's a long time ago I think you know, but you can get, you can, you can revisit the feelings, you can feel them again.</i></p>	<p>This is painful for you but perhaps we can talk about this experience here and now</p> <p>What a crass question ...</p> <p>I feel like we have reached the same time zone now. It feels more real.</p>
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Gwyneth's re-enactment of the enactment we are seeing in the video works as an effective defence in the IPR session. There are three levels of defences operating here: the original getting-up ritual to manage her terror of going to work, the display of this defence in the video, and the series of interruptions, distractions, re-enactment and commentary on the re-enactment in the IPR session. Clearly this is a KM full of alarming memories, and it presented me with the dilemma of how to work with it. As a therapist, my natural inclination is to encourage reflection and to challenge defences. However, in a research conversation this may be neither appropriate nor possible, and certainly it would be unethical to invade the emotional space of the participant. I am treading a fine line, as my inner voice shows, but Gwyneth is herself a therapist and I wait, hoping she will reflexively explore what is happening now. When I ask, '*What's it like hearing it now?*' she is already aware of the strength of feeling and has voiced the wish to continue (*'It's interesting, I want to ...'*). My question feels crass because it is not the empathic reflection or silence that I might offer in a therapeutic context, but intended to re-position us as co-researchers engaged in reflexive thinking about the present experience. This leads to a RMM which feels more real because neither of us is defended now. We have negotiated the dilemma.

This whole KM demonstrates Gwyneth's defences operating to resist the threat of renewed distress as she revisits her story. The chronotope is complex, covering three time zones, and so it is as if the conversation does not arrive in the present until the

final reflective moment. In the first extract she seems unaware of her defensive strategy in providing a distraction from the video scene, and we go through a MNM in which we both resist disturbing feelings. Resistance generates resistance. In the second extract Gwyneth immediately interrupts the playback to point out her enacted defences and becomes so involved in re-enacting them that feelings are successfully kept at bay and reflection is for a time impossible. We then describe the process of the enacted defence together, completing each other's sentences (*'so you literally ... made myself ... built them up'*). This shared acknowledgement of the process has the effect of bringing us closer and Gwyneth's resistance to letting herself feel distress is lessened.

### **Resistance and defence as contributions to conversational processes**

It is clear from the KMs presented in this chapter that resistance and defence are building blocks of conversational processes. They are not necessarily barriers to communication and in fact can facilitate it if reflexively understood. Moments of meeting, as discussed in chapter 9, are the points within 'now moments' (Stern, 2004) when relational connection becomes apparent to both interlocutors, but they are often reached via MNMs arising from resistance and RMMs as resistance is resolved. Dialogical analysis allows this process to be seen.

BPCSG (2013) suggest that enactments such as defensive manoeuvres and disruptions in the therapeutic alliance are 'an emergent property of the dyad' (p.727) which may lead towards new implicit procedures or styles in relating to others. At the procedural level rather than that of cognitive insight, such enactments create an opportunity of finding new ways of being and doing things together. This occurs in KM19 where Gwyneth and I work through a defensive enactment, not by interpreting it but by gradually acknowledging its purpose, until a 'new relational organization' (BPCSG, 2013, p.727) is formed. We are then in a RMM and can move forward.

I suggest that the relational quality of conversations such as these is characterised by resistance, resolution and emergence. Research conversations, like therapeutic ones (or indeed any others), potentially include 'sloppiness' when 'a fittedness of joint directionality' is disrupted, resulting in 'an uncomfortable feeling that something isn't quite right' (BCPSG, 2013, p.729). BCPSG (2013) argue against the prevalent view of such enactments as dissociative phenomena understandable within their immediate context:

A more fully relational model of enactment, we believe, would view such occurrences as a function of the dyadic system that is in process of self-organizing at higher, more inclusive levels. To treat enactment as an emergent property of the dyad means not concentrating on the level of the individual components of a system (e.g., the analyst's or patient's dissociated self-state).

Rather, it means regarding enactment as a property of the entire system, without which there would be no emergent property. (BCPSG, 2013, p. 734)

From this perspective, enactments in research conversations emerge from the whole relational system of the dyad or group. The pre-existing relationships between the research participants and myself are part of this system, as are features of research interviews including dominant discourses which structure our beliefs about academic and professional values and norms. The emergence of resistance therefore can be understood as specific to our dyadic system at that point in its history and a necessary part of its complex intersubjective matrix.

### **Summary**

This chapter has illustrated the appearance of ambivalence, resistance and defence in research conversations and sought to understand them intersubjectively through dialogical analysis. I have made several claims, as follows:

1. Ambivalence, resistance and defence are different but overlapping phenomena.
2. They operate in research conversations as well as therapy and need to be respected and understood intersubjectively.
3. They should not be perceived negatively and can potentially create opportunities for new understandings in research as well as therapy.
4. IPR can help to resolve resistance through reflexivity.
5. Researcher resistance can be understood as part of the researcher's transference to the work (Romanyshyn, 2007). Rather than thinking of this merely as inconvenient bias, it can be elucidated through reflexivity and the autoethnographic exploration of the research process, which feeds back into interpreting findings.
6. As enactments, resistance and defences may contribute to the meaning of the conversation by expressing what cannot be verbalised. They are communicative.
7. Ambivalence, resistance and defence are sometimes apparent in metaphor and embodied communication.
8. They contribute to MNMs and can be understood reflexively and/or resolved, leading to RMMs.
9. Resistance may be a sign of the imminent emergence of new perspectives and new ways of relating. This is transformation in action.
10. Resistance is characteristic of negotiating and achieving a balance of power in the research relationship as elsewhere.



## 11. Metaphor and Symbol

The concepts of metaphor, image and symbol are closely allied yet distinct. Far from being merely a decorative or expressive form of language, metaphor has been shown to be a building block of thought (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and so is inherent in how we conceptualise experience and communicate ideas. Symbols, on the other hand, 'are opaque and often bring thinking to a standstill' (Stein, 2009, p.3) since they refer to archetypal potential which by its nature is unconscious. Jung (1960, para.148) states that a symbol is 'the best possible expression for a complex fact not yet clearly apprehended by consciousness', and believes that through active imagination and analysis symbolic expressions can in principle be made conscious and elucidated, though this may not exhaust their potential meanings. Stein (2009) follows Jung's (1967) distinction between directed and non-directed thinking, the former being word-based and culturally situated while the latter includes feeling, imagery, dreams, fantasy and mythology, all of which employ symbolic forms that appear not to be directly translatable into concepts or words. These seem to refer to intuited meanings and areas of potential human experience unconfined by particular historical or cultural locations. Symbols, therefore, on this Jungian view, point beyond conceptual thought while metaphor functions as a medium of thought and can in principle be understood cognitively:

The link between signifier and signified is totally opaque in the case of symbols; with metaphors, on the contrary, this link is evident even if often very complicated and at first glance puzzling (Stein, 2009, p.3).

Stein's language here paradoxically recalls Hoffman's (1991) description of the disorientation she experienced on emigrating to a very different cultural and linguistic environment:

But mostly, the problem is that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. "River" in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. "River" in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations for me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke. (Hoffman, 1991, p. 106)

For Hoffman, the Polish word carries layers of personal associations and feelings that enrich her concept of 'riverhood', giving it a resonance that seems to reach towards an archetypal 'essence of riverhood'. The Polish word is not just a semiotic signifier of a simple signified, as the English word is for her, but points to many experiences of rivers linked emotionally to a sense of belonging in her country. It has acquired symbolic meanings for Hoffman. She implies that the 'severed' signifier 'river' in English is

neither a symbol nor a metaphor for the experience of 'riverhood', but rather something like a symbolic equation (Segal, 1957). A concrete referent (river) is designated in the new language by a purely arbitrary sign that (at least at first) lacks experiential layers for a language learner stranded in a new cultural environment. While it is obvious that much vocabulary is arbitrary since it has no necessary relation to its referents, it is through living in a particular language and culture that words gain for us the resonances that enable them to mean more than signs pointing to abstract concepts. In this way they acquire richness and carry supplementary meanings over and above a dictionary definition. This is part of the power of metaphor, even when the words used metaphorically have syntactic functions rather than a specific object of reference (for example, UP and DOWN used as metaphors for mood (Lakoff & Johnson (1980); capitals are used throughout this chapter according to these authors' conventional notation for conceptual metaphors).

Psychoanalytic theory distinguishes symbolic thinking, characterised by a potential for flexibility and layers of meaning, from symbolic equation in which a concrete one-to-one relation between signifier and signified is established (Segal, 1957). For Hoffman (1991) for example, the English word 'river' cannot symbolise her experience of rivers, but only denote an abstract notion of a geographical feature. The word or signifier is merely a sign, which points to the particular object it represents, but is not linked to the full experiential 'signified' in the way that a word in her own language is. I argue here that metaphors and symbols both convey a depth of experiential meaning that is not present in symbolic equations, but that they are distinguishable, as Stein (2009) suggests above, by the relative clarity or opacity of the link to what they signify. However, what they signify is a matter for interpretation which is always both subjective and intersubjective. Interpretations are inevitably made at the 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 2004, p.390) between personal and intersubjective experience and what is thinkable in a particular culture and historical moment.

For Stein (2009, p.5), consciousness changes a symbol into a 'sign' which 'can be used then as a metaphor by consciousness if the [analytic] patient chooses to be poetic.' Clearly, Stein implies that metaphor is consciously employed and 'poetic' rather than conceptual, a point of view largely discredited by conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). He also uses 'sign' in a different way from the one I employ here. In spite of this, Stein's distinction between symbol and metaphor is helpful in emphasising what he refers to as 'a *symbolic process* that reveals an invisible and hard to discern but all-important and life-giving tendency in the psyche that is intent on creating *meaning* in the large spiritual sense of that word' (p. 9, italics in original). Drawing on a cognitive linguistic understanding of metaphor applied to narrative

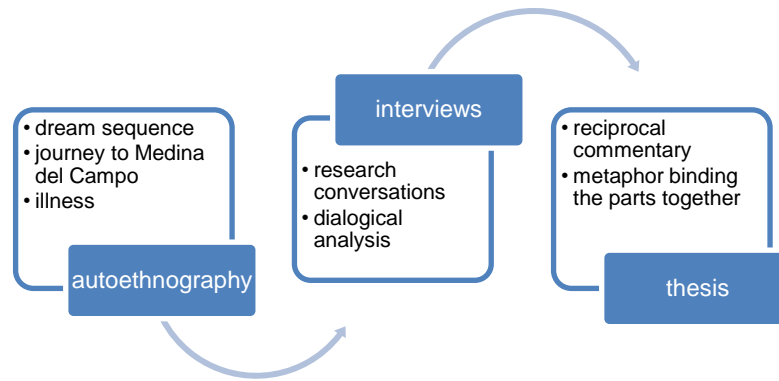
research (Catalano & Cresswell, 2013), I take a more complex view of metaphor than implied by Stein (2009) while following his Jungian perspective on the 'symbolic process' of emergent meaning. My argument is that metaphor enables and conveys our conceptual process while symbolic forms point to areas of potential experience which cannot be conceptualised yet and so cannot be said to have cognitive meaning until they are conceptualised. Nonetheless, the sense of something present yet currently beyond the reach of thought can be felt and intimated in symbolic forms. If meaning-making is one of the functions of thinking, metaphor can be understood as a means of thinking thoughts that are in process of emerging into the domain of consciousness. Of course metaphors may become well-worn through usage, and eventually cease to be recognised as metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) show. There is then a continuum from the unthought, felt or shadowy presence of potential meaning adumbrated by symbols which always point beyond themselves, through metaphorical categories of thought that enable us to think the new, to familiar usage that we normally no longer recognise as metaphor.

Images are the forms taken by both symbols and metaphors and may be visual, word-based or auditory as in the case of programmatic music. They form and express a link between signifier and signified. The signified may be symbolic, in which case the imagery is often strange as in dreams and some art works and poetry and not reducible to conceptual meanings. When conceptual thought is engaged, however, images can take on the character of metaphor and become engines of the thinking process.

I argue that metaphor, the use of one category of experience to represent another, is not restricted to language. For example, work in one area of experience such as conducting research can result in a product, in this case a thesis, which stands as a metaphor for the researcher's psycho-spiritual trajectory and current state of integration. Jung (1966) similarly believed that the project of alchemy was a metaphor for the psychological transformation sought by philosophers and scientists from ancient to early modern times. Alchemy ceased to have this metaphorical valence as modern science emerged and required new categories of thought which could no longer be sustained by the older categories of alchemy. The symbolic forms employed in alchemical writings and engravings, however, such as images of the sun and moon, the four elements, birds, beasts and plants, still have the potential to resonate with modern and postmodern minds because they do not represent anything that can be translated directly into a concept limited by its historical or cultural moment. In other words, they are not metaphors. In the context of alchemical texts, they function as pre-conceptual symbols. Jung (1966) calls these archetypal symbols precisely because they point to human potentialities rather than actualities. Archetypal symbols require

new metaphors in every age, and these may take the form of complex processes such as alchemical experiments and other kinds of research. This is because the process of bringing unconscious human potential into the actuality of experience that is available to conscious awareness requires a complex multi-faceted vehicle for thought. Thomas (2014), for example, describes how a conceptual metaphor RESEARCH IS ALCHEMY came into her awareness in visual form through active imagination. This metaphor creatively expanded her conscious awareness of different aspects of her research process. It enabled what could not be articulated previously to be thought and acted on. Similarly, I have known since very early in my research process that this work parallels my inner work of individuation. The conceptual metaphor in my case is RESEARCH IS INDIVIDUATION. The Jungian reference of the metaphor colours my interpretation of meanings emerging from the data and directly informs the model of transformation presented in chapter 8 and the title of the thesis.

