Telling Tales:

An inquiry into being and becoming

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctorate in Organisational Change

Ashridge Business School / Middlesex University

17th December 2014

Student Number: M00375374

Module Code: Module 4 – DOC5180

Word count: 65,166

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my husband and to our daughter, before anything else, and to Cybele my constant companion.

And I dedicate this to us, to who we are and to who we are becoming.

Sue Wiper

December 2014, Berkhamsted

Telling Tales: an inquiry into being and becoming

Sue Lloyd, October 2014

ABSTRACT

This is an inquiry into the process of being and becoming through the practice of telling tales. In it, I explore the shifting narrative boundaries between the real and the make-believe and examine the potential of embodied story-telling in my personal and professional practices.

In the course of this inquiry, I developed a research methodology in which I re-tell folk tales "from the inside", by improvised freefall talking in character, while filming myself on my iPhone. These filmed videos became the source material for subsequent cycles of inquiry.

My embodied story-telling method was inspired by the theories of Bateson on Learning III, Stanislavski on method acting and contemporary academic Dr Susan Greenwood on magical consciousness, which together represent multiple ways of "being another". I inquired into the practice implications of an expanded sense of self that is not "bound by skin" (Bateson 1972); of making use in practice of the "magic if" (Stanislavski 1936); and of experiencing what Greenwood (2010) describes as "an orientation to life that participates in an inspirited world through emotion, intuition and imagination."

In the process of embodied story-telling, I experienced the world, myself and others differently. Working within the frameworks of a relational ontology and an expanded epistemology, I redefined my own perception of self as being inherently relational and discovered a heightened sense of connectedness with others and with the natural world.

I describe the impact of *relational selfhood* on my practice and suggest potential areas of practice development. I share with the reader how, in the course of this narrative inquiry I rediscovered enchantment and reclaimed it for my daily practice by, in the words of John Updike (1996), "giving the mundane its beautiful due". Specifically, I experienced through embodied story-telling what Foucault describes as the "*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" and reinstated feminine, domestic and magical realms of knowing.

Key words: personal narratives, folk tales, story-telling, improvisation, iPhone, interview, method acting, metaphor, magical consciousness, action research, naïve therapy, epistemology of self, participation, community, film, acting, directing, first person inquiry, reflexive practice, applied philosophy, subjugated knowledge

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PROLOGUE

My thesis describes an inquiry into the process of being and becoming through the practice of telling tales. It has at its heart the question: who am I and how do I know? Essentially, it is an existential inquiry into identity and whether and why it matters.

I am grateful to my workshop students at the University of the Sorbonne for framing the question so gracefully at a time when I was struggling to find what was at the centre of a discursive and seemingly labyrinthine inquiry.

When I started to review my earlier writing preparatory to writing up my thesis, I was surprised to discover the following extract from my very first paper, which anticipated this line of inquiry:

> ### Notes on my rose garden, May 2011
>
> *"What will survive of us is love" is the last line of Philip Larkin's poem "An Arundel Tomb" (1955). It is the inscription we chose for my father's tombstone and it will be engraved on the stone at the centre of my rose garden, planted in the summer of 2011.*
>
> *It lies at the heart of my thinking about one aspect of my inquiry: "Who are we, and how do we know who we are? How do we know ourselves, and how do others know us? What is it to know another person?" What survives when we are gone seems to me to define us more than anything else, but is something that might never be known by us, only to others".*

The question, who am I and how do I know, which I framed at first in terms of the *epistemology of self*, turned into a veritable quest which took me to places sometimes joyous and sometimes perturbing, often both. It took me back and carried me forward through time like waves on a beach and led me to re-evaluate my practice past, present and future.

My supervisor and doctoral study group, the Quartet, provided a challenging and supportive environment in which to carry out my inquiry. They helped me to address some deep issues concerning my own identity which I had been studiously avoiding and in the process, to unlock epistemological memories concerning folk tales, magic and make-believe which

provided the rich methodological opportunities that came eventually to define my inquiry, which began long ago and seemingly has no ending.

It is difficult to know where to start the telling: the King's injunction to Alice to "*Begin at the beginning … and go on until you come to the end: then stop*" (Lewis Carroll 1865) no longer seems possible. But as the teller of the tale, start I must, so I will begin in the following chapter by introducing myself to you.   It is in the spirit of my inquiry that at first, I will be a stranger but as the tale progresses, you will come to know me and in the telling, I will come to know myself better, or at least differently. I am aware as the teller of my own inquiry that I have a responsibility to you, the reader, and to myself to deliver an account which is good enough. I will examine what "good enough" means to me and in particular, I will address the problem of the reliability of the first-person narrator when, later in this thesis, I examine my own epistemological status as tale teller, and yours as the one who hears it, and ours in the sharing of both our tales.

Fig 1a: from a distance

Fig 1b: getting closer

But first, notes on form and structure

1. This is a multi-genre thesis (Romano 2000) which involves videos and photographs available on my website. Integrating this material within the text was challenging:

"Multi-genre papers require a great deal of readers. So much is implicit, so little explicit that multi-genre papers can be quite a cognitive load" (Romano 2000, p.149). Because they lack conventional transitions or structures, Romano advises the use of recurring images, echoes and repetition of form that reverberate among genres, to create unity and help the reader. I have used the recurring motif of an acorn as a signpost to guide you to the website and to integrate themes which run throughout the written text.

  This acorn symbol will provide links to relevant images and related themes

2. The thesis you are about to read is not the one which I originally submitted. My examiners passed my original thesis in February 2015 with conditions, which related to matters both of form and substance. They suggested that theory needed to be made more explicit and integrated within the text; that I needed to engage more deeply with the issue of validity; and that the videos needed to be worked harder rather than presented in raw form and left to the reader to figure out. There was also a deeper underlying issue of what was my practice and questions relating to trustworthiness and authenticity – (what was I hiding?) This last issue had arisen repeatedly in my supervision group and I recognised that it was one of such magnitude that I must address it directly and explicitly.