The powerful dream sequence described in chapter 3 also functioned as a metaphor for the disturbing psychic process of beginning research, which like therapy 'mobilises the psyche' (Schaverien, 2005, p.127). The dream images in many cases offered visual metaphors for aspects of the research process and my personal experience, and they also brought into awareness symbolic forms that could not be easily elucidated and seemed to point to an archetypal domain. Thus aspects of doing research, such as opening to new ways of thinking and consequently experiencing disturbance, gained metaphorical currency for me as aspects of personal transformation, and the whole experiential process made me more aware of potentialities that I could not think in linear terms but only register through symbolic forms. Another conceptual metaphor, RESEARCH IS THERAPY, enabled me to understand the research process as offering a transformative facilitating environment (Winnicott, 1965). The conceptual metaphors RESEARCH IS INDIVIDUATION and RESEARCH IS THERAPY both entail dreaming as relevant to the research process. They also bind together the distinct parts of the research study, since the autoethnographic account of doing research informed how I did the interactive part of interviewing others. The diagram below attempts to illustrate these interwoven aspects:



**Figure 26: The research process**

### **Thesis as metaphor**

In this study, several metaphors relate to the transformational processes experienced by participants and myself. One, as indicated above, is the research process and its product, the thesis, which represent my trajectory towards individuation. As I began thinking about this chapter I realised that the structure of the thesis is also a metaphor for my attempts to integrate aspects of myself into a coherent whole. I noted in my journal:

The thesis mirrors me. At the moment what I've written about the interviews is quite intellectual and theoretical. The thesis is split between interviews and autoethnography, theory and spirit, left and right brain. It needs to be integrated, as do I. (Journal, 18.11.13)

I have been aware throughout of a split between the autoethnography and the interviews and of the recurrent question of how to integrate them. At times I thought of leaving out one or the other, but that always felt one-sided and not true to my aim. The personal experiences of dreams, a journey and illness which are described in the autoethnographic chapters always seemed to me to be linked to the research process and to comment on it ironically (Macaskie & Lees, 2011). Bringing both aspects of the thesis together mirrors my personal trajectory towards integration, and how well I succeed in writing a coherently structured account may depend on how far I can progress towards individuation. Turning to Jung for inspiration (as he – or the aspect of myself he represents – indicates in the dream described on p.202), I recognise that symbols offer the potential to transcend the opposition of polarities because they point beyond themselves to a state or experience that cannot yet be encapsulated in linear thought. Symbols and metaphors, as they appear in the research conversations and my reflections and writing, not only express some of the participants' experiences of

transformation, but potentially also constitute an active means of moving towards integration and transformation.

Reflexive research and psychotherapy have been described as metaphors for each other (Freshwater, 2008a). Doing research can be therapeutic and transformative, yet like therapy it can also reach a point of impasse where the researcher's resistance to the process may indicate the pressure of an emergent perspective. Disruption of settled ways of being and thinking precedes their transformation into new forms of illusion that in turn will be displaced at some future stage (Jacobs, 2000). I described this experience in my journal:

When the mirror cracks and illusion breaks up, is the distress I feel in the disillusion itself, or in the resistance before the moment of breaking? Or is that just a false opposition? They are different experiences: disillusion is sometimes desolate and lonely, sometimes clear and cold, sometimes exciting and refreshing; both loss and emergence. Resistance is stressful, full of tension, battling internally and feeling full of anxiety. In a way the disillusion is a relief from the tension of an untenable position. (Journal, 15.2.09)

I became aware of a similar impasse in psychotherapy when a visual image of a large stone or boulder blocking the path frequently occurred to me. It seemed to represent an obstacle and there was no help available to climb over it or find a way round it. It was interpreted by my psychotherapist as representing resistance, and also as something to stay with rather than look for ways of getting past it. Staying with the stone was difficult, heavy, dull, hard, just like the stone itself.

Edinger (1972), drawing on the writing of Elias Ashmole, editor of a 17<sup>th</sup> century anthology of alchemical texts, gives a complex description of the Philosopher's Stone as both the means of transformation and its goal. Ashmole (in Edinger 1972, p. 261) refers to the Stone as 'the Philosophers' Materia', suggesting that the *prima materia* or original chaos is present in transformed state in the Stone, which unites the four elements in a quintessence which transcends their separation. The Stone therefore represents the end of a process in which the originally undifferentiated material is first separated into its discrete elements and then unified into wholeness.

Alchemical writings suggest both a literal, concrete way of thinking and an awareness of the symbolic and spiritual nature of the transformation they sought. Ashmole writes of the Philosophers' Stone both as 'mineral' and as 'subtle', having at once the enduring hardness and resilience of stone, the power to bring about the *coniunctio* of opposites represented by *sol*, masculine and *luna*, feminine, and spiritual qualities which make it 'the food of angels' (Edinger, 1972, p. 263). The Stone's alchemical

function of turning base metals into gold thus seems itself to have been understood metaphorically as a quest for purification by the adept.

Goldmaking, we are told, was not the intent of the ancient philosophers. This statement corresponds to the widely-expressed idea in alchemical works that, "our gold is not the common gold" but is "philosophical gold". What is confusing is that after saying this the authors then proceed to talk about fires, flasks, and chemical procedures in the laboratory. The only explanation is that the alchemists themselves were confused. They were looking for a "philosophical" or spiritual content in a chemical procedure and this was doomed to failure. However, in their failure, the alchemists left us a rich heritage of symbolic material which describes the phenomenology of the individuation process. (Edinger 1972, p. 267)

My recurring stone image indicates a paradoxical desire to move forward and to stay with the known, which is the nature of resistance. It also suggests a similar confusion in me to that which Edinger (1972) ascribes to the alchemists. I felt at the time that my stuckness (like the hard mineral nature of stone) was real and enduring: there was no apparent way forward. However, this sense of being literally blocked from part of myself also made me aware of what was blocked off, the desired and needed transformation, and of my despair of realising it in the way I had chosen, psychotherapy. My stone, like the Philosophers' Stone, symbolised both process and goal because it challenged me to find a way forward and at the same time to stay present to whatever message it had to give. The message was perhaps that there were more ways forward than I thought, and if you stub your toe on a large stone you may break your toe. Instead, lateral thinking, creativity, dreaming, active imagination and reverie may cast light on the problem and transform it into a goldmine. In fact this is what happened: I needed to move on from therapy into research for the transformative process to become un-stuck, and yet without becoming stuck in therapy I would not have embarked on this particular research process. The stone was more than a metaphor for resistance, since it pointed symbolically towards a transformative process that at the time I could not conceptualise.

### **Participants' use of metaphor**

I now consider some of the ways in which the research participants use metaphor to enable and communicate complex thought. Kim, for example, uses metaphor as a habitual mode of communication and her awareness of symbolic forms contained in fairy tales and alchemy also makes her alert to areas of symbolic significance that are different from conceptual thought. My research conversations with Kim are full of metaphors and some of them, such as recurring watery images of rivers and canals, are discussed between us. Matthew also uses a key metaphor, the '*ambivalence seam*', in KM43 (p.79). My subsequent (mis)use of this and Kim's metaphor of a river are

discussed below (p.188). Some metaphors are not languaged, or are a means towards languaging. For example, art objects become metaphors for feelings in conversation with Maria (KMs 66 and 67, pp.157-159). For Natalia, the key metaphor of outside and inside runs through her stories and is also evident in the room where we sit and talk. Maria, Gwyneth, Louise and Kim all embody metaphorical meanings through movement and gesture. I will focus firstly on the use of metaphor as a consciously conceptual mode of communication, secondly on hijacked and negotiated metaphors as a communicative currency potentially available for reflexive awareness, and thirdly on the use of objects and places as metaphorical communication.

### **Metaphor as consciously conceptual mode of communication**

Some of the metaphors consciously used by participants to express their conceptions of transformation have a remarkable similarity. This implies that the conceptual metaphors in operation are readily available within our shared cultural context, and yet fresh enough to be striking and powerful. Images related to the concept of transformation as renewal are frequent, as Table 3 shows:

**Table 3: Conceptual metaphors and images of renewal**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Images</b>	<b>Conceptual metaphors</b>
		<b>TRANSFORMATION IS ...</b>
Kim	<i>River gaining oxygen</i>	REFRESHING / RENEWAL
	<i>Snake shedding its skin</i>	RENEWAL
	<i>Phoenix rising</i>	NEW LIFE / REBIRTH
	<i>Nataraja dancing to break open the earth</i>	OPENING / EMERGING
	<i>Seed gestating</i>	NEW LIFE / GROWTH
	<i>Smoke rising as a solid burns in an alchemical process</i>	CHANGE OF STATE / PURIFICATION
	<i>Rain renewing the earth</i>	REFRESHING / NEW LIFE
Louise	<i>Opening myself</i>	OPENING / LETTING IN
Christine	<i>Like a dye all the way through</i>	INDELIBLE / DEEP / WHOLE
Natalia	<i>Outside in the sunshine</i>	LIGHT
	<i>Outdoor people</i>	GOING OUT / ACTIVITY
	<i>Summer's day</i>	LIGHT / WARMTH



The implication of these conceptual metaphors is that transformation is a natural process and that for Kim at least it may involve something akin to loss or death before renewal can take place, as implied by the images of a snake, phoenix, seed and burning. For Louise and Natalia there is a sense of inside and outside, expressed in recurring metaphors suggesting that transformation is contingent on going out or letting something from outside come in. In the case of Natalia, the connection between this recurring metaphor and the sense of being free or trapped is discussed in more detail below (KM37, p.192). For Christine too, transformation seems to mean taking in and being wholly permeated by something new:

*If it comes from inside, then I've complete understanding of what I mean...It's a different kind of learning and it's kind of like a dye... it's bodily and it's everywhere.*

This kind of learning renews her capacity to believe in herself as a therapist and to work spontaneously and intuitively.

**Table 4: Conceptual metaphors and images of intersubjective relationship**

Participant	Images	Conceptual metaphors <b>TRANSFORMATION IS ...</b>
Kim	<i>Grail</i>  <i>Chalice</i>  <i>Counsellor and client each putting something in to cook</i>  <i>Third figure or presence</i>	GOAL OF QUEST / SACRED / COMMUNION CUP  COMMUNION CUP / SHARING  SHARING / WORKING TOGETHER / ALCHEMY  RELATIONSHIP
Matthew	<i>St Thérèse's Little Way</i>  <i>Prayer as silent land full of life</i>  <i>Prodigal son returning to the father</i>  <i>Mining engineer directing miners along the seam</i>	LOVE / SERVICE  RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD / LIFE-GIVING / INNER STILLNESS  HUMILITY / LOVING RELATIONSHIP / FORGIVENESS  WORKING TOGETHER / PARTNERSHIP
Louise	<i>Client getting inside</i>  <i>White emptiness and trust</i>	DEEP CONNECTION  BEING OPEN / RECEPTIVE
Gwyneth	<i>Containing vase</i>	SAFE RELATIONSHIP / CUP ( <i>cf grail</i> )
Maria	<i>Language and being able to communicate</i>	RELATIONSHIP / UNDERSTANDING

These metaphors imply that transformation is experienced relationally. For Matthew the relationship that transforms is fundamentally with God, which in turn transforms human relationships as in the Biblical parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15, 11-32) and the Little Way of St Thérèse of Lisieux, a life of service to others in small ways. Matthew also thinks of transformation made possible through the interaction of a mining engineer's insight and the miners' effort, a metaphor for the therapeutic relationship and also for the inner reflexive process of personal development. Maria's discussion of her relationship to the English language suggests this has become a metaphor representing the importance of finding a medium of communication, whether through language or art, to transform the horror of isolation into relationship. Both Louise and Gwyneth use metaphors that echo Kim's reference to a container not unlike the alchemists' crucible in which base elements are transformed. Kim identifies this with a chalice or cup for sharing and with the Grail, which perhaps also symbolises the desired goal of transformation that is not yet experienced and so is still unconceptualised.

Many of the participants' conceptual metaphors entail the transcendence of polarities or opposites, that I have argued in chapter 8 is a core element of transformation. The metaphors of relationship imply the joining of two to produce a third, the intersubjective connection, which transcends the separate original elements. Renewal, as implied by the metaphors above, also entails transcending polarities of life and death, open and closed, inside and outside, so that a new way of being can emerge.

**Table 5: Conceptual metaphors and images of the third**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Images</b>	<b>Conceptual metaphors</b> <b>TRANSFORMATION IS ...</b>
Kim	<i>Biblical reference – where two or three are gathered together, I will be there</i>	MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE / SPIRITUAL / BEYOND THE KNOWN
Maria	<i>embodied metaphor of triangle</i>	JOINING UP / THREE TOGETHER

Kim explicitly refers to the 'third':

*There is this one scene in the Bible where Jesus says when there are two of you, two or three of you are gathered in my name, I will be there. And I have very often experienced in counselling, you know, one to one, that there is something third happening. There's something third coming in... I very much trust that third thing, that something on the unconscious level which can also link to other people. I believe very much on a level where we are connected.*

The concept of the third recurs in psychoanalytic theories, first appearing in Freud's use of the Oedipal myth to formulate the notion that healthy development involves accepting the presence of a third person to break up the exclusive dyadic first relationship of (m)other and infant. The third person creates the possibility of seeing others in relationship and imagining one's own relationships through their eyes. Britton (1989) understands this as the basis of reflectiveness and argues that the therapeutic relationship can also include such triangularity when the therapist has the capacity to maintain a third position of reflexively noticing her or his own experience in relation to the client. This is the analytic third. Ogden's (1994) version of the analytic third is slightly different and refers to the intersubjective space constituted between the therapeutic couple, which is the area of overlapping and interrelating subjectivities. In this space something new can occur, which could not occur to either individual in isolation. The intersubjective is a creative space. Jung's (1960) notion of the third is a new dimension opened up by transcending the polarities of binary opposites, represented symbolically in threesomes of various kinds in myths, art and dreams. The third also appears in the Christian concept of the Trinity, and in Christ's promise to be present among groups of believers (*The Bible*, Matthew, 18:20), referred to by Kim. Interestingly, Kim makes clear that she is not using the image of a third with a specifically Christian meaning but understands it as a metaphor for a transcendent quality of the intersubjective relationship between therapist and client.

There appears therefore to be a conceptual metaphor INTEGRATION IS A TRIANGLE or TRANSFORMATION IS A TRIANGLE, which is readily available within psychotherapeutic theories. Another familiar example from the literature is Malan's (1995) notion of triangles of conflict and person used as an aid to psychodynamic interpretation, which help draw together past and current experience with the transference so that the therapist gains a new understanding of the client's experience and can offer a 'mutative interpretation' (Strachey, 1934). This conceptual metaphor also appears to be expressed in embodiment or enactment. Gibbs (2011, p.541) reviews evidence that 'similar patterns of conceptual metaphor are seen in the analysis of linguistic and non-linguistic domains, such that conceptual metaphors are not merely linguistic, but reflections of entrenched thought.' They appear to influence our use of gesture, for example, so that movement and gesture can be thought of as embodied metaphors. One example is the triangular gesture enacted by both Maria and me (KM69, p.131), expressing how she joins up the three elements of theory, art and language. This seems to correspond to the multiple uses of triangles and the third as conceptual metaphors in psychotherapy theories.

Cameron and Deignan (2006) postulate an emergentist framework for understanding metaphor in which metaphorical thinking and language are seen as dynamically linked activities constituted by dialogue that is always located within a socio-cultural context. Metaphor is thus established, modified, negotiated and conventionalised by interlocutors in shared cultural environments. The examples above suggest that the shared culture of therapy, with its accumulated theoretical traditions and its inherent preoccupation with change, development and integration, creates the context in which particular kinds of metaphors for transformational processes emerge. These make use of concepts theorised in the tradition such as the third, central notions in practice such as the therapeutic relationship, and images more generally available in the wider culture such as those suggesting renewal.

### **Hijacked and negotiated metaphors**

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that metaphor is a fundamental means of negotiating problems in understanding meanings:

Metaphorical imagination is a crucial skill in creating rapport and in communicating the nature of unshared experience. This skill consists, in large measure, of the ability to bend your world view and adjust the way you categorize experience. Problems of mutual understanding are not exotic; they arise in all extended conversations where understanding is important. (p. 231)

However, it is not always apparent to people in conversation that they have a problem in understanding because we easily assume that the other shares our beliefs and expectations. This can lead to the misinterpretation of metaphors. Metaphorical entailments may appear self-evident to a listener, yet not be the same as those assumed by the speaker. Ritchie (2004) notes that although entailments may be elaborated, the degree to which interlocutors do this is influenced by factors such as conversational purpose, relevance and common ground, which affect the salience of entailments. However, common ground may be assumed until metaphorical entailments that are highly salient to one of the conversational partners begin to appear problematic to the other. Although Ritchie's (2004) model takes account of socio-cultural factors, it does not explicitly consider the role in interpreting metaphor of dominant discourses in Foucault's (1981) sense of culturally normative constraints on thinking. These, as the examples below demonstrate, can influence the salience of culturally conventional metaphorical entailments and limit the listener's capacity to be alert to new entailments. The consequence is a potential failure in communication which, if not resolved, may allow meanings to be hijacked. The entailments of the hijacking metaphor include the forceful appropriation by one interlocutor of what had been the common ground, which ceases to be common unless renegotiated.

I suggest that the way heard metaphors resonate with our own experience may also lead to the hijacking of the other person's metaphor, and that this is noticeable in MNMs. The resolution of MNMs may depend on 'bending your world view' to 'categorize experience' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 231) differently through negotiating metaphors intersubjectively. Gibbs (2011) cites psycholinguistic evidence suggesting that conceptual metaphors influence the readiness with which people access verbal metaphors, in particular that texts containing verbal metaphors related to a single conceptual metaphor are more readily processed than texts where verbal metaphors relate to several conceptual metaphors. The conceptual metaphors more readily available to us as listeners (researchers, therapists) may therefore condition how far we are able to process discourse that is influenced by different, unexpected and therefore unshared conceptual metaphors or their entailments. Hearing what is said in terms of our own prevailing conceptual metaphors may lead not only to a failure in communication, but also to a failure to negotiate understanding and to misrepresentation of the other's meaning. Metaphorically, this amounts to hijacking. The following examples illustrate how I hijacked the metaphors of Matthew and Kim to fit my established world view and only discovered what I was doing through reflexively reviewing my writing.

I submitted an abstract for a conference paper (Macaskie, 2012) entitled 'Mining the seam, riding the white water'. The metaphors in this title convey my attitudes towards a reflexive position which as researcher I both ambivalently occupied and avoided. The first metaphor, 'mining the seam', is my version of another metaphor derived from a research conversation with Matthew (KM 43, p.79). He realises that ambivalence is a theme running through his work with clients, and that his sudden appreciation of its salience suggests its personal relevance and transformational potential for him:

*You know, it's a bit like various coal seams and there's the ambivalence seam (indicates horizontal seams with hand), but I'd like to follow it down and down and down (gestures downward slope), see how far this goes and where it goes.*

The second metaphor in my paper title, 'riding the white water', is my adaptation of a recurring image used by Kim (KM51, p.95):

*But this is the beauty of being a counsellor, with this constantly shifting, moving oneself, a constant river, flowing in a way ... Hopefully it's a river where there are stones and bends and roots and problems where you have to find your way around, and waterfalls... That's how a river gets all the oxygen back ... and it feels, a river when it goes around a stone, it's always there where there is this foam, these white things, and that's oxygen, it's renewed.*

*Rivers usually have space, when the water rose in spring time or whatever or the snow melted over the banks ... and this would fertilise it. Water needs a certain temperature. That's why rivers are very healthy when there are trees*

*overhanging, to provide a kind of shadow so the water can have a certain temperature*

My choice of title for the conference paper reflects an initial reading and response to Matthew's and Kim's metaphors, and demonstrates something of the dominant discourses operating in and on my thinking yet not fully in my awareness at the time of that first reading. 'Mining the seam' would take me deeper into the data and hopefully enable me to extract the coal – an image not of finding hidden treasure but of dirty, dangerous work to retrieve significant yet perhaps unglamorous material at the cost of great effort and some risk. This metaphor positions Matthew as a therapist-miner who is prepared to make the effort of reflection and perseverance both in self-understanding and in exploration with his clients, and in selecting the metaphor I also position myself as a researcher-miner who similarly makes great efforts to extract data. In both cases the metaphor implies something already in existence waiting to be found. In spite of my consciously intersubjective and postmodern understanding that the data of therapy and research are co-created through the participants' dialogue, the way I hijacked Matthew's metaphor of a 'seam' points to the dominant discourse of supposed objectivity which runs through positivist and post-positivist research paradigms and much of the humanistic and psychoanalytic therapy literature. In this discourse, Matthew and I are represented as heroic discoverers, just as Freud (1896) pictured the psychoanalyst as an archaeologist delving into the unconscious, or like the lone ethnographer of colonial anthropology (Rosaldo, 1993). The conceptual metaphor operating here is RESEARCH IS MINING and it entails an attitude of exploitation towards the data.

'Riding the white water', on the other hand, expresses my resistance to staying with the data. Kim's complex ecological metaphor captures the river's interaction with obstacles in its path ('stones, bends, roots and waterfalls') which leads to renewal, and the environmental features ('space, trees') which produce a healthy balanced temperature. I have changed this metaphor to one of skimming the surface, the excitement and thrill of white water canoeing, having the skill to resist and harness the power of the water – in fact my adapted metaphor reveals an epic genre (Sullivan, 2012) with myself, the researcher, once again as hero. This hero is an adventurer in a spectacular world who overcomes obstacles with skill and panache. My conceptual metaphor RESEARCH IS CANOEING entails a very different relationship to the watery environment from that implied by Kim. The river in her metaphor co-exists interdependently with obstacles and maintains its health in the process. If I ride the white water I will skim along the surface over the rocks and either capsize or manage to avoid the rocks and so miss learning what they have to give to the research process. From a discourse analysis

perspective (Foucault, 1981), I am encouraged to skim the surface by pervasive discourses which constrain and channel my thinking into culturally familiar forms. These include the idea of overcoming obstacles and meeting challenges to demonstrate strength and skill, but there is also another element which draws me into skimming the surface. This element is, I think, the mistaken assumption that I intuitively know what she means, and its presence is clear in the recorded conversations at moments when I am not really listening but apparently enchanted by my version of the river metaphor. It is precisely this assumption of knowing what is meant which Kim criticises in what she calls '*the counsellor mode*'. The effect of my failure to listen means that I miss the challenge to the conventional lyrical genre of picturesque rivers and waterfalls that Kim's ecological metaphor contains, resulting in extended moments of not-meeting.

The apparent tension between the two metaphors – to mine, to go down deep, or to ride the surface of the water – expresses my ambivalence about the discomfort of analysing constraining discourses and the resistance to engaging with messy data which I experience in consequence. These words 'ambivalence' and 'resistance' resonate in my mind with a traditional psychoanalytic perspective in which resistance expresses unconscious defence against insight and ambivalence is a condition of stuckness. In this reading resistance is a barrier to change and ambivalence is the attitude which avoids commitment and keeps us sitting on the fence. Yet my research participants are not saying that. Matthew identifies the '*ambivalence seam*' as '*rich with life*', which like the '*stones*' in Kim's river disturbs my assumptions. There are more creative ways of thinking about ambivalence and obstacles implicit in the research participants' metaphors than in my hijacked versions.

### **Use of objects as metaphor**

I suggested in chapter 9 that physical objects and ideas may become a shared interest focus (SIF) between conversational partners which can mediate a move into reflective meeting (RMM) and so facilitate the integration of thought and feeling. Here I explore the use of objects as metaphors that enable shared thinking and communication. One example is the use Matthew and I make of the computer screensaver (pp.89-90) as a metaphor for our intersubjective experience of reaching '*the edges of thought*'. Another is Maria's use of art to communicate in a metaphorical mode: the pictures and sculptures represent aspects of herself and her experience. Maria's art serves various dialogical purposes in our conversation as discussed in chapter 9, and here I focus on her use of a box of buttons as a further example of the metaphorical use of objects. Interestingly, I did not flag this as a KM for dialogical analysis. Nonetheless, focusing

here on the use of objects as metaphor reminded me of this episode at the beginning of our first research conversation.

**Maria: the box of buttons**

Maria tells me about her certificate in counselling course:

*We often had these mornings where you brought something and that kind of showed you what you were like, you could tell a little bit about yourself with an object, so brought a big box of buttons... I've always had, it's fairly big, my grandma she always had these buttons and I had a great fascination with all the different types, and I think it's like human beings as well, I kind of played little games with it as a little girl. And ... I brought this object, and it was just a bigger box, and the box has got bigger, I was going to bring it but it's got really big, and what I've done for the very first time in my life, because it became – I couldn't oversee it any more – put all the buttons in little bags, sort of the colour, and I feel that's what's happening to me right now in my counselling career as well. I do a lot of reading, I know a lot of little bits and bats, and as a new, quite new counsellor, not new any more, dipping into different theories and it feels like I'm bagging them all up and closing them.*

Maria did not bring the box with her because *'it's got really big'* so it is a metaphorical object in the room. She thinks that the box represents herself (*'kind of showed what you were like'*), all the different types of buttons are *'like human beings as well'*, and her need to get control of them by bagging them up is like her need to integrate different counselling theories in her mind. So for Maria, the way she uses the box and its contents is a ready metaphor for putting things in order and integrating them. This leads me to wonder how she is using the (absent) box in our conversation. It is almost tantalising to be told about an object of significance and not be shown it. This is the prelude to showing me actual objects – the art journal and sculptures – but at this early stage she just tells me about her box. I have to imagine it. It is as if the stages by which she gradually brings herself into our conversational space (first the absent box, then the actual art objects and finally the emotionally-charged topic of language) metaphorically mark the degree of safety, commitment or ease which she feels. The mode of communication expressed through the use of present and absent objects acts as a metaphor for an intersubjective dynamic that is not made conscious at the time. However, in the IPR session the significance of this enacted metaphor becomes clear:

*J: I found that really interesting because you started there saying how you took the box to the certificate course, you took things to show what you were like, and of course that's what you did, you brought your journal and sculptures, you brought things to show me what you were like.*

*M: Yeah (laughter). That's interesting because I feel that people probably can't see what's going on underneath it, and I think I wasn't recognised ... it's a big thing in my life isn't it, I wasn't recognised. And I think I've often experienced through my whole life that people just see the outside of me and they kind of*



*make a judgment about me straight away which I haven't liked, I want people to see what's inside me, so (pause)*

*J: So you show it*

Maria's use of objects to show herself is an invitation to understand her better and also a protective move to guard against being unrecognised and judged. But the *absent* object perhaps has another function, to prepare us both for the self-revelation embodied in the actual art works. Showing herself carries some risks, and the difficulty I felt in responding to the pictures and sculptures (KMs 66 and 67, pp.157-159) shows that it was risky for me too to find a way through this complex interaction. By metaphorically bringing an absent object first, Maria seems to represent herself as both partly absent and wanting to be present if I am able to recognise her as she hopes. This intersubjective negotiation is actively conducted in the way we use objects, so that the process of using them takes on metaphorical meanings.

### **KM37 Natalia: the picture in the room**

The IPR session with Natalia took place at the counselling agency where she works, but in a different room from the one used for our first conversation. She began by saying she had previously worked with a '*difficult*' client in that room, and although it now felt '*different*' to be in the room again it was also '*weird*'. This dialogue then occurred:

*J: I'm just wondering if he's still here in some way.*

*N: I do feel it yeah, I do feel it, there seems to be a presence.*

*J: What can we do to put him outside?*

*N: Perhaps not talk about him (laughs). Yeah, it's the first time I've come back into this room, that's why, since.*

*J: Is there anything you need to do to make the room better for you?*

*N: (looks around) And I've never noticed that picture before. Because I used to focus over here, and I just looked at that picture and thought what a lovely building.*

*J: It is, isn't it?*

*N: It is.*

*J: I don't know where it is.*

*N: You could be sat out there in the grounds, it's lovely, just the architecture of the building is lovely. Never noticed it before. (Looks around the room as if seeing it for the first time and smiles)*

*J: Okay?*

*N: Mm. (Nods and smiles)*

The direction of Natalia's gaze across the room towards the picture and chairs seems important, as if they are also participants in discourse. I am sitting in her client's chair while she is in the same chair as when working with him. Feelings between us in the room are not named directly but implied in her description of the client and his look. He had '*piercing eyes*' that were '*intimidating*' and it was '*challenging*' although she '*wanted to work with him*'. Something seems to be unspoken in relation to my sitting in his chair, as if I am simultaneously different from him but perhaps also presenting a challenge that Natalia wants to meet and finds difficult. Rapport increases when I wonder '*if he's still here*' and this releases us from his presence, so that she can focus on something new, the picture, which she has never noticed before. The picture shows a beautiful building set in landscaped gardens, and seems to open a window onto the outside of our room so that she can imagine sitting outside in the grounds. Images of the outside recur in the conversations with Natalia, for example in this extract where she describes going to a poor area of Leeds:

*I saw a really mature old lady in a white salwaar kameez and she was hobbling down and she put the rubbish out, and I parked up and there was glass everywhere so I thought, okay I can't park my car here because it might be smashed up by the time I come back, I'll go park it round the front, and then I was watching the lady and she put the rubbish and she hobbled back, it was a lovely day and she closed the door and went inside, and I just wondered, trying to wonder what sort of experience it was for her living in that area.*

In contrast to Natalia's awareness of the dilapidated environment in which her car is at risk, the reference to the '*lovely day*' is striking. The old lady seems oblivious of the nice day and only ventures out to get rid of the rubbish. She seems locked into the little world of her house, unable or unwilling to go out into her deprived neighbourhood, and therefore missing the nice day outside which Natalia sees in spite of the otherwise gloomy surroundings. In context, the old lady stands as a metaphor for being trapped in a small world because of cultural differences, fear of others who are different and perhaps also of compromising one's own cultural values. There are echoes of this scene later in the IPR session when Natalia talks of a client who felt suicidal, reminding her of her own experience early in her marriage:

*I thought about it, I did once, I thought about it and it was a lovely summer's day, in this huge kitchen of just windows and I just thought, it's a lovely home, it's clean and that's all I ever seem to do cook, clean and be a housewife, but it's so boring and monotonous; what is the point?*

Again, the '*lovely day*' outside seems a wistful reminder of what she does not have. Her own family of origin were '*outside people*', but her husband's family home was in another town and she had nowhere outside to go.