When I began to work on these conditions in May 2015 and specifically on the afternoon of May 2nd after we scattered my mother's ashes in bluebell woods, I decided that they amounted to such a substantial challenge that in order to address them properly, I might need to rework my entire thesis. At the same time I feared that this would lose more than it gained: the result might be something that I no longer thought of as "mine", that paradoxically was written to appease the requirement of demonstrating authenticity.

<div align="center">I might have to act real.</div>

To help the reader to get the hang of how the acorns work, I invite you now to watch the following iPhone video, which I played at the beginning of my final viva in February 2015, to speak to the question of practice.

Signpost to http://suelloydresearch.com/my-practice/
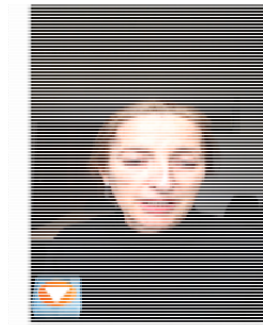
(Please click on the link if reading this electronically, otherwise copy and paste the URL into your internet browser to access the video online).

I am enjoying how my thesis now begins with a video which I made after the thesis was first written. It illustrates how the narrative process of self-creation both transcends and disrupts a linear notion of time.

> *"What we call the beginning is often the end*
> *And to make an end is to make a beginning.*
> *The end is where we start from"*

T.S Eliot, Four Quartets, Little Gidding Part V

Dramatis personae

Sue Lloyd (SL) / Sue Wiper (SW):	One and the same: the author (birth name and married name)
Cybele (pronounced sigh-bee-lee)	The author's amiable flat-coated retriever
The Quartet (AM, CC, PB)	Members of our doctoral study group
Dr Robin Ladkin (RL)	Doctoral supervisor
Folk tale characters, principals	Hansel, Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel
Folk tale characters, supporting roles	A selection of wicked witches, stepmothers etc.

I invite you to visit and explore my website, to browse the photos and videos which accompany this text.

www.suelloydresearch.com

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Telling tales is the common thread that runs through all my practices. I realised this only in the later stages of my inquiry. As an executive search consultant, I tell stories all day to clients and candidates about each other. Then as a mother, I tell stories at bedtime. The story that is most difficult to tell is my own and I take time in this thesis to examine why this might be.

When choosing the title "Telling Tales", I did so purposefully, recognising that it has at least three meanings: "story-telling" as in speaking imaginative narratives, either pre-learned or improvised, with the purpose of entertainment or instruction; "making things up", as in lying or intending to deceive; and "telling tales" on or about someone, as in whistle-blowing, or telling teacher, with the intention of getting them into trouble. The intention can either be to reveal or to conceal. Thus the expression "telling tales" contains within it the positive and the negative, the light and the dark side of the process in which I am engaged, which can be viewed both as seeking to enlighten or seeking to obscure. It is implicit in the process of telling tales that all accounts are partial and therein lies the power of the teller.

While interviewing candidates as an executive search consultant, I found myself asking "how would I answer that question?" or "what would I say if I asked myself that?" These were not questions which occupied much of my attention at the time; it was more a recurring sense of self-reflection during the interview process. Once I started to pay attention, I reviewed my candidate reports and notes and found that on occasions when I was dissatisfied with the reply, when for example I felt that the candidate had provided a weak, evasive or incomplete answer, I would invite them to try it again. I would say something like, "I'm not sure that's right" or "are you sure that's how you felt" or "I'm not very convinced by that answer, have another go". I realised that my motivation was not to get a better answer to improve the candidate's chances of achieving my short-list, but for me to have another go at learning what really happened or what they really did or felt.

Often, after the next try, or sometimes after a few tries, my candidate would say something like, "yes, that's better, that's what I meant to say in the first place" even when the final version was less flattering or self-serving in terms of the job interview, and often they would say "I haven't even told my wife that" (I cannot pass without noting that it is usually a wife).

There would then typically be a display of what I took to be relief, expressed in the form of humour or a laugh, often followed after the interview by an email saying that they really enjoyed it. An example is the following fictionalised exchange:

SL: Why did you have such a difficult relationship with [chairman]?

JD: [first answer- to the effect that the chairman is a difficult character]

SL: Really?

JD: Well, I suppose in a way what went wrong was [second answer – waffle to the effect that they didn't see eye to eye anymore]

SL: I'm still not convinced.

JD: OK. [pause] He always made me feel as though I owed him a favour. Because we worked together since [company] and twice I've followed him as his CFO when he's moved on. It's always been a promotion and I've done well out it but I've always felt that he thinks, and probably others think as well, that I wouldn't have made it up the slippery pole if it wasn't for him. So I owe him. And finally I got fed up with it, playing second fiddle, taking the flack, and I told him and he didn't like it. In fact, he pretty much said that if I didn't like it I could sling my hook, which I took to mean he'd fire me. And that made me angry. I kind of think he owes me [not the other way round] because mostly he's been successful on the back of work I've done. I guess I felt humiliated, yes, but mostly, really angry. [laughs]

I developed a reputation of "giving good interview" such that candidates who knew someone else I had interviewed previously would say, as an ice-breaker, something like "John warned me about you, said I'd better get my story straight". I continued to pay little attention to this aspect of my practice, which got lost in the stream of being busy, racing against deadlines, juggling roles.