Natalia focuses on lovely weather inviting her to go outside, out of the narrow confines of the house. This is not a conscious use of metaphor, but it is a recurring theme of contrasting images that captures the transformational shift in worldview that she experienced through counselling training. She represents this as moving out, opening up, and no longer being trapped by cultural norms. Given this background thematic imagery, the picture in the room where we talk takes on deeper significance. It is as if the client's shadowy presence in the room disturbs Natalia with a resonance of subtle threat, reminding her of experiences of witnessing a restricted life and feeling trapped. Then the presence is dispelled and she identifies with the invitation of the picture where *'you could be sat out there in the grounds'*. The physical objects of room, chairs and picture have a metaphorical significance in our conversation that depends on Natalia's conceptual metaphors, which perhaps include FREEDOM IS OUTSIDE and TRANSFORMATION IS GOING OUT.

### **Summary**

This chapter has explored the difference between symbol and metaphor, and suggested that metaphor is an intersubjective communicative medium that is constituted in cultural and dialogical contexts. Metaphorical entailments are subject to negotiation and reflexive revision so that misinterpretations and hijacking can be noticed and repaired. This conversational process contributes to the resolution of MNMs, and even when revision takes place much later, as in the case of IPR or data analysis, it is possible to recognise and repair a miscommunication in a research conversation. Metaphor is sometimes embodied in gesture and brought into the conversational arena through found objects in the environment. I have argued that these uses of metaphor are also relevant to communication and need to be explored for a deeper understanding of research conversations.

Symbolic forms, as distinct from metaphor, have also been briefly discussed in this chapter and are also explored in relation to dreams in chapters 3, 7 and 12. Here, however, I have suggested that the as yet unthought enters into awareness through symbolic forms and may cast light (or shadow) onto the thought processes embedded in conceptual metaphor.

## 12. Autoethnography (3): Disjuncture and transition

This chapter focuses on the impact of illness and recovery and attempts to relate these experiences to the individuation and research processes. In February 2013 I was told I had endometrial cancer, and then became completely incapable of thinking about my research project. For several months I thought I would not return to it. It no longer mattered, and what did matter was sharply in focus: living, being with people I love, seeing spring emerge from the long winter. Then in May, after discovering the surgery had been successful and I did not need further treatment, I felt that the disjuncture of being ill required me to make a life decision of some kind, abandon the research, give up my job and find a new direction in an effort to focus all my energy on getting a balance into my life. It was not until two months after the surgery that I realised what mattered was not to stop doing these things and find something new, but to do what was to hand in a better way. This meant listening better, to my body and my spirit and the voice of the 'other' which makes itself heard through other people, through dreams and sudden or gradual awareness of a shift in perspective. Listening better is the best way to make sure I don't get out of balance again.

I could not reflect actively on what I was experiencing during the weeks between the diagnosis and the surgery, or afterwards as I recovered, got ill again with an unrelated problem, and slowly began to feel normal once again. But I did dream, as if the unconscious was making up for the absence of reflection and leaving me symbolic markers of what I felt and the sense I was somehow making of it. Jung (1960) found that engaging in active imagination tended to lessen the occurrence of dreams, as if the psyche was finding new channels for unconscious material. It is likely that the opposite is also true, that more dreams occur when other avenues are closed to the psyche. The dreams were powerful enough to reassure me that at a deep level I was still listening to an inner voice that I could trust to make meaning. I had several dreams before and after going into hospital which seemed to carry a quiet hope. In what follows, exploring some of the dreams leads me to distinguish between the concept of disjuncture, which becoming ill undoubtedly was, and disruption, which does not fit my experience. Instead, this has been a time of personal transition leading to a renewed research focus.

### **Dream 12: The watershed restaurant and the sisters of mercy, 2.3.13**

The dream was in two parts, clearly separated by dreaming that I was waking up.

*I was wandering through city streets, trying to find my way. I was with some other research students but felt cross and decided not to stay with them. I went to buy a sandwich but couldn't read the menu and the girl behind the counter got cross with me.*

*Then I saw a sign to the Watershed Restaurant. A white cat was improbably sliding along a white surface and I tried to do the same.*

*Still asleep, I dreamed I woke up in a darkened room with a broken fan heater and a dead match on the floor. I went out and found a group of women sitting in the next room. They said, 'Welcome'. I replied, 'How did I get here? I was lost in my own city'. I realised we were in Ireland but had no idea how I'd got there. The women gave me a wad of new notes in Irish currency, not Euros but Irish punts. I wanted to pay for the punts and offered them pounds sterling in exchange. Most of the women said no, but one woman who seemed like a former student of mine said, 'I'll have pounds'. I was slightly amused by her solid, down-to-earth manner and thought, 'Well, one of them is practical then'. The women talked to each other in a strange high tone like birdsong or the distant sound of something playing through headphones when you aren't wearing them. I said, 'I can't hear what you are saying' and they just smiled, but spoke aloud to me in English.*

The dream announces a watershed in my life and a transition to a new place with different currency and a different language. In the first part of this dream I am lost in my home city, no longer want to associate with other researchers, and cannot read the menu, as if all the familiar ways have lost their meaning. My crossness expresses my discomfort and irritation as I find that what I thought I knew has become unfamiliar, and I feel my lack of skill to manage in this newly unfamiliar place is irritating to others, like the cross girl in the sandwich shop. When I see the signpost to the watershed I sense the possibility of a transition to a new way of doing things. The cat, like cats in many of my dreams, I take to represent my liveliness, physicality, capacity for fun and vulnerability. This cat is doing something uncharacteristic, so it is adapting to new circumstances and I identify with it by trying to do the same. But it is not easy to keep my footing on the white slippery surface. Up to this point, the dream seems to present an image of the emotional limbo that the diagnosis left me in, knowing that I had reached a crisis and struggling to cope with it. But knowing it is a crisis, seeing the signpost to the watershed, is not enough. I have to go there.

The second part of the dream seems to take me there. The disjuncture is signalled by the impression of waking up in a dark room, not knowing how I got there. The means of heating and lighting are broken, so I cannot stay in this dark place. I wondered at the time if this was a death dream, though later it seemed to capture the strange sense of waking up from the anaesthetic knowing that something huge had happened to me outside my conscious awareness. As I go out of the room and meet the kindly women I have no awareness of how I reached this unknown place, but I do not feel any fear. It is new and strange, but not totally foreign. After all, Ireland is not very far away, and the name of its old currency was not dissimilar to the pound. The language of the women is out of my range of hearing, but their smiling acknowledgement seems to say that I will tune into it in time, and meanwhile they will speak English for me. I associated them with the Sisters of Mercy in Leonard Cohen's song:

*Oh the sisters of mercy, they are not departed or gone.  
They were waiting for me when I thought that I just can't go on.  
And they brought me their comfort and later they brought me their song.  
Oh I hope you run into them, you who've been travelling so long.*

*Yes, you who must leave everything that you cannot control.  
It begins with your family, but soon it comes around to your soul.  
Well I've been where you're hanging, I think I can see how you're pinned:  
When you're not feeling holy, your loneliness says that you've sinned.*

*Leonard Cohen, Sisters of Mercy (Cohen, 1967)*

These lyrics remind me of the numb feeling of being lost and no longer in control when illness threatened to disrupt the course of my life. I also recognise that at various times I have in a sense left my soul, abandoned the deep spiritual attunement that I know is both what I most want but also do not want, because it demands a total commitment. The dream shows me the confusion and lostness that come from not listening to the voice of the soul, and the opportunity that the disjuncture of illness offers. It takes me through the darkness to where the sisters of mercy give me the resources to go on. Although from a psychological perspective these dream figures evidently represent a resourceful and hopeful aspect of myself, in a more relational and spiritual sense I understand them to embody the wisdom and love that I feel sustains me and reaches me in mysterious ways through other people and through faith in the source of life.

Jung (1966) notes that in picture 6 of the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, 'after the *coniunctio oppositorum*, deathlike stillness reigns ... all energy ceases: there is no more flow' (para 467). The conjunction of the psychological opposite principles of consciousness and unconsciousness apparently exhausts the resilience of the psyche, and so the alchemical inscription of the picture refers to the departure of the soul in pain (*Die sele scheydt sich mit grosser*



Figure 27 Death (RP6)

*not*) and to *putrefactione*, the corruption of the body after death. The integration of what has been projected as *animus* or *anima* involves ‘a serious lesion of the ego’ which is often expressed in alchemy ‘through the symbols of death, mutilation, or poisoning’ (Jung, 1966, para 472). I was really ill; nonetheless, the prevalence of the symbolism of death and decay as part of the process of transformation, not only in the *Rosarium* but, as Jung (1966) points out, in other ancient texts and in the Christian practices of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, contributes to understanding my illness dreams as commentaries on the wider process of individuation. Dream 12 seems to depict a conflicted and untenable state followed by sleep or death which becomes a transition into a new state, where I am no longer the same ego-me as before. According to Jung (1966, para 474) a ‘new personality’ is born from the conjunction and death of the opposing aspects of consciousness and unconsciousness, and ‘since it transcends consciousness it can no longer be called “ego” but must be given the name of “self”’. He goes on to say that ‘the integration of the self is a fundamental problem that occurs in the second half of life’ and that representations in dream symbols such as mandalas ‘occur whenever the individuation process becomes the object of conscious scrutiny’. As I was immersed in scrutiny of this process well before becoming ill, it seems consistent to interpret the psychological valence of the illness as another aspect of this ongoing process.

### **Dream 13: The squirrel, 2.3.13**

*I was driving along a road and saw a squirrel whose tail was on fire. I thought we must stop and help it, but then its tail dropped off and it ran free.*

Like the first dream, which occurred earlier the same morning, this seemed to refer to my illness, and again I awoke feeling hopeful. I immediately associated the squirrel’s burning tail with the cancer, and thought I too would walk free – I would have the surgery, the cancer would be removed and I would be well again. Here another animal symbolises my physical being and vulnerability. The squirrel without its tail may be weakened or incapacitated, but by ridding itself of the damaged and dangerous burning tail, it cuts its losses and survives. I felt confident on good days that I would too.

Before the cancer I had never had a serious physical illness. In the last few years I began to feel that I would inevitably become ill some day and perhaps I almost needed to be ill to learn something significant. I needed to constellate the wounded healer archetype in myself. I have written elsewhere (Macaskie et al, 2013) of the significance of the wounded healer for my colleagues and me as teachers and writers, and here I would add for me as researcher. Romanyshyn (2007) refers to the researcher not as author but agent in the service of whatever it is in the soul of the work that seeks to be made known. The woundedness of ‘the researcher who has been dismembered by the

work' (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 76) represents a hope that the work will not just be in the service of the researcher's ego, or of the social and academic group ego that is reinforced by the myth of objectivity in research. The wounded researcher cannot stand apart from the topic, and reflecting on her or his own wounds becomes an integral part of the work. The tailless squirrel seems to represent being wounded and incorporating this state into the ongoing work. Becoming physically ill meant accepting my vulnerability and need for others, and seemed to correlate with the psychological and spiritual need to integrate these aspects of the Shadow.

### **Dream 14: Cancerous trains, 21.3.13**

*Trains were running around and I was standing watching them from above, as if it was a model railway layout. The trains exploded in a nasty black sticky mess, splat. But then a little train ran out very fast and set out round the side of a hill, like a rescue train escaping from the mess.*

I had this dream the night before a consultation with the surgeon. The damage portrayed by the squirrel's burning tail and the exploding trains is associated with fire. I have 'got burned' by my illness. Edinger (1985) describes the relevance of fire symbolism to the *calcinatio* stage of alchemy which drives off moisture from chemical substances and is thus psychologically associated with 'the drying out of waterlogged unconscious complexes' and 'the necessary frustration of desirousness' (p.42). This is purifying:

... the energies of the archetypal psyche first appear in identification with the ego and express themselves as desires for ego-pleasure and ego-power. The fire of *calcinatio* purges these identifications (Edinger, 1985, p.44)

This symbolic understanding fits my need to integrate the lostness and vulnerability I experienced through illness. I could no longer follow the ego-driven trajectory of conscious choice, and had to learn to accept my weakness. The trains recall dream 11 (Medina del Campo) and a subsequent image in mandala 3 arising from active imagination (p.120), where the railway seemed to signify a journey into the Shadow side of myself. Yet there is hope and faith in an escape route from the destruction and mess of cancer. This dream seems to express the hope that although the journey involves darkness and mess, this is not the end. The rescue train emerges rapidly with a sense of purpose and direction, as if it is on an important mission.





Figure 28 The Ascent of the Soul (RP7)

In picture 7 of the *Rosarium* sequence, the ascent of the soul ‘carries the *putrefactio* a stage further’ (Jung, 1966, para 475). The departure of the soul from the dead figure of the united king and queen leaves a corpse which ‘is the residue of the past and represents the man who is no more, who is destined to decay’ (Jung, 1966, para 478). The psychological state symbolised is one of confusion, ‘being driven along willy-nilly without any sense of direction ... in an utterly *soulless* condition ... of deadly darkness’ (Jung, 1966, para 476, italics in original). This state is sometimes referred to in alchemy as the *nigredo*, blackness, the result of dissolution, burning and death. Jung quotes the *Rosarium* text which

alludes to the transformation reached via this darkness, and comments:

But the fact that mediaeval alchemy had connections with the mysticism of the age, or rather was itself a form of mysticism, allows us to adduce as a parallel to the *nigredo* the writings of St John of the Cross concerning the “dark night”. This author conceives of the “spiritual night” of the soul as a supremely positive state, in which the invisible – and therefore dark – radiance of God comes to pierce and purify the soul. (Jung, 1966, para 479)

The darkness that appears in dreams 12, 13 and 14 is associated not only with illness and possible death, but also with a hope of transformation. St John of the Cross (2003) states that the loss of desire, pleasure and the capacity to meditate experienced in the first dark night, that of the senses, may be caused by illness rather than spiritual progress. I think this was the case for me. However, the effect of the experience was that I let go, accepted my incapacity to think and direct my life, and in doing that I began to integrate neglected spiritual resources. Wynn (2012) suggests that the spiritual transformation described by St John of the Cross is not necessarily limited to his historical context or to those who share his theological beliefs, but has wider significance as an exploration of the confusion and loss frequently experienced in the course of spiritual transformation. John describes the state of mind-soul experienced by someone ‘in the middle ground of this transformation, when the familiar patterns of desire and activity that sustained the old sense of self are being eroded, or have been kicked away, and have yet to be replaced by a new centre of thought and action’ (Wynn, 2012, p. 108). This state can be understood as spiritual or psychological, and

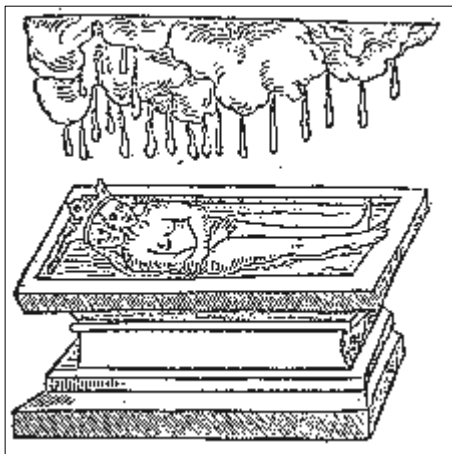
from a holistic point of view as both. This is a binary pair that can be transcended by thinking of the psyche as Jung does as more than cognition, consciousness and personal unconsciousness, and inclusive of transpersonal elements conceptualised variously as archetypes, God and spirit.

### **Dream 15: Spirit guide cat, 22.3.13**

*A young tabby cat I didn't know sat up and looked around, eyes wide and alert, on guard. She seemed to grow calmer (and perhaps a little older?) and sat facing me. I felt she was my spirit guide.*

This dream occurred after seeing the surgeon and learning I had a second cancer in one ovary. I had moments of sheer terror and then felt very tired and drifted into sleep. I was much more frightened at this point, though the surgeon was very positive about the prognosis. This felt like a moment of truth, when I was too tired to carry on with frantic displacement activities and could only be in the moment. The cat is one I didn't recognise, and the feeling in the dream that she was my spirit guide suggests that although I do not consciously know the deepest parts of myself, they can provide me with guidance and calmness in the face of fear. Interestingly, the cat appears to be a spiritual presence, though still associated with my physical state. As I thought about my condition I became more consciously aware of my body, a step towards a more holistic way of being and perhaps learning to listen more to body and spirit or soul.

It was now a month since the first diagnosis and I had not been able to write anything during that time. However, these two dreams before and after the consultation prompted me to write them down and reflect a little, and I realised that times of fear alternated with times of feeling held and supported by the love and prayers of many people. I felt hopeful and believed I would get through the illness. I now wanted to tell people what the diagnosis was, having protected myself up to then by not saying it. Now I felt I could be honest because I could begin to face it more calmly. The tabby cat sat looking at me in the dream, so I could learn to sit and look directly at myself.



**Figure 29 The Falling Dew (RP8)**

Jung's (1966) discussion of picture 8 of the *Rosarium*, representing purification through the falling dew, points to the need for more than merely intellectual understanding of the *coniunctio* of conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche. It is necessary to balance knowledge based on thinking with the feeling function and its attribution of values, and the aesthetic awareness of symbolism with the

imaginative and creative possibilities of intuition. Jung proposes that this 'enantiodromia' or balancing leads from *nigredo* to *albedo*:

The black or unconscious state that resulted from the union of opposites reaches the nadir and a change sets in. The falling dew signals resuscitation and a new light: the ever deeper descent into the unconscious suddenly becomes illumination from above.... The preceding union of opposites has brought light, as always, out of the darkness of night, and by this light it will be possible to see what the real meaning of that union was. (Jung, 1966, para 493)

While I hesitate to apply these insights too precisely to my own experience, I think they do indicate a shift similar to that which I felt in the cat dream. A change set in, marked by my ability to write a little and acknowledge to others that I had cancer. But it was more than this; the cat seemed to bring me to a more integrated awareness of mind-body-soul as one, so that I could begin to find my inner strength again.

### **Dream 16: Meeting Dr Jung, 5.5.13**

*I was making a vegetable stock and set the liquid aside for soup but kept the vegetables and residue in a dish to analyse. I put the dish in the hymn-book cupboard at the back of the church I went to when growing up. Just then, C.G. Jung appeared. I recognised him at once and said, 'Dr Jung!' He clicked his heels and bowed slightly, saying 'Dr Jung.' He looked at the dish and said, 'Well, what have I done? I have inspired you.' Then he turned to go, but turned back again to point at the dish and said, 'There are anti-fatty acids in there.' I felt he already knew what the analysis would show.*

This dream delighted and intrigued me. I had scarcely written my journal since the previous dreams and had lived very much in the experience of the present moment without reflecting on it. I had had the surgery and now, with the news that no more treatment was necessary and that wonderfully, I was cured of two synchronous primary cancers, I could begin to reflect a little. This dream came just after hearing that news.

Certainly Jung has inspired me throughout this study. His writings have provided a source of illumination in thinking about the phenomena of unconscious life, especially dreams, and in integrating psychological and spiritual insights arising from them. It is as if in this dream Jung is reminding me of my research and the excitement it aroused in me before I became ill. The dish of things to be analysed suggests the histological analysis done on the bits removed during my operation, which showed that neither of the cancers had spread. In the dream, Dr Jung bore a slight resemblance to my surgeon, whose successful treatment definitely inspired me to carry on living. I felt that Jung was a scientist who would make a careful analysis, yet he already had an insight into what I would find and was giving me an advance indication. It is characteristic of the dual research and personal trajectories that dreams have addressed throughout this study that what Jung tells me here may be understood in both domains. The dish I have cooked (implicitly an alchemical process) represents the current state of both

individuation and research processes. Personally, there seems to be a reference to the analysis of physiological or biochemical elements which had just taken place after the surgery, and curiously this also anticipates the liver dysfunction I experienced a few weeks later which included intolerance of dietary fats. Perhaps unconsciously I already knew that I needed to avoid fats in my diet! Of course, at the level of symmetrical logic (Matte Blanco, 1998), opposites are conflated, and so fatty acids and anti-fatty acids stand for each other to the dreaming ego. As I had no conscious knowledge about anti-fatty acids, the unconscious scientist in me seems to be reminding me that when I resume work on my research I will need to pay attention to unconscious processes and to analyse what I have just ‘cooked’ during this period of illness.

Picture 9 of the *Rosarium Philosophorum* shows the return of the soul to the corpse. Jung (1966) states that to the mainly male alchemists the soul represented the *anima* or unconscious relational qualities designated as feminine, while for a woman it would indicate a need to integrate the *animus* or ‘masculine’ capacity to ‘discern and discriminate’ (para 522). This description implies a concrete view of gender which I do not share, but I do not dispute the need to achieve a balance between synthesis and analysis, uniting and differentiating, in how we think and live. Dream 16 seems to present the possibility of integrating my analytic capacity more fully in my research. After writing about this dream, I finally began to write up the analysis in the thematic chapters 8-11.

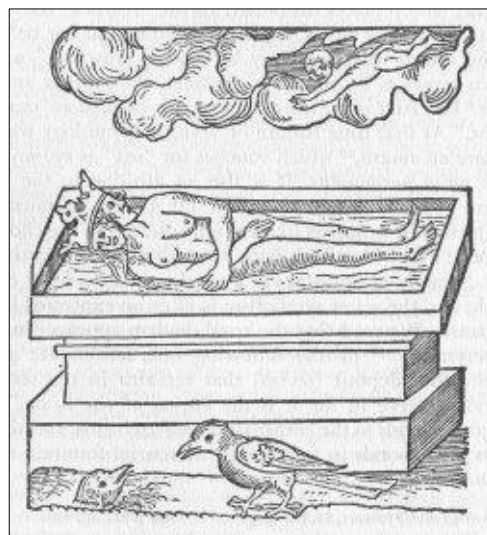


Figure 30 The Return of the Soul (RP9)

Jung’s use of alchemy as a metaphor for the psychotherapeutic process relies on his realisation that it always was a metaphorical endeavour for many of the alchemists themselves (Jung, 1966). The goal of finding the philosopher’s stone implied a psycho-spiritual transformation, not merely the ability to make gold. Thomas (2014) suggests that thinking of research as alchemy is a conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) (see chapter 11), and can lead to a creative understanding of the researcher’s personal involvement with blocks and disruptions in the research process. Her work describes a visualisation in which a samurai figure struggles to set up alchemical apparatus, and by understanding this as a metaphor for her own struggle with her research project, she learns to listen to the inner difficulty and so frees herself from it. In dream 16, Dr Jung seems to be directing me towards several things: the cooked vegetables in the dish, which perhaps represent unconscious material generated by my

illness, the storage cupboard with its associations to childhood and spirituality, and a rigorous analytic process in which he acts as an inspirational guide. But the findings may be something I currently know nothing about (anti-fatty acids) and as in alchemy may include a reconciliation or *coniunctio oppositorum* with what appear to be the polar opposite (fatty acids).

The choice of the church hymn-book cupboard as a storage place for the dish also suggests the need to listen to the unconscious. It represents the spirituality of childhood and growing up in a family which revolved around church life, and reminds me that although the disjuncture of losing faith cut me off from engagement with my spirituality for many years, now it is possible to draw differently on inner spiritual resources without the ritual and institutional background of the church.

In this dream, the unconscious is linking my recovery, my spiritual roots, the inner journey I have made and the next stage of that journey. Jung, representing an aspect of my own inner wisdom with the skills of healer and scientist, is telling me to get on with the combined alchemical processes of completing the analysis of my research data and psycho-spiritual development. After this dream I thought for the first time since the diagnosis that I would finish the research study, and that the work still to do included going back to spiritual sources, exploring what being ill and recovering meant to me, and listening to myself (and to Jung). I was beginning to recognise that this experience of apparent disruption had the potential to lead towards the next stage in the transformation I was looking for.

### **Disruption or transition**

The dreams described in this chapter include two kinds of imagery. The first, notable in dreams 12 and 16, uses the experience of illness as the occasion and ground of symbolic scenarios whose strangeness suggests archetypal significance. The second type of imagery, appearing in dreams 13, 14 and 15, is more obviously linked to my conscious fear of cancer and underlying hope and faith that I would recover. I now consider the implications of these dreams in relation to the concept of biographical disruption as a consequence of illness, first proposed by Bury (1982).

Bury (1982) suggests three ways in which illness, particularly chronic illness, disrupts the individual's everyday life by bringing into focus the reality of suffering and possibility of death, changing the nature of relationships through the individual's need for support, and requiring a reassessment of future plans. All of these initially applied to me. However, several studies question the assumption of biographical disruption as an inevitable consequence of illness. Faircloth et al (2004), for example, note that for some people, sudden onset illness such as stroke may not feel disruptive but is

incorporated into an ongoing biographical narrative of chronic illness. Harris (2009) also reports that the meanings attributed to a diagnosis of hepatitis C vary according to the context of the individual. Williams (2000) notes the challenge to the concept of biographical disruption presented by postmodern notions of multiple selves and also by the disability literature. Williams (2000) also suggests that late modernity's preoccupation with reflexivity, exemplified in psychotherapy (and, one could add, autoethnography), has normalised the rethinking of biographical narratives and thus challenged the assumption of a static identity implicit in the notion of biographical disruption.

Although the literature on biographical disruption refers mainly to people experiencing chronic illness, I feel it is relevant to my argument even though I recovered very quickly. The power of narratives surrounding cancer led me to assume that if I did not die my illness probably would be chronic, and that it would disrupt my life. My experience of diagnosis and hospitalisation was disruptive in the sense that it broke into my everyday life and interfered with my capacity to think reflexively. But the squirrel and train images in dreams of this time represent the disruption as violent but short-lived. I was very lucky to recover quickly and these dreams indicate hope and faith that this would be so. Rather than biographical disruption, my experience of illness was one of pausing. It created a space in which thinking gave way to simply being in the present, and as my reflective capacity returned, I was less dominated than previously by the thinking function and better able to balance it with feeling (Jung, 1971). The first dream of this time seems to anticipate this balance by pointing towards a new place which is not completely unknown and where the kind women mediate my emergence from darkness into their space. They are sisterly rather than maternal, wise women whose strange bird-like language is new to me but not beyond my capacity to learn. The slightly numinous quality of their presence suggests an archetypal image. They seem at peace with themselves and with me, accepting, whole, as they welcome me into a dimension they inhabit with ease. This is a dream of transition rather than disruption, and has a future focus. Rather than the sharp break implied by disruption, a more appropriate description of my experience is Mathieson and Stam's (1995, p.300) concept of 'biographical work as that which prepares a common ground to guide the revision of the self-narrative'. Revision is ongoing; the task of integrating the experience of illness and recovery into the self-narrative has not precipitated me into a different story but enabled a different perspective. In this connection it was important for me to understand that cancer is not an invader of the body but the uncontrolled growth of one's own cells. I felt better knowing that it was not a foreign body but part of me. I think this helped me to learn to listen to what the illness had to teach me, and to think

of it as a metaphor for getting out of balance in terms of both physical and psycho-spiritual health.

In terms of balancing opposites, the dream of meeting Dr Jung seems to point both backwards to the church of my youth and forwards to completing the analysis of the contents of the dish, but it is centrally concerned with the present moment of meeting a heroic figure. As I write this, I notice that I have called it a 'moment of meeting' (Stern, 2004), and this therapeutic concept adds another insight into what is taking place. I am indeed meeting a therapist in this dream, not just a scientist and researcher. It is a 'moment of meeting', signalled by mutual recognition and 'implicit relational knowing' (Lyons-Ruth et al, 1998). Jung is heroic in his manner in the dream, shining with confidence, like the surgeon who conducted my operation; both of them embody an aura of heroically confronting and overcoming dangers, whether of illness or the unconscious. The hero figures of myth and epic constellate the archetypal possibility of a quest, overcoming dangers and trials of the spirit, yet Jung himself dreamed of killing the hero-figure Siegfried and came to understand his dream as 'indicating that our Gods need to be overcome; they need renewal' (Shamdasani, 2012, p. 77). Killing the hero implies reconciling ourselves to our weakness; for Jung, 'it was necessary to overcome heroism and to accept our incapacity' (Shamdasani, 2012, p.77). The hero was perhaps constellated in my personality by researching the experience of transformation, since this became a personal quest articulated as a process of individuation. Jung (1966) notes that the unintegrated *animus* is often projected onto heroic figures, and he perhaps offered me a 'hook' for such projections. However, individuation can only happen through the symbolic death of the hero and the integration of the Shadow and *animus/anima*, which may enable 'the Gods' or archetypal images to be renewed. Being ill does not feel compatible with being a hero. But integrating my incapacity, accepting my vulnerability and need for others, has I think instigated a process of transition towards renewal. After all, the heroic figure Jung presents in the dream is somewhat ironic; the middle-European formality and self-congratulatory remark that he has inspired me strike me as a self-parody. Perhaps I have killed the hero of my research.