Until, around the half-way point in my doctoral inquiry, following the presentation of my transfer paper, when I was challenged to "bring into practice" some of the theories I had been writing about, I remembered all this and on a whim, I took my iPhone, pointed it at my face in video mode and asked myself a question. Then, I turned to face in the other direction (an unnecessary but symbolic gesture of taking the other conversational role),

pointed the iPhone at my face again, and answered it. I found both question and answer surprising.

The question I asked was, "do you still miss your father?" [He died 10 years previously]

I replied:

"More than ever: I miss him all the time. [At this point I started crying]. I miss how impressed he was with everything I did, I miss how he would always be there, an hour before we met, ahead of me, sitting on a bar stool, back to the door, doing the crossword, with a pint half-drunk on the bar and a cigarette, early, making sure he was never late. I miss the glance up as I walked towards him and the casual, hello love. I miss the applause."

And what shocked me when I replayed it was both how true it was and what a lie. It was a long time, further on in my inquiry, until I began to understand why it was both true and not true and that it spoke not about me, or about my father, but about the patterns that connected us, the patterns of our relationship.

From that first time, it was a few short steps to experimenting further with my iPhone by examining folk tales "from the inside" in character and finding that in telling their stories, I told my own. As a process, I found it both revealing and generative and the focus of my inquiry became examining this process and its practice implications.

Why is my inquiry important?

Reason (1996) suggests that every research proposal and resultant thesis should address the questions: "What is the purpose of my inquiry?" and "why does your inquiry matter to you?"

One reading of my inquiry is that it is essentially an exploration of what it means to tell tales about and to, myself and others. I believe that this is a worthwhile exploration at any time, but perhaps particularly in mid-life when I have a sense of urgency and opportunity to evaluate where I am now, and where I might go next.

Carl Rogers commented on Kierkegaard's observation on the fundamental dilemma of the individual:

"I have been astonished to find how accurately the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard pictured the dilemma of the individual … He points out that the most common despair is to be in despair at not choosing, or willing, to be one's self; but that the deepest form of despair is to choose 'to be another than himself'. On the other hand 'to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair', and this choice is the deepest responsibility of man". (Rogers, 1961: 110 cited in Reason & Bradbury 1996, p.111)

And, I find, to women. Echoing as it does Polonius' injunction "to thine own self be true" (Hamlet Act 1, scene 3, line 78), I find this problematic in its assumption that one's "own self" is necessarily known to one or indeed if there is such a thing. In the course of my inquiry, I found support for the view that plural subjectivity is a more accurate ascription and I suggest that "being another" may provide a gateway to being and becoming oneself.

In September 2012, I wrote:

"*I would like to discover whether there are philosophical and life choices which are available to me, which would be better choices for the next stage in my life, than choices which I have made before. It might be that my self-perceptions are incomplete or plain wrong. This inquiry provides an opportunity for me to re-examine my life-choices in terms of how I define myself and my life, and either to reaffirm them or to change them*".

At this time, I was examining the concept of inclusion, both as part of my executive search practice, which deals with elite appointments, and as an existential notion concerning connectedness with self, others and the world. I continued:

"*As part of this process, I have consciously combined my own enlightened self-interest with the aims of this inquiry. So, the inclusion subject and aim, now underlines myself. What is it that I am currently included in, and what am I excluded from? Am I satisfied with this state of affairs? Do I want to change it? Can I?*"

Looking back, I recognise in these quotations how my interest in the experience of "connectedness" which runs through the work of Bateson, Stanislavski and Greenwood is rooted in a yearning for existential connectedness with my elusive self, with others through the quality of my relationships, and with the natural world, with which I had become

increasingly disconnected. It was here that I began to give voice to my sense of unease, a sense that something was missing. I see now that what was conspicuously absent from my professional practice was overt reference to anything pertaining to my inner world, the natural world or the knowledge that comes from imagination and intuition: knowledge which is tacit, magical, wondrous. I began to inquire of these common place forms of knowledge, familiar to everyone through myths and folk tales and prevalent in every day, "non-professional" discourse and practice through metaphor and ritual: where had they gone?

It was one thing to recognise the absence and another thing to know where to look. Much later in my inquiry I found the metaphor of being in the dark. I experienced not only a sense of my inquiry having lost all meaning and direction, but also a kind of "epistemological panic", to borrow Mary Bateson's phrase, combined with a sense that my very identity was on shifting ground. I felt insecure and anxious.

> *"I am in a dark place. I have experienced a sustained sense of being in a dark room, pitch black, feeling my way around, feeling walls and shapes, trying to work out what all these objects are, what is the layout of the room, how do the things in the room relate to each other, trying to understand what is going on in my inquiry space – it feels like a maze, a puzzle".* (Journal notes 2014)

At the time in my inquiry when I felt in the dark and was trying to find the cause of the underlying anxiety which gave rise to my questions, all I could do was to try out different ways of phrasing and explaining what I was about, to see what felt and sounded right.

I realise that this framing and re-framing which occurred over and over again during the last year of my doctorate was my attempt to find a way of telling the tale of my inquiry in a way that rang most true. The writing process was thus an exact reflection of the process of re-telling folk tales which comprised my field work. In both cases, it was only in the telling, that what felt true emerged. It was only in speaking the words and observing and listening to myself do so, that I arrived finally at a sense of relieved comprehension: "*so that's what I'm saying, that's what this is about*".

Here are two ways I reframed my inquiry during this uncomfortable period of sense-seeking and sense-making:

Experimental re-framing #1:

"In my doctoral thesis "<u>Being another: an inquiry into my own personal authenticity</u>" I suggest that there is both self-development and organisational development potential in the practice of "being another". Using folk tales as my source material as part of my own journey of self-development, I crafted a process of self-interview and found that speaking in the voice of another generated insights into my own psyche.

I describe how my experience of "being another" draws upon:

a) Bateson's idea that self is not "bound by skin";

b) Levy-Bruhl's concept of magical participation "if we are to understand participation, we have to renounce our concepts of separateness of phenomena and entertain the possibilities of flexible, transient and transformatory boundaries between things" (Levy-Bruhl 1912, cited in Greenwood 2009, p.39); and

c) Contemporary examples from within the academy of how magical consciousness is a concept capable of forming part of an extended epistemology which is consistent with and complementary to conventional scientific paradigms.

I critique Bettelheim's analysis of the uses of folk tales and locate my research at the intersection of narrative inquiry, method acting and Jung's notion of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Examining contemporary theories of personality, I find that my account of my own personal authenticity is <u>impeded by</u> the notion of an authentic self, other than one which exists only in the moment. I illustrate this with examples from acting theory and recent research into metaphor.

I conclude that my own flourishing depends, in part, on acknowledging both what I am not, and what I might be, and that this is as important than discovering "who I am", on the grounds that my being in the moment is migratory and no sooner known, is gone".

Experimental re-framing #2:

 "My doctorate has taken a long time to crystallise into a specific inquiry question – it's been a meandering process of writing, thinking, examining various possible avenues; and then really just looking for patterns, for themes and clues about what it is that I am inquiring into.

This is the opposite of what I imagined a doctoral inquiry would be like: I assumed that it would be a more or less linear process of identifying a question, defining it precisely, deciding research methods, validity criteria, satisfying ethical board requirements, connecting with the academic community in that field and then, at round about this time, writing up my conclusions in order to present and defend my contribution to the academy.

I had hopes not exactly of a cure for cancer but at least a contribution which would warrant a few appearances in the national media or maybe even a few published articles in leading journals. And certainly, I had assumed that I would be able to state with confidence, when asked, that my doctorate was about … (it would have a snappy title). My doctoral work would be one my defining life endeavours; a summit experience. It would be an important part of my legacy, even validating to some extent a somewhat slack and meandering approach both to my career and to my personal development. Everything would be fine: I would pick up all the loose ends, tidy up my life and skate over the inescapable fact that I had really never asked the hard questions, let alone answered them. I had focussed all my efforts on worldly pleasures and material gain. Along the way, I had been a nice person, overall, and done my bit but I had very definitely not engaged with life's big questions. And I have doubts over how nice I have been – there have been too many things I have chosen not to hear.

And now, I realised that time was running out and there were lots of metaphorical drawers crammed full of unanswered mail and envelopes marked "issues to be dealt with in a few years when I get round to it". By 2012 a few cracks were beginning to appear in the dam, and I was running out of fingers to plug them with".

This seems to be a fitting time to introduce myself to you, as promised earlier.

I have taken my time in doing so, although no doubt by now you will have drawn certain inferences and made certain judgements. I am already wondering how you will have perceived me and whether the following formal introduction will confirm or confound what you already know.

Fig 1c: Framing

Introduction to me, 2014

My professional practice for the last 15 years has been as practice director and partner of global executive search firms. I work with clients to recruit board and senior management executives, generally from competitors. My "10,000 hours" (Gladwell, 2008) has been spent conducting face-to-face interviews with prospective candidates. For the last five years, I have also been non-executive director and investor in a community cinema in the Cotswolds which was restored in association with English Heritage and an ethical bank. The collapse of the non-ethical banking sector in 2008 meant that our family had to invest far more than we anticipated or indeed, could afford, to secure the project. For the reasons below, I took a sabbatical from my executive search firm, attending only a few meetings with clients and partners created valuable time to work on my inquiry and attend to family matters.

In my personal life, the last few years have been extremely stressful. We decided to sell our home, which was traumatic for me. Throughout these hard times, my inquiry has provided me with a refuge (what Grayson Perry in the 2013 Reith Lectures referred to as "an inner shed"). Reflection on the themes which have emerged in my first person inquiry has enabled me to sustain myself through a kind of "naïve therapy" (an expression offered by my supervisor). It has also provided an opportunity for the first time for me to work creatively to develop my practice into areas which I find joyous and generative. I feel personally transformed by my emerging process and keen to explore new paths as they open up before me. I hope that as you explore my work, you will experience some of my enthusiasm.

Taking a few steps back, the following are extracts from my acceptance paper to the Ashridge Doctoral Programme (ADOC), submitted in April 2011. Reading it from a distance of three years, I can see quite clearly now the seeds of what my inquiry became. I reproduce these extracts to show how my story evolves in the telling and because it is important to me in telling my tale, to contextualise how I told my own story at different points in my inquiry.

Applicant: Sue Lloyd ADOC April 2011

"I am currently engaged in an executive search consultancy practice … at a transactional level, my practice is successful and growing. However, I now want to invest time in deepening my understanding of how we relate to each other and to our clients in the hope that a richer and more holistic practice will emerge."

"The Future of Work" is my broad area of research interest. This includes the shifting relationship between the individual and the work organisation, away from being defined as a fixed presence in physical space, towards distributed, shifting and diverse networks of interest groups interacting in the virtual world. It raises questions of identity, relationship and ways of knowing which are emerging and evolving rapidly".

"The theories and intellectual perspectives which have influenced me most throughout my life include: gestalt psychology, subliminal/unconscious knowing, representations of self and the concept of identity, social constructions of reality, holistic approaches and notions of balance."

"My adult life has been lived in three parts: the first, from the age of 18, at the University of Liverpool, reading Sociology. A bastion of the British Communist Party and student activism, it was populated by ex-convicts, social workers, revolutionaries and hippies. This was a formative influence as I learned how to challenge intellectually and not to be afraid to take opposing views. The subjects we studied were mostly around oppression, power, conflict and feminism; involved a radical examination of social constructs.