A transition is not the same as reaching a destination. I have not reached it yet, and arguably life does not allow a final destination anyway. So the new but not entirely unknown place I find myself in is a place of listening more and hopefully hearing better. Coming back to this study, after a period when I thought I would not do that, gave it clarity and a sense of rightness. Writing this while watching Wimbledon, I felt as though I had found the sweet spot of the racquet when you hit the ball just right.

## Finding my way

As I re-read this compilation of my reflections on recovery, written mainly in July 2013, I was struck by the polarity still apparent in my thinking between abandoning the research or finding the sweet spot, and very soon I struggled to maintain momentum or even commitment. My kitchen ceiling fell down and startled me into noticing what I was doing. I wrote:

Synchronicity? Seems to symbolise what happens when you get overloaded – crash! I wrote about learning to listen but actually I don't – I just carry on as before. I felt good about the research but now I have dried up, feel out of tune, can't focus, feel it's a burden. I need to stop willing myself (forcing really) to do it. Maybe I can't. (Journal, 11.8.13)

Although I thought I had learned from being ill and recovering that I need more balance between the intellectual, physical, spiritual and relational aspects of my life, and that being seriously out of balance is a major health risk, I still had not integrated this learning. It was theoretical. The ceiling falling down was a stark reminder that next time, if I didn't change, it could be me who collapsed. This realisation was reinforced as I began to listen to subliminal messages from two friends who were also learning to listen to an inner sense of truthfulness. I wrote:

If you ignore the inner voice and the signs and messages of people around you, and forge ahead imposing your will in the face of them, you will not succeed and you will get ill. But if you stop, take time, pray, listen, rest when you need and work to discern what your inner voice is saying, then you will have a chance of being true to it. I think of Matthew talking of ambivalence before the immensity of a step into somewhere very uncomfortable but ultimately rich with life. The way is not known in advance, it's a step into unknowing. As I try to impose my will to work on the research, I fail. If I relax, rest, wait, I am afraid it won't be done and also that I may just be being lazy. Maybe it won't be possible to finish it. (Journal, 11.8.13)

Learning to listen to myself is hard. I began to do *lectio divina*, a spiritual practice of meditating on a text and allowing a response to arise in the heart and mind, and realised how much I needed to let go of imposing 'my' way and let things and people be the way they are. Romanyshyn (2007) speaks of letting go of the research so you can let the soul of the work speak and learn to listen to it. All the transformational processes of research, illness and recovery, illusion and disillusion, seemed to be about letting go and learning to listen. Another journal entry describes this:

It is hard to find my illusions are false gods, but they are. But this is a process of searching and re-searching, finding and letting go, in all areas of life. If you love something, let it go. If it loves you, it will come back to you as itself, not as your projection. If I let go of the research, I let go of the dominant discourses (or even just recognise them) and the imposed format of 'a thesis'. Then I let go of my beliefs and expectations. Matthew and Kim both show me how to do this and the dialogues reveal how the process happens. Then I learn to listen and



wait, and write myself into the work so I am more conscious of the process. And listen to what I hear, from all sources. (Journal, 26.8.13)

I could not make my way back into the work by force of will, but as this journal entry shows, I was beginning to listen more deeply to Matthew and Kim and learn from our research conversations. The strands of individuation and research were weaving together, and it began to seem that I needed to integrate them even if paradoxically this meant not writing a thesis after all. It was then that I found I could write again, and wrote the chapter on resistance and ambivalence. I think I first had to listen to my resistance to writing anything, which lasted several weeks from writing about recovery until the journal entry above. I had to do some inner work first, which involved accepting that I am a wounded researcher (Romanyshyn, 2007) and that woundedness, as Matthew says of ambivalence in our research conversation, is '*the human condition*'. Something changed then. I discuss in chapter 10 the impact of the psychoanalytic discourse of resistance as a sign of pathology which has dominated how I related to my own resistance in therapy and in this research project. Now I began to understand, through reflecting on the research conversations with Matthew and Kim, how my resistance sometimes announced the pressure of emergent new thinking or the potential to transcend familiar polarities. I also began to accept that I might not finish the thesis if I really entered into the inner work of doing 're-search with soul in mind' (Romayshyn, 2007), and that that would be all right.

This new acceptance released my resistance and my work seemed to gather momentum, but after writing several chapters I knew something was wrong again. I wrote:

Have written several chapters, not written any journal, not done any meditation and hardly walked at all. Very out of balance. It's as if the thesis mirrors me. At the moment it's quite intellectual and what I have written is about the interviews, quite theoretical. The thesis is split between interviews and autoethnography, theory and spirit, left and right. It needs to be integrated, as do I. (Journal, 18.11.13)

I refer to 'interviews' here, rather than research conversations, as if I have detached myself from them. I am in my head and my heart feels left behind. I worked on a meditation practice to balance and integrate right and left sides of the body and made a promise to myself to honour all of myself. I do not always remember that.

During this time of writing and ambivalently trying to integrate aspects of myself, I have not had 'big dreams' (Jung, 1960, para 554) such as those discussed above. This may be because I am more conscious of the task of integration and how it leads towards individuation or becoming whole, and so have less need of dreams to compensate for a one-sided conscious attitude. There is a loss though, since the dreams appealed to my

aesthetic imagination and psychological curiosity and provided the basis for active imagination activities which were full of discoveries. Now I am in a phase where such pleasures are replaced by a more sober spirit. I recall Wordsworth's description of the loss of his rapturous delight in nature and its replacement by mature reflection:

*Not for this  
Faint I, not mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue.*

*Wordsworth, Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey  
(Davies, 1975)*

The 'still, sad music of humanity' is, I believe, the music of acceptance and integration. I am learning to accept my ambivalence without denial or striving that only leads to more polarisation. So the presentation and celebration represented in dream 10 (p.51) remains a symbolic aspiration towards wholeness, and perhaps towards integration of the different parts of this thesis. A third position which could evolve through transcending yet another binary pair, autoethnography and dialogical analysis of the research conversations, remains a work in progress.

### 13. Interweaving findings

In this chapter, I focus explicitly on the findings discussed earlier and the theoretical relationships between them. It is indicative of the dialogical nature of this study that the need to draw the findings together in this way emerged through conversation with readers. Bearing in mind the role of the thesis as metaphor for the research and individuation processes (p. 180), this chapter therefore attempts to transcend the apparent polarities of the disparate findings relating to transcendence and relational conversational processes and dynamics. To do this, I try to remain open to symbolic thinking while writing in a linear way as I retrospectively survey my work.

This study has shown that transformational experience often involves transcending limited perspectives which have become entrenched as polar opposites, and that this process is not an amalgamation of a binary pair but movement towards a third position that could not have been envisaged before. It therefore requires something new to emerge from the apparent stasis of polarities. I have theorised this process mainly in terms of Jung's (1960) concept of the transcendent function and narrated my own experience of transformation in the autoethnographic chapters with reference to the alchemical transformation described in the *Rosarium Philosophorum* (Jung, 1966). Parallels between these psychological accounts and spiritually-oriented accounts of transformation such as those of St Teresa of Ávila and St John of the Cross emerged from my journey to Medina del Campo and in the references and metaphors of some of the research participants. These different lenses allow perspectives on profoundly human experiences that are conceptualised through the specific discourses and metaphors of their historical and cultural location. These are in a sense the chronotopes of experience. By interweaving them, I attempt to transcend the splitting of psychology and spirituality which artificially divides the psyche or soul, while recognising that a focus on one or the other may be helpful in specific circumstances such as those described by Matthew (p. 145).

The transformational experiences documented here involve emotional and reflective connection between self and another, and this relatedness occurs between us in some of the research conversations, as well as in experiences described by participants. I suggest that relatedness between self and internal other also creates a matrix for transformation. This may occur in reflexive writing, states of reverie and also in dreams, where the other(s) are figures who I understand to represent unconscious aspects of the psyche in dynamic relation to the dream-I. Thus reflexivity, reverie, dreams and relational conversations potentially allow head and heart, thinking and feeling, to link up between self and other through reflection. Reflection is central: without reflective awareness, the process seems to be short-circuited and perhaps forgotten, as in KM60

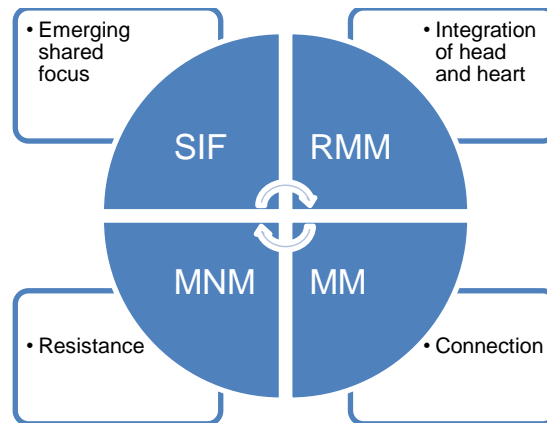
(pp.127-9). Linking head and heart through reflection leads to integration, as figure 22 shows (p. 134).

By analysing dialogical features I have documented the different kinds of conversational moment which underpin this linking process by facilitating connection, disconnection, and the movements between. Moments of meeting (Stern, 2004) in the research conversations are seen to be powerful instances of connection, but the impact of MMs may be lost if they do not lead through reflection to RMMs, which I suggest create the necessary context for integrating thinking and feeling and thus making transformation possible. The transformation thus realised may be a change of relation to self and inner experience, in turn transforming our relation to the world. Relational conversations flow between MM and RMM, negotiating not-meeting (MNM) like the '*stones in the river*' alluded to by Kim, which can keep the water fresh and '*healthy*'. The flow varies in intensity; shared interest (SIF) enables interlocutors to manage emotional temperature by directing their focus to a third object, sometimes *en route* to RMM and sometimes to negotiate MNM. It is apparent dialogically that resistance by one conversational partner contributes to MNM, and that resistance has intersubjective as well as personal significance. It is a property of the dyad, constellated by specific dynamics and the presence of dominant surrounding discourses. Working together to understand MNMs can transform resistance and allow a new perspective to emerge. This happens in some of the key moments we analysed together in IPR and fails to happen in others, some of which I understood later and have described as unconscious commentary (p. 100) and as hijacked metaphors (p.187).

The failure to address resistance, and the consequent hardening of defensive positions, characterise the stuckness I have called –T. This is a potentially dangerous state in which there is no integration of head and heart, and polar opposites become more fixed. In this state we close down relationship with each other and between aspects of ourselves such as thinking and feeling. Some of the participants refer to –T experiences in professional contexts, highlighting the unhelpfulness of assuming that we know, or that our theories are correct.

Figure 31 shows the different kinds of moment identified in relational conversations in relation to the dynamic elements of resistance and emergence, conceptualised as building blocks of transformation. The movement between moments is constant in more than one direction and as Stern (2004) and the BCPSG (2010) demonstrate, involves sloppiness and repair. By identifying the role of specific moments in building relationships between self and other, negotiating resistances and defences, and creating a reflective matrix for integration of head and heart, we can see how these

conversational moments underpin experiences that participants including myself recognise as transformational.



**Figure 31 Building blocks of transformation**

I suggest that recognising such moments and their dialogical functions contributes to greater understanding of research conversations, therapy, and other relational contexts, and allows us to see the processes at work in transformational experience and its antithesis or –T. The intersubjective context of self and other(s) is fundamental to understanding these processes. While this is clear in the work of relational psychoanalytic writers such as BCPSG (2010), Benjamin (2004) and Ogden (2004), it is not always recognised that the intersubjective context includes the shadowy presence of others in the self, heard in a dialogue of inner voices, which the dialogical analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates. These include echoes of cultural discourses which as Besley (2002) argues, influence what both therapists and clients implicitly believe unless they work to develop greater awareness. Dialogical analysis also shows that while attuned empathy leads to MMs, the slightly different engagement of RMMs, sometimes reached via SIF moments, is necessary for integration of head and heart. It is important not to undervalue these more companionable moments of shared reflection in therapy and other relational conversations in favour of the emotional attunement of MMs.

This chapter has highlighted the interweaving of findings regarding relational conversational processes with the transformational potential of transcending polarities. The autoethnographic findings also suggest that the transcendence of split perceptions of conscious and unconscious, inner and outer, spiritual and psychological, health and illness, is made possible by reflexive work towards integrating different aspects of self in relation to others. This ongoing spiral of individuation was facilitated by doing this study, which also documents it as another thread in the weave.

## 14. Conclusion

This final chapter includes a brief summary of the connections between the findings followed by discussion of their implications for practice, education, research and the social context of counselling/psychotherapy. This is followed by a discussion of the interweaving of dialogical analysis and autoethnography in the thesis, with suggestions for blending these methodologies in future research. The study concludes with reflections on my practice(s), participants' responses to reading extracts, and brief remarks on the need for counselling/psychotherapy to look beyond the individual.

### Connections between findings

The findings of this study relate to the experiences of the seven participants and myself, and therefore are not necessarily generalisable to large-scale populations. However, just as a novel may resonate with the reader and speak to universal human concerns, I hope these reflections on transformational experience will resonate with the experience of others and so have value for them. The key findings are discussed in chapter 13 and connections between them are recapitulated here.

Doing reflexive relational research has provided opportunities for reflection, learning, integration and transformation for the participants as co-researchers and for me. We have found that transformation is an active process of integrating disparate aspects of self through reflection in intersubjective relationships, in research and other contexts such as therapy. By bringing into relation polarised qualities, thoughts and perceptions, we can transcend them and take up a third position from which we can relate and act differently.

This process is facilitated by relational conversations such as the research conversations in this study. These involve not only moments of meeting as described by Stern (2004) and elaborated by the BCPSG (2010), but also moments of not-meeting, reflective moments of meeting, and shared interest focus. The micro-processes by which these are constituted and negotiated can be observed and tracked, especially through the use of IPR. These different moments constitute the building blocks of transformation by flexibly creating the intersubjective matrix for reflection in which integration of thinking and feeling is possible.

Not-meeting in relational conversation may occur through cultural or personal misattunement or resistance. This is an intersubjective phenomenon constituted within the dyadic relationship and so needs to be respected and understood more positively in therapy and research. It may contain subliminal relational messages or indicate the imminent emergence of new knowledge or insight. Researcher resistance to hearing

the dialogically embedded messages of participants, or to engaging with different perspectives, is therefore potentially information-rich and can be better understood through rigorous reflexive exploration.