After dropping out in the middle of my second year, I travelled extensively in the USA and Central America and returned home to take a secretarial course on my mother's advice and then went to University College London where I gained my first degree in Psychology. Faculty was almost equally divided between a behavioural, experimental, rat-based ideology and a consciousness ideology and so here I acquired a degree of intellectual agility and high tolerance of ambiguity. I also studied the philosophy of science. After UCL, I was accepted as a D.Phil student at the University of Oxford.   I left almost before I began, transferring to London Business School to take an MBA. At the time, I believed that I needed to acquire real-life experience. The opportunity to earn money was a powerful motivator."

"After the MBA, I held executive positions at British Telecom, where I managed substantial budgets and headcount without the benefit of any management experience, so this too was a period of intense learning. The organisation was undergoing significant change and my role was to incubate, grow and manage innovate value-added businesses and to engender an entrepreneurial culture within a bureaucratic, monolithic structure. My time at BT led directly into my next role which was a consulting business set up with other BT executives to advise international telecommunications companies in the USA, South Africa and Australia. This was a time of learning about the challenges of cultural diversity, international business practices and geographically dispersed teams."

"The third phase began when I joined an executive search firm where I worked until shortly after the birth of our daughter. I joined my current firm three years ago as Partner and co-director of the technology practice. During this period, I have experienced a growing desire to move back into a learning environment where I can build on my life experiences to date. I want to put my practice and my life on a higher level of participation, involvement and understanding and to become more radical, less defensive and open to new challenges."

"I have a strong connection with the natural world, manifest primarily through the time I spend in the mountains around Chamonix. Rock climbing provides an opportunity to be "in the moment" which I enjoy greatly. I am drawn increasingly to contemplation and reflection and wish to find ways of incorporating this into my practice. This is related, in ways I have yet to discover, to the silences and the spaces between things and the potency of things unsaid and / or unsayable. I am aware that my habitual dependence on verbal dexterity and intellectual knowing has led to an imbalance in appreciating the value of non-verbal and emotional knowing. There is an issue around safety and trust which is at the heart of much of my practice which I feel prevents deep understanding and limits the potential of what I can achieve."

"I like gardening and the natural cycle of the seasons and growth. This year, and every year for the last ten years, I intend to plant a rose garden for my daughter."

"I am a non-executive director and founding investor in a community cinema which acquires, restores and operates derelict art deco cinemas in market towns. We operate in public / private partnership with local authorities to provide multi-use facilities for the arts,

education and minority interest groups. We also work in partnership with an ethical bank which supports community arts and urban regeneration projects (the cinemas are almost always listed by English Heritage and out of the reach of property developers, sited in central retail locations in towns which are suffering from the economic downturn). This is a vibrant enterprise which is based on support from the local community and depends on volunteers as well as the creation of paid jobs."

"In terms of my own career and life, I have strayed quite far from the path and the values that I originally embraced and I feel that I need to revisit some of these and to redress the balance."

"The benefits to me are potentially enormous: apart from the deepening of my practice, the idea of creating a space in my life for learning with others and time for reflection is hugely attractive. My overwhelming feeling when I contemplate starting my doctorate is one of excitement verging on terror, I imagine similar to the feeling just prior to jumping off a cliff, but in a good way."

Fig 2: And into a new world

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced myself and described my dual professional practices in executive search consultancy and community enterprise. I did so in narrative form using extracts from previous writing in order to construct my story about myself and my inquiry. I described how my iPhone self-interview methodology arose from a practice observation about what it would be like to interview myself as opposed to another person and I presented a fictionalised narrative account of the kind of conversation that seeded my curiosity. I explained why I believe my inquiry is important and offered two experimental re-framings to illustrate how migratory and elusive I found my efforts to define it.

In the following chapter, I will continue the narrative of how my inquiry evolved using extracts from my writing to show how practice and inquiry informed each other throughout the process.

CHAPTER TWO: PRACTICE AS INQUIRY

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between my practice and my inquiry and show how the two entwined. The relationship between *theory* and practice is examined in the next chapter, when I describe how certain theories were brought into practice specifically so that I could test them experientially. However, the subject of this chapter is somewhat different: it is intended to illustrate both metaphorically and empirically how I have developed the *practice* of "telling tales" not only as a research tool but also as a way of knowing.

I show how questions and ideas which arose in my early writing were brought into practice in order that I might inquire into them: inquiry ceased to be a purely intellectual process and became far more absorbing. I choose the word "absorbing" intentionally. As I practiced making iPhone interviews and taking photos, the meaning of what I was saying, hearing and seeing seeped and soaked into me, as rain on loamy soil, rather than running off the hard-baked earth. It is as though I have become more permeable and the membrane between myself, the world and others is allowing more to pass between.   This is precisely how it feels to be working with my inquiry question: at first, it belonged outside me, in the world of "knowing about" but as time went by, I found knowledge within me and recognised it as something that was always there, but not available to me.

Extracts from my writing show how my research process emerged from an exploration of concepts and experiences contained in myth, metaphor and folk tales enacted in the ancient woodlands of the English countryside within a five mile radius of where I live.   My decision to use these extracts and weave them together is an homage to Bateson and his idea of the metalogue, in which the subject is reflected in the form of the conversation.   To this end, I develop the metaphor of the forest and offer as a starting point a dryad, a tree spirit, sacred to the oak, and images of the forest gathered during my inquiry.

Part I: Starting a dialogue with imagination

Entering the forest

Imagine walking through the forest, deeper and deeper until there are no paths. Feel the anxiety and panic, the primal fear of being forever lost. The tree canopy, tree trunks and undergrowth appear amorphous, the themes of my inquiry merge into one tangled mess of knotted twine and brambles, muddy holes and mossy stones. The sense of being watched, followed, not alone. The silence is broken by snapping twigs, dripping water, rustling leaves, bird song. Deeper silence falls.

Fig 3: Heartbeating

Introduction to Part I

My inquiry arose from practice, in response first to my musing about self-interview and then to a specific challenge by my viva examiner at the mid-point of the doctoral process to "bring into practice" what I had been describing largely from a theoretical perspective: my interest in extended epistemology at the boundaries of knowing. There followed a period of around a year during which I sought to do this and to practice, as in "to rehearse", ways of working with the theories which inspired my inquiry. My actions ignited my curiosity and set my imagination spinning: I felt very alive. I felt like the Ouroboros, the ancient symbol depicting a serpent devouring its own tail; it represents self-reflexivity and cyclicality and should be imagined not as a static image but rotating in a perpetual motion of self-renewal. Like the Ouroboros, my progression was in the form of renewal and growth rather than forward motion. That came later.

Fig 4: Orobouros

(drawing by Theodoros Pelecanos, 1478)

I describe below this beginning phase as occurring in three cycles:

First Cycle: Inclusion (it's not about that)

Second Cycle: Discovering the golden thread (myth and magic)

Third Cycle: Engaging with my inquiry narrative (two workshops)

First Cycle: Inclusion – it's not about that

When I first approached my inquiry, I framed it in terms of abstract concepts such as "the future of work" and later "inclusion" and I expressed my need to find a way of bridging my two seemingly distant practices of executive search and community cinema. I drew upon my climbing experience to offer the image of a classic figure of 8 knot, shown below, which my supervisor suggested might describe my incursions into each of these two areas, with me at the centre of the knot, the intersection. This proved a helpful image, because it has movement and energy within it, dipping into one area then looping round to return to a point of reflection. It is also the symbol of infinity.

Figure Eight Knot

Fig 5: and it catches falls

I described how, in both these practice areas, the issue of inclusion is central. My executive search practice involves decisions regarding the selection and appointment of corporate leaders in positions of power and influence. This inevitably involves the rejection of others. The community cinema enterprise is founded on the efforts of a demographically diverse group of volunteers who support the restoration in many ways. They include investors, professionals, trades and crafts people, artists, poets, graphic designers, historians, social workers, teachers, elected representatives, family and neighbours. The concept of inclusion seemed relevant in the sense that the cinema was a locus, a focal point of a community in which everyone felt involved or wanted to be involved.

I made a series of observations which on reflection, were prescient:

1. Inclusion within the meaning of my inquiry requires <u>not only</u> a feeling of inclusion by the participant, but acknowledgement or <u>validation</u> of their inclusion by others, otherwise in power terms it is illusory (in the sense that presence in the room is not sufficient to be a participant in the group);

2. Self-perception and the perception of self by others is negotiated and emergent and derived from social relationships;

3. Becoming and being ourselves is a creative process. It might involve painting ourselves like a picture, experimenting on ourselves like a social scientist, analysing ourselves like a psychotherapist, changing ourselves as evolving beings, or possibly accepting ourselves for what we are or believe and want ourselves to be;

4. Inclusion might mean "being allowed to participate" or "behaving / being in ways that invite inclusion" or "taking action that ensures inclusion" and these three increasingly assertive stances might imply different ways of imagining ourselves, being ourselves and acting on ourselves and the world;

5. Regarding ourselves as our own artistic creations might provide opportunities to achieve our potential;

6. Rough sketches / dress rehearsals could take place in two very different transformational spaces - physical space (social milieu) and virtual space (social media);

7. Internet virtual worlds might have transformational or therapeutic potential as practice spaces.

I concluded:

"Social inclusion is the broad topic of my inquiry: my intention is to use my inquiry to seek fruitful approaches to promoting inclusion within the corporate and the community enterprise worlds in which I work."

Or so I thought.

"At our recent supervision group meeting on 8th July, my supervisor was unconvinced that social inclusion was the true nature of my inquiry. Instead, it may be that a "golden thread" runs through this paper, of interconnections which at the moment are unclear to me, and that these connections may turn out to be my true inquiry. In response to his suggestion, I will reassemble my writing to include sections from a previous paper, which was a meditation on my rose garden. I hope that through this process, we can discern the golden thread.

Already, it came to me that my true inquiry might be less about "social inclusion", and more about "belonging". As I reflect on this intriguing word, I realise that etymologically, "longing" means yearning, wanting, desire. Belonging / to be longing. I will dwell on the notion of belonging and how it feels to belong and not to belong."

Second Cycle: Discovering the golden thread (myth and magic)

I present below extracts from three papers completed between April 2011 and April 2012 which on later examination revealed the "golden thread" of myth and magic and illuminated three underlying inquiry themes.

The papers were entitled:

> Notes on my rose garden (May 2011)
>
> Paths that wind, the ties that bind (November 2011)
>
> A post-modern screenplay: shuffling the pack (April 2012)

The themes they illuminated were:

1. The nature and aesthetics of <u>being</u>, <u>belonging</u> and <u>becoming</u>;

2. The transformational power of symbols, metaphors and magic on my experience in the world; and

3. An understanding that within my practice, <u>instinct</u>, <u>insight</u> and <u>intuition</u> are the processes which interest me.

At the time of writing, I seemed to regard these themes as inessential, almost irrelevant embellishments to a more serious endeavour of proper academic research. I now see them as foundational.

When I read them now they are powerful and intense: they mean more now than I appreciated then.

Notes On My Rose Garden (May 2011)

"We came to our house in December 2000, just before Christmas in deep snow … now, there are briar roses growing wild in the hedges around us and these will link the formal rose garden with the surrounding land. Also known as the dog rose (R. canina) the wild rose is named after the ancient belief that its roots could cure the bite of mad dogs."