Some of the ways in which resistance is seen in moments of not-meeting include misinterpreted and hijacked metaphors, which require extensive reflection and renegotiation in conversation and subsequent analysis. Relational enactments, semi- or unconscious events which provide a commentary on the present communicative context, also occur in research conversations as in therapy and other relationships. Learning to recognise these intersubjective events can help to detangle the intersubjective web and contribute to resolving moments of not-meeting.

The autoethnographic findings also indicate the significance of transcending polarities in my personal transformation and in my capacity to design this study and conduct the analysis. They show that symbolic forms in dreams and art work can allow what is not yet thought to come into awareness. These can then be elaborated through active imagination practices and made more available to conscious thought. Extending awareness in this way helped me to recognise connections between the spiritual and the psychological, to develop receptivity to the participants as co-researchers and to the research data and at the same time to be transformed by the research process. The connections between transformation and conversational processes, my personal transformation and research relationships, and the emergence of the 'third' in intersubjective contexts, are demonstrated in this study.

## **Implications for practice, education, research and social context**

### **1. Practice**

Thinking of transformation as a process of transcending polarities has implications for therapy practice. Rather than focusing on reducing symptoms or achieving goals, therapists whose practice is emancipatory will seek to help clients and themselves recognise, challenge and transcend processes of splitting, denial and projection, not because these are supposedly pathological but in order to risk liberation from the known. Symptoms of anxiety and depression may be reduced and clients may become better able to set and achieve goals, but these are better thought of as the welcome consequences of the therapeutic process rather than the only outcomes by which therapy is measured and judged. In terms of EBP, a new concept of evidence is needed to embrace the holistic nature of therapeutic transformation. Evidence of this kind will be based on practitioner and client experience, analysed in a variety of ways such as those used in this study, and acknowledge the complexity of the intersubjective matrix within which such experience occurs.

The micro-processes of relational conversation tracked in this study have much to contribute to understanding therapeutic change processes. Concepts such as moments of meeting (Stern, 2004) can be amplified by taking account of the extra power of reflective moments of meeting to integrate head and heart, leading to transformation. I am suggesting that neither emotional release nor cognitive insight is enough on its own to effect transformation; therapeutic change requires both to be integrated through reflection in a relational context. The implications of this finding for therapeutic models are considerable, pointing to the need for relational approaches which facilitate shared reflection on emotional experience. The flow between different kinds of moment (MM, RMM, MNM and SIF) is an indicator of the state of the intersubjective matrix and relational direction of travel. Increasing awareness of the flow can enhance therapist and client sensitivity and capacity to work together through resistance and not-meeting, and lessen the likelihood of –T developing. While most obviously relevant to psychotherapy, these findings also have relevance for other helping professions such as teaching, social work and healthcare, where awareness of intersubjective processes can assist practitioners to work relationally.

Additionally, the concept of –T implies the need to pay attention to moments of not-meeting and the intersubjective experience of resistance. Participants in this study identified therapy, supervision and training as contexts of –T; as all of these are intended to facilitate transformation, this is quite an indictment of our professional capacity for attunement. I suggest that –T is a concept that may also be useful in other professional contexts to cast light on practitioner-client interactions and on the impact of normative professional discourses which can obscure or disallow individual experiences and concerns.

## **2. Education**

Awareness of conversational micro-processes is a growing feature of therapist education (Macaskie et al., 2013) and the analysis of the different kinds of moment identified in this study offers a tool for developing reflective and reflexive practice. It also has significant implications for teaching counselling skills to practitioners of other disciplines, and for clinical supervision. The use of audio-recordings in all these contexts allows for intensive listening to conversational flow, especially when IPR is used for shared reflection and analysis. These training and supervisory practices can help practitioners to develop their internal supervisor (Casement, 1985) and thus be more reflexively alert to intersubjective events as they happen.

The theoretical claims made in this study also have implications for practitioner education. The interconnection of relational conversational processes and the capacity



to transcend polarities and move to a transformed third perspective sheds light on how change happens intersubjectively. Therapists and clients make change happen together, or block it together as –T. The movements within the intersubjective field that facilitate or block change are flowing and negotiable, and an understanding of dialogue and metaphor illuminates the process.

### **3. Research**

While this study has explored micro-processes in research conversations, further research using therapy conversations as data could contribute to better understanding the functioning of different kinds of moment as building blocks of transformation. It would be useful to explore the movement between MMs and RMMs, the negotiation of MNMs, and instances of resistance, recognisable in MNMs, as intersubjective phenomena in therapy. It would also be useful to track the functioning of SIF and its contribution to the development of RMMs in therapy contexts.

Intersubjective research requires intersubjective methods, and therapy research as outlined above requires collaborative work by clients and therapists. IPR methodology offers one way in which both can become co-researchers by taking part in reflecting on and analysing data. I used IPR without difficulty with therapist participants already accustomed to reflexive practices, and it could be used similarly in practice-based research with clients and other participants willing to engage in in-depth reflection. IPR helps to transcend yet another polarity between researcher and researched and challenges researchers' perceptions and assumptions of understanding.

The practice of autoethnography offers considerable scope for therapists and others to research experience and experience research. It has not been developed widely in counselling and psychotherapy research traditions, although currently 9 out of 28 students (32%) who have conducted master's dissertations in counselling and psychotherapy in my university department have chosen autoethnography as their methodology. I suggest that the therapy profession as a whole can learn from the application of reflexive criticality which situates the individual's experience in their cultural context, whether this is conceived as the professional and practice context or the wider socio-political world.

At a time when concern is growing to listen more to service users' voices in healthcare following publication of the Francis Report (2013), the counselling and psychotherapy professions and their employers need to support narrative and participatory research methods which enable clients' stories and perspectives to be told. Autoethnography is one way in which some service users who are also researchers (see, for example, Grant, 2010) may tell their story with critical implications for their profession. The

enhanced awareness of interdependence between self and context developed by autoethnographic methods also creates a good basis for working with service users using other narrative inquiry methods.

#### **4. Social context of therapy**

Therapists are well placed by virtue of their reflective and reflexive practices to become agents for social change. For this to happen, the private and ritualistic nature of some therapeutic practices needs to be challenged, so that psychological insights can be fertilised by social awareness and vice versa. The theoretical tendency to privatise experience as intrapsychic is challenged by research which demonstrates the intersubjective basis of experience. Relational conversations, as shown in this study, can be transformative and the micro-processes that facilitate transformation affect both conversational partners. However, conversational processes are not simply interpersonal but coloured by socio-cultural discourses that position people in terms of power, and by the generic expectations and inner voices highlighted by dialogical analysis. The chronotopes of context, including social context, also influence experience. Therapists need greater awareness of these dialogical and contextual influences on practice.

This study demonstrates the impact of social class and cultural difference on the capacity of reflective co-researchers to meet emotionally and communicate effectively. These factors are still under-researched, with few studies especially of class and therapy (Balinger & Wright, 2007; Balmforth, 2009). Perceptions of class prevent Louise and me from meeting until we are able to talk about our relational difficulty (p. 67). Louise mentions the lack of discussion of class in her therapy training and the inability of some practitioners to imagine the experience of working class clients. Smith et al (2011) suggest that therapists' perceptions of social class influence their practice and may predispose them towards lower expectations of outcome for working class clients. Evidently the therapy profession needs to engage with social class as it has begun to do with other cultural differences. However, the ways in which we fail to understand one another are often hard to discern. For example, Natalia and I miss meeting (p. 65) when my cultural assumptions blind me to her dilemma, and we have to work hard to reveal our not-meeting in order to meet. The contribution of this study to greater understanding of the impact of social and cultural context lies in demonstrating how MNMs often arise from cultural misattunements and mistaken assumptions, and how shared reflection can open the way to transcend these outworn positions.

The concept of transcending polarities also has implications for healing group processes including social and political conflict and extreme oppositional ideologies.

Fundamentalist beliefs are polarised, and may engender an opposite polarisation unless we recognise and integrate the group and social Shadow. Integration and social healing based on psychotherapeutic principles has sometimes been attempted, for example in Nicaragua after the Contra war of the 1980s. Teams of psychotherapists there sought to widen the scope of psychological understanding to minister to a traumatised society by educating doctors in group and organisational dynamics and by training ordinary citizens to work with loss and trauma in their communities (Hollander, 1997, 1998; Langer, 1989). Lees et al. (2014) argue that the therapy profession in western Europe has much to learn from such therapeutic practices, which focus on salutogenesis and collective responsibility rather than individualised pathology and managed care. I also suggest that the therapy profession has much to contribute to our own society's healing from our developing understanding of intersubjectivity and that the split between individual and social psychology is another set of polarities to be transcended.

### **Methodological critique**

This thesis has interwoven two distinct methodologies, dialogical analysis and autoethnography, both of which aim to reveal something of what lies outside our current awareness and can be discerned in symbolic forms and complex inner voices in dialogue. These forms and voices make reference to archetypal human potentialities and to surrounding social and cultural discourses, as well as to personal concerns and interests. Combining these two methodologies has allowed me to show the trajectory in my own experience of the topic of the study, in parallel to the experience of the participants, and to identify the impact of my experience on my relationship to the research. This is one way in which Romanyshyn's (2007) concept of the wounded researcher has fruitfully informed my research practice. Implicitly, this practice critiques the dominant discourse of objectivity and neutrality in therapy research by demonstrating that the researcher cannot avoid being involved in the work and that this is not a weakness but potentially a source of deeper insight. By attempting to understand the researcher's transference to the work, as Romanyshyn (2007) suggests, we can learn to challenge our resistances and the influence of dominant discourses on our thinking. I suggest that autoethnography as a reflexive and critical research tool could be helpfully interwoven with other methodologies that invite researcher reflexivity such as narrative inquiry, discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Potentially, this could take researcher reflexivity to a more developed level by exploring the social and cultural context of research activity.

I have learned as I went along how to interweave these methodologies, and this thesis represents only one way of doing this. The three autoethnographic chapters are presented at nodal points in the work, so that the personal experience they describe acts as a commentary on that stage of the research. It would be possible to interweave autoethnography more fully into the work by presenting contextual commentaries and subtexts throughout the main text. In view of the intersubjective emphasis of the findings of this study, closer interweaving of commentaries deriving from active discussion with co-researchers would enable an organic, collective account to be presented as an 'experiential ethnography' (Freshwater, 2014, personal communication).

### **Reflections on practice(s)**

This study has involved me in practices of research, conversation, meditation, reflection, reflexivity and writing, within the informing context of professional therapeutic practices. I could not have done these things in this way without being a psychotherapy practitioner. Practice is intentional activity towards a goal which is sometimes defined, but often left open to the unfolding of the currently unrealised. It carries the sense of developing through doing as well as deliberately choosing ways of doing. My practices of writing, reflecting and meditating created autoethnographic data and enhanced my analysis and understanding of research conversations. The participants and I engaged in the therapeutic practices of being present with oneself and the other, listening between the lines, reflecting on embodied experience and attending to the 'edge of awareness' (Gendlin, 1981), and these practices were also necessary for doing dialogical analysis and facilitating understanding through reflective writing. Hindrances to giving attention and being present in these contexts are similar to distractions in meditation. Both involve interference through fantasy about some other place, time or object, so that the present ceases to be the focus of attention. 'Just' being present is a disciplined activity and reflexive awareness of distraction very often comes after the event, as I have shown in discussing IPR and my resistance to listening to Kim and Matthew.

The study links my research practice with personal practice towards individuation and both facilitate transformations in thinking, beliefs and relationships. Because practices are active they change, and my ways of practising psychotherapy have changed through doing the practice of research-individuation. I am not currently 'in practice' as I have no clients or individual supervisees. Nonetheless, my practice as a teacher, group supervisor of counselling students, colleague, writer, researcher and person who continues to develop, is growing in depth and compassion through the medium of this study as I work with students, research participants, colleagues and friends.

The practice of the research participants also continues to grow and some have commented on the impact on them of being involved in this study. I gave each participant transcripts and video copies of our research conversations soon after our meetings. The IPR sessions afforded opportunities to talk about their experience of taking part, as did later email contact. In the final stages of writing I also sent each person their dialogue poem from chapter 4 and the key moments I had written up from our conversations, inviting them to comment if they wished. All of the participants expressed interest, and some of their responses stand out. Matthew, for example, was intrigued by the dialogue poem, which he thought reflected a spiritual quality in our conversations, and asked me to record another conversation with him in order to write a further dialogue poem for possible publication in a Carmelite journal. We have now made another recording and will collaborate on composing a poem.

Gwyneth evidently felt that my analysis of our conversations was more responsive or avowedly intersubjective than is usual in some kinds of psychodynamic therapy. She wrote:

*Thank you for thinking so much, as you have done, about what I said. It's special to be on the receiving end and somehow the 'without memory or desire' bit of our training doesn't always cut the mustard (whatever that means...!)*

She also continued reflecting on her defensiveness and desire for connection, and shared a new insight:

*I'm recently thinking it may be about a fear of being invaded and taken over by others - so how to meet others - but safely!*

These responses lead me to hope and believe that our conversations were opportunities for safe meetings.

Natalia said she felt '*privileged*' to read the dialogue poem and commented:

*I am pleased that we were able to have this dialogue and reflecting on the extract I feel just as passionate about it now as when we first recorded it. I sense your sincerity in your reflection, especially you disclosing 'shame'. I recognise your hard work and the effort you have put into this research. The dialogue certainly reflects 'a meeting' of cultures.*

Maria found that reflecting on my text affirmed her sense of communicating emotionally through art:

*I now understand that art is a very personal kind of translator for me. I was wanting to show you the emotional transformation I was going through and that I had found a voice or rather a different language to make sense of what may have been going on for me at that time as a person and counsellor.*

She also remembered taking from our conversations the insight contained in the metaphor of a triangle, and using this in her work with clients:

*The metaphor of a triangle was very important for me and still is. I felt deeply understood by your mirroring. The triangle helped me deepen the understanding of that it doesn't matter what language we speak, as long as we are connected on some level we will feel understood and can make some sense of whatever we want to make sense of. The interview also made me think more about how I could meet my clients in helping them feel understood and helping them find their own individual language.*

These four participants' responses to the text are very affirming, yet Louise, who found the research conversations a difficult experience, wrote:

*When I read the extract I immediately recognized myself and remembered the interview. It was such a long time ago. I am left with mixed feelings about this, but nothing to be concerned about.*

Louise also asked to read more extracts from the thesis and I am pleased that in spite of the discomfort of the conversations and her present 'mixed feelings', she is still willing to engage with the topic and research process.