"During our first ADOC residential weekend, our supervisor played us "Enlightenment" by Van Morrison and we thought about when it was that we first realised, "It's up to you, the way you think". I first knew this intuitively when I used to climb a tree as a child aged around 12, and sit in a place where the branches divided, and think myself into a happy future. The tree was a young oak, similar in age and shape to one which grows close to where the rose garden will be."

"It's up to you, the way you think" was a theme I recognised from "The Owl Service" (Alan Garner, 1967), which I read when young, probably around a year later. The book reinterprets a Welsh tale from the Mabinogion about Lleu and his wife Blodeuwedd who was made for him out of flowers, and later he turned her into an owl in revenge for her infidelity. The drama is re-enacted from generation to generation, as ambiguous images – in a painting, on a design on a dinner service - are perceived by protagonists either as owls or as flowers, and their way of seeing the pattern (as owls or flowers) determines their story."

"I read Dr Chris Seeley's paper "Uncharted territory" in which she quotes Foucault. "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault 1997 cited in Seeley 2011). I recalled that "We are not separate from our world, but we participate in it and "co-create" it in the context of our relationships." (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

"I wanted to use the symbolism of the rose in designing aspects of the rose garden … In alchemy, the rose is a symbol of conjunction "the chymical wedding"; the masculine (the red king) and the feminine (the white queen) are often portrayed as roses. In the War of the Roses, Yorkshire, my mother's home county, was represented by the white rose."

"I have chosen [to create] in the knot garden to contain my roses, neither the mandala nor the pentacle with its magical connotations and rootedness, but instead, the classic rock-climbing knot – the figure of 8. This is a binding knot, simple and strong, that stops falls. The application of a heavy load increases its strength rather than reduces it."

"I am fond of spells: binding spells in particular, which are related to knots."

Extracts from Paths that wind, the ties that bind (November 2011)

"My inquiry has been shipwrecked and I have woken up on a beach somewhere, my craft in pieces all around me and I am somewhat tattered and torn. Much is lost but by the feeling deep inside me and the smile on my face as I look down upon it, I see that for some reason, I am not dismayed. Is this a dream I had? Where am I now? I hate the sea: we came from here. This sea metaphor haunts me: by my nature, I am earthbound, of soil and land. I would rather be anywhere than at sea."

"Belonging, longing, yearning, the discovery of a new word saudade, a complex Portuguese word, with no exact translation in English.   It describes a yearning with the knowledge that the object of longing might never return. It has been described as a "vague and constant desire for something that does not and probably cannot exist ... a turning towards the past or towards the future". It may also be translated as a deep longing or yearning for something which does not exist or is unattainable. It is described as "the love that remains" or "the love that stays."

"The paths in the woods and the places they might lead us to, a destination, a place of security. I locate us in a deep recession, with fear and hunger all around, and no-one to lead us through the dark. Longing for firelight, candlelight, warmth and home."

"We are approaching the 22nd December, the shortest day, the darkest day, and the point when days start to get longer. This day is wholly unaccounted for in the Celtic tree calendar; it is the day spoken of in folk tales where the story takes place over a year and a day."

"The Holzweg (path through the woods) – as everyone who grew up in a country with so many forests knows – is in fact only an imaginary path. It does not lead anywhere but comes to an abrupt halt somewhere in the undergrowth. It was the woodcutters who dragged the felled tree trunks along these paths, creating as they did so an aisle in the woods. However, if works of art are created out of these logs of wood, then what we are looking at with fascination is the creation of people who have (found) a way with wood."

"When Sehnsucht (desire) leads you up the garden path" Speech by Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher at the Ninth International Woodcarvers on 10 July 2006.

"And I am caught, balancing on a very long thin wire, with deep falls below me, between youth and age, holding the moment of knowing that my step-sons are adults and my daughter is 12, my parents have gone and I have finally arrived here, where the grown up people are, making the arrangements, keeping the home, and locking the doors at night".

"I bought myself a camera: a small, simple one, and I am photographing the things that we do, and in doing so, I am creating my past, recalled."

"When I contemplate these philosophical aspects of my inquiry, I feel as though I am entering a deep, dark forest with a footpath that divides and divides again and I am a little anxious that I might get lost. Footpaths are shifting things in the following sense: they look different on the way back, than on the way you came. So, following even a well-worn footpath is no guarantee of safe return if the path keeps dividing. If you do get lost, don't keep wandering – you might never be found. Wait to be rescued. This only works if you have told someone where you are going."

"Journeys begin purposefully with a destination in mind: full of hope. Wanderings are wanderings and always lead somewhere, of course. Both are a process through time and space, both internal and external: journeys do not always require travel in a physical sense but they always mindful of distances travelled existentially. "

Extracts from A Post-Modern Screenplay: Shuffling the Pack (April 2012)

Looms, harps and spells

"I spoke about my "craft du jour", or should I say, "craft du jours perdus", which was weaving. I found a loom at school which I liberated into my own possession, and on which I wove strange, rustic fabrics, with feathers in there, and wool taken from barbed wire in Yorkshire, and acorns and twigs, the occasional dead bird."

"I realise now, in writing this, that the secret is in the plucking of things, pulling them in, strands, notes, incantations – foraging, picking out, discarding, taking what's good, knowing what is excellent, arête, that which is good. An ear for it, an eye for it, intuition."