### **Beyond the individual**

Words like transformation, integration and individuation point beyond polarities to a new place, a third thing, or a new way of being. What does it mean to be transformed, from what and to what? For me it means to go beyond a choice of either-or alternatives or a sense of balancing on a knife edge between them, into a new space where things look different. We get stuck in narrow thinking through identifying with one of the poles we set up as ideal, but both poles limit us and we need to transcend them. This is not just an individual problem but social and political.

Today on the news I hear how people in South Sudan are turning on neighbours of different names and tribes. The extremes of suffering and terror are turning them back into a total identification with one of a pair or group of opposites – my tribe, my group, my people – and so they desire the end of the other(s) out of fear. This always happens when we over-identify through fear and stress – Bosnia, Syria, and all fundamentalisms. (Journal, 24.12.13)

Integration and transformation may not be stable since there seems to be a tipping point at which people can go back to polar oppositions and experience hate and fear of the other. South Sudan began life as a country built around a common religion, but this was not enough to transcend its multiple differences. In this study I have described the absence of transformation as –T, and accumulated experiences of this kind in a society or an individual may contribute to rising stress levels that can lead to such extreme polarisation. There is also a point at which we choose to transcend the polarities and move instead towards a third position with the possibility of love and peace. However,

this must involve a loss of familiar ground and identifications, and so it is a point of ambivalence where we choose to accept or refuse the loss. Approaching the end of this study, I had the following dream which seems to speak to these issues.

**Dream 17: The naive fundamentalist, 30.1.14**

*A young man was preaching to a crowd of people. He seemed naive. He asked them, 'Have you heard about Dunkirk?' The crowd started to mutter and protest that of course they had, how could he be so stupid? I felt sorry for him and asked him, 'Haven't you converted anyone then? Did they feel you were patronising them?' He didn't understand what I meant. I told him the Scots weren't all Celts, and he was surprised. I thought the reason he was a fundamentalist was only because he didn't know quite basic cultural information.*

This young man reminds me of the shadowy terrorists in dream 2 (p.41) who were bent on destroying the Forth Bridge, but now these dangerously unintegrated *animus* figures have revealed their own Shadow. He is naive, simple, and needs help. I do not feel angry like the crowd or afraid as I was in the earlier dream. I feel sorry for the young man's humiliation and want to educate him into a less categorical view of the world. I feel he can learn. He mentions Dunkirk, a historic event that has become a cultural metaphor for threat to national identity and survival. Yet it is news to him; he is outside the culture and people are annoyed by his assumption that they must also be unaware of their own history. The crowd response might carry a risk of escalation and turn the young man into a hook for projections, but this does not happen. He is seen to be ignorant of shared knowledge and so his fundamentalism is easily dismissed. This dream implies that my tendency to polarisation is getting less extreme and can be educated. The qualities that the dream-I offers the naive fundamentalist in me are compassion, cultural knowledge and wisdom.

These qualities are basic to any social and political resolution of conflict, and so they imply a need to look beyond individual concerns to a wider context. Counselling and psychotherapy are vulnerable to their own fundamentalism or one-sidedness of privileging individual aspirations above the collective and ignoring the social, political and economic contexts in which clients live. Kumar (2012) for example, points out that the many references to poverty in psychoanalytical sources are concerned almost exclusively with poverty as a metaphor for lack of psychological resources or ego strength, and not with the social and economic adversity many people live with. In this study I have attempted to relate the psychological and the social by noting the prevalence of dominant discourses in my thinking and relationships with research participants, and in how we practise. Three participants (Louise, Natalia and Kim) mention constraints on practice through lack of cultural knowledge in the profession and on the part of individual practitioners. The limitations of practitioners' awareness of

class, culture, language and normative professional assumptions can be transcended only through humility and openness to learning that we don't know. As Kim says, 'counsellor mode' can be an obstacle to learning.

In this study I offer a performative inquiry (Gergen & Gergen, 2014), since I have attempted to create ways of communicating in writing and pictures that I hope invite readers to share the text. It is an intertext, because it arises from my interactions with many other texts, spoken, written, conscious and unconscious, and I author my present version while acknowledging its intersubjective context. How it is read is performed by readers, who also have 'the right – if not an invitation – to interpret' (Gergen & Gergen, 2014, p.220). As author, I invite you into a 'participatory dialogue of the reader-audience' (Freshwater, 2008b, p.210) because this text is not and cannot be complete. The transformational processes it seeks to communicate need to continue. Since the thesis is in a sense a metaphor for myself as I move towards individuation, it is also a work in progress, though I choose to conclude it in the knowledge that both my own trajectory and my understanding of the participants' narratives will continue to develop.

*Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in*

*Leonard Cohen, Anthem (Cohen, 1992)*



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**Appendix 1: Key moments and themes**

**Table 6: Criteria for key moments and related questions**

<b>Criteria for key moments</b>	<b>Related questions</b>	<b>Focus</b>
1. Narrative that illustrates a theme of passionate interest to the participant	How does therapeutic practice impact on participants? How does personal experience impact on their therapeutic practice? What meanings do participants give to experiences they find transformational? When do participants challenge the operation of dominant discourses in their lives and what impact does this have on them?	Content Content Content Content+process
2. Narrative that illustrates a theme of passionate interest to me	How do differences in language and culture impact on participants? Is there a connection between psychotherapy and spirituality? How does resistance intersect with emergent new perspectives? How do participants use metaphor and embodiment?	Content+process Content+process Content+process Content+process
3. Instances of intersubjective connection	What happens intersubjectively when MMs occur? What happens when a MM includes explicit reflection as well as mutual connection and understanding (RMM)? What happens intersubjectively in shared interest focus (SIF) on a third object (S)? Is there a difference between RMM and SIF? How do we get from one kind of moment to another? Are there transformational moments?	Process Process Process+content Process Process Process+content
4. Instances of intersubjective difficulty	Are there instances of resistance or Shadow functioning in the research conversations? What happens intersubjectively when moments of not meeting (MNM) occur?	Process+content Process
5. Reflexive discussion of our interaction	Can we reach a shared understanding of dialogical events? How does the experience of reflecting together impact on us?	Process Process
6. Review or revision of thinking	Does reflecting on experience/belief change it?	Content+process
7. Implicit commentary on interaction or theme	Are there implicit references to our here-and-now interaction? Are dominant discourses of therapy or research apparent in our interaction? Do we challenge them?	Process Process+content Process+content



**Table 7: Major themes derived from questions**

Major themes	Questions from Table 6	Participants	Key moments
1. Transformation and transcendence	<p>Are there transformational moments in the research conversations?</p> <p>Does reflecting on experience/belief change it?</p> <p>What meanings do participants give to experiences they find transformational?</p> <p>Is there a connection between psychotherapy and spirituality?</p>	All	<p>8 (Louise)</p> <p>23 (Gwyneth)</p> <p>32, 34, 35, 42 (Natalia)</p> <p>43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 (Matthew)</p> <p>53, 55a, 55b (Kim)</p> <p>60, 61 (Christine)</p> <p>69, 70 (Maria)</p>
2. Processes in relational conversation	<p>What happens intersubjectively when MMs and MNMs occur?</p> <p>How do we get from one kind of moment to another?</p> <p>What happens when a MM includes explicit reflection as well as mutual connection and understanding? (RMM)</p> <p>Is there a difference between RMM and SIF?</p>	All	<p>3, 4, 7, 9, 16 (Louise)</p> <p>21, 24, 25 (Gwyneth)</p> <p>30 IPR, 34, 37, 39, 41 (Natalia)</p> <p>43, 44, 47, 48, 49 (Matthew)</p> <p>51, 53, 55a, 55b, 56a, 56b (Kim)</p> <p>58, 59, 60, 61, 62 (Christine)</p> <p>66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71 (Maria)</p>
3. Ambivalence, resistance and defence	<p>Are there instances of resistance and Shadow functioning?</p> <p>How does resistance intersect with emergent new perspectives?</p>	Louise, Gwyneth, Matthew, Kim, Jane	<p>14, 15 (Louise)</p> <p>17, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26 (Gwyneth)</p> <p>43, 44, 45, 47, 49 (Matthew + Jane)</p> <p>54, 56a, 56b (Kim + Jane)</p>
4. Metaphor, symbol and embodiment	<p>Are there examples of metaphor and embodiment?</p>	All, especially Natalia, Matthew, Kim	<p>1, 8 (Louise)</p> <p>19, 23 (Gwyneth)</p> <p>36, 37, 40 (Natalia)</p> <p>43, 45, 48 (Matthew)</p> <p>51, 52, 53, 54, 55a, 55b, 56b, 57 (Kim)</p> <p>64 (Christine)</p> <p>66, 67, 69, 71 (Maria)</p>

**Table 8: Sub-themes derived from questions**

Sub-themes	Questions from Table 6	Participants	Key moments
5. Reflections on interaction and IPR process	Can we reach a shared understanding of dialogical events? How does the experience of reflecting together impact on us? Are there implicit references to our here-and-now interaction?	All	9, 10, 11, 15, 16 (Louise) 19, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29 (Gwyneth) 30, 32, 36, 38, 40, 42 (Natalia) 43, 46, 47 (Matthew) 51, 54, 55b, 56a, 56b, 57 (Kim) 58, 60 61, 62, 63, 65a, 65b (Christine) 68, 69, 70, 72, 73 (Maria)
6. Dominant and submerged discourses	When do participants challenge the operation of dominant discourses in their lives and what impact does this have on them? Are dominant discourses of therapy and of research apparent in our interaction? Do we challenge them?	All, especially Kim, Louise, Christine	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, (Louise) 22, 26 (Gwyneth) 41, 42 (Natalia) 43, 49 (Matthew) 50, 51, 52, 54 (Kim) 59, 60, 62, 64 (Christine) 70 (Maria)
7. Difference, connection and language	How do differences in language and culture impact on participants?	Louise, Natalia, Kim, Maria	3, 4, 7, 9, 16 (Louise) 30, 31, 32, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42 (Natalia) 54, 56a, 56b (Kim) 66 (inner KM), 68, 71 (Maria)
8. Impact on participants and their practice	How does therapeutic practice impact on participants? How does personal experience impact on their therapeutic practice?	All	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14 (Louise) 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27 (Gwyneth) 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41 (Natalia) 43, 44, 45 (Matthew) 50, 51, 52, 54, 55a, 55b (Kim) 58, 59, 60, 61, 64 (Christine) 68, 69, 70, 71 (Maria)

Appendix 2

Table 9: Examples of dialogical analysis: ‘Bureaucratic’ overview of selected key moments (‘Charismatic’ discussions: KM53 chapter 6, KM 69 chapter 8)

KM	Selection criteria	Genre	Discourse	Emotional register	Chronotope	Context	IPR comments
<p>Kim KM53, K1, 237- 262 ‘rudimentary’ struggling for words</p> <p>Themes – metaphor; transcendent/transformation; relational conversation</p>	1,2,3,7	<p>Reflective; dialogue in which third emerges as snake image – metaphor for what we can’t describe; poetic – then as image releases thought and third can be stated as idea, return to experience of practice in reflexive genre.</p>	<p>Inside-out. K struggles to express something almost intangible (‘rudimentary, transient, not material’). We dialogue together (notice pauses) to build the thought of what this transformation is, and K finds the snake image, humorous and enacted, then new thoughts come into awareness and a RMM happens</p>	<p>Hesitant, uncertain, searching together. Sense of rightness of snake image; humour. ‘Freeing’ – from old skin, and here and now also as we are freed up from difficulty describing and <i>find the thought and the words through the metaphor.</i> (MM or RMM?)</p>	<p>Timeless – no space-time refs as we search/wait; as if we are on threshold. I refer back to metaphors of health and river (back in time to our shared history in conversation/thinking); the K begins to embody/present/enact the snake, laughing and moving shoulders, now grounded in <i>here, now</i>. This place now – this experience – becomes the metaphor for a thought we can’t reach in the abstract. We reach it once the metaphor does its work of freeing us from timelessness.</p>	<p>K’s struggle to put a profound experience into words.</p>	<p>Commentary within 1st interview, K1, 297-314. J enacts snake shedding skin movement to express ‘struggling to kind of understand something, or find words for it’. K adds more metaphor: ‘lacking the layers’ (305). Describes holding idea in mind so it can be added to later. ‘I could have used that image’ (312) – recognises that image or metaphor crosses gap where we can’t find words. Second commentary: K1, 532-5, ‘antenna in me ... something alive’.</p>

<p><b>Maria KM69</b>, M1b 3-28 triangle</p>	<p>1,2,3,5,6,7</p>	<p>Autobiographical, reflective, theoretical</p>	<p>Dialogue between us seems to enable her reflective voice: she pieces together a story of how her life changed. Very like a reflective counselling session. SIF and RMM.</p> <p>Triangle of hands – theory, attachment stuff and language. Embodies connection.</p>	<p>‘interesting’, ‘I wonder’ repeated in first few lines as she thinks, then from 24-27 these words don’t appear and she describes how it was for her without language.</p>	<p>Triangle demonstrates coming together of separate elements of experience through the couns training – so this was unifying. But part of her ‘got left behind in Holland’ (14). Here and there contrast; then (Holland) + then (aged 19) + no-time/present of reflecting.</p>	<p>After a break, we come back and I ask if there’s anything else ...</p>	<p>M2b, 36-71. ‘So we spoke about all the other deeper things I suppose at the beginning and it’s just making sense of the whole thing’ (36-7) – the triangle, reflective discourse. Who made the triangle? Discussion of MM and RMM, linking this to counselling and other conversations (65-71) – key finding here already in first set of interviews!</p>
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## Appendix 3

### Websites for images from the *Rosarium Philosophorum*

RP 1 Mercurial Fountain [http://www.springerimages.com/Images/HumanitiesArts/5-10.1186\\_1747-5341-5-13-2](http://www.springerimages.com/Images/HumanitiesArts/5-10.1186_1747-5341-5-13-2) creative commons open access

RP4 Immersion in the bath [http://bodyelectronics.iammendel.com/?page\\_id=786](http://bodyelectronics.iammendel.com/?page_id=786)

RP 5 Coniunctio <http://www.golob-gm.si/4-three-standard-stoppages-marcel-duchamp/l-alchemical-thought-of-marcel-duchamp.htm>

RP 6 Death <http://forum.tarohistory.com/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=647>

RP 7 Ascent of soul <http://hermetisme-gnosis02.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/extractio-sielen-stiger-opp-i-rosarium.html>

RP 8 Purification or falling dew

<http://www.webring.org/l/rd?ring=atheist;id=1;url=http%3A%2F%2Fwebring%2Ecom%2Fpeople%2Fqm%2Fmindstuff%2Fjuning3%2Ehtml>

RP9 Return of soul <http://www.mpuuc.org/services/JungRosarium.html>