Weaving stories / weaving spells

"*In the story of Rumpelstiltskin, the miller's daughter broke out of imprisonment by breaking a naming spell – upon which, all magical powers of her captor dissolved and Rumpelstiltskin flew into a rage, stamped his feet and disappeared never to be seen again. The deeper magic in this story lies, I believe, in the power differential between the knower and the not-knower, or the known and the unknown – the liberating power of naming that which harms us. Also consider the parallels between the spinner of straw and the spinner of tales. Storytellers spin stories with words: spinning, like knitting today, was an activity where storytelling took place and was the domain of women in the community. I have not yet found any substantiation for my own view that this story also refers to alchemical transmutation of the common, straw, into the precious, gold. As such, the spell-breaking, intermediated by a messenger who discovers the name of Rumpelstiltskin through subterfuge, may itself be a subterfuge for the feminine protagonist in the forbidden arts, also associated with the transubstantiation of Holy Mass and the heretical presence of the female priestess.*"

Reflections on the word "becoming"

"*What about "be"-coming, to come to "be" at a place, to arrive, it means a transformation also, a change of state, a "turning into". At what moment does something "become" something else? When does ice become water, embers become ash, black become grey? Is it*

a gradual or a step-change? Do we, do the seasons, change in big epiphanic moments or through gradual infinitesimally small, imperceptible little changes? At what point, looking at it, do we say it is this rather than that. When does summer become autumn or winter become spring? A rustling of leaves, a chill, a smell of loam, a wanting for green ginger wine and whisky rather than Chablis, the lighting of a fire. At what moment do we become something other than what we were before – what are the moments in life that define us?"

"My hypothesis is that there is an asymmetry – to others, I change slowly, almost imperceptibly, but to my selves, there are step-changes of recognition and realisation, moments when things change. It's the flashlight, the light-switch, the eureka, the crawling out of the chrysalis and leaving it behind on the forest floor, emerging tender and blinking on a new dawn."

"Proust's insight is that human experience is not as a chronological narrative but through thought-associations and the realisation of memory. The madeleine moment (mediated by taste for Proust but for me, more by smell, like my own smells of childhood – Chanel No.5, lilac, honeysuckle, wet soil, ironed linen sheets dried on a washing line, Johnson's baby talc, wet dog, ink, railway stations)."

Post-modern magic

"In examining notions of magical consciousness, I continue to be intrigued by the potential of hyper-connectivity to create post-modern ways of knowing through images of <u>webs</u> both natural and digital, and I seek to develop post-modern magical paradigms within my practice which challenge and build upon conventional conceptual frameworks – "a post-modern witch"?

My inquiry shifts on seeing the golden thread

"I am not entirely happy with the way my inquiry has developed to date: it has meandered, albeit into some interesting backwaters and at other times has burst out of its banks and flooded its shores. I sought a well-defined inquiry topic, in order that I could contain my

research within the time available but I underestimated the depth and breadth and sheer necessity for digging deep into my own values, hopes and fears. This latest development, which has revealed the strong influence of natural philosophy, magical enchantment and myth on my worldview, has alarmed me because I struggle to accept its legitimacy either for my practice or for my doctoral thesis and in one way, I would like to disappear it again. In another way, I am intrigued by its potential as a metaphor for personal development and transformation and I am enjoying working with it."

I had realised by then that my inquiry is into the <u>quality of my relationships</u> with myself and others and our relationships with the natural world. I was intrigued by the possibility of developing my practice based on a faculty of expanded consciousness and extended epistemologies such as <u>instinct</u>, <u>insight</u> and <u>intuition</u>.

By the end of this second cycle, I began to speculate that the very nature of magic, as an elusive, hidden, often transgressive, "disappeared" phenomenon associated with disreputable practice might deliver powerful metaphors for transformative practice which requires and benefits from an expanded consciousness which is more-than-rational.

I became increasingly intrigued by my sense that "*things are not as they seem*". Levy-Bruhl observes that, "As far as we are permitted to go back into observable primitive societies … man has had the revelation that reality is such as he sees it and at the same time there exists another reality, or better said, that the reality given to him is *at one and the same time what it is and other than what it is".* (1985, p.103). The idea resonated that as humans we have two coexisting forms of consciousness: rational-logical and imaginal.

It is the relationship between these two expressions of reality that I decided to inquire into next. It led me to understand that there is more than one way to tell a tale.

Third Cycle: Engaging with my inquiry narrative - Two workshops (June 2012)

The following are accounts of two workshops during which I engaged with the golden threads described above. As before, I present these accounts in the form of extracts from my writing at the time.

1. Dr Steve Marshall workshop (June 2012)

Introduction to session

In this session, we were asked to bring a photograph with us in it. I asked a friend to take a photo of me in her apple tree. I called it "Sue Sleeping Take 2" because it reprised a previous photo I had taken myself, on my iPhone, in another ancient apple tree which survives in the garden of my old house. During the session, we were invited to visit each other's photos and work on them, kind of photoshop them, add things.

JR did the "photo-shop" on my photo: she gave me red and golden hair, and scattered glitter that looks like folk dust over me and the tree. Later, my supervisor asked "what is the archetype represented by this?" and it was Midsummer's Night Dream, the enchanted ones.

Fig 6: Sue Sleeping Take 2

JR wrote:

"Working on Sue's photo after I had been with the trees, opened me to the fire inside that we don't always see ourselves".

I look at this image that JR made and think, "I am enchanted".

I am grateful to JR for creating a beautiful and insightful image which so closely reflects the spirit of my current thinking.

2. James Aldridge workshop (June 2012)

The importance of place, location and localness first dawned on me during this session. My picture, which is reproduced below was deeply embedded in my local knowledge of the land on which Ashridge and my own home stands. I realised how much I had absorbed by dwelling in this place.

Introduction to session:

> *"If we are to fully know ourselves, and the world of which we are a part, we need to use our full capacities to explore and reflect on our relationship with our material, social and ecological environment and gain a deep understanding of our own professional practice. This workshop experience will offer deep experiential and metaphoric knowing for your own research - for knowing the landscape and archaeology of your inquiries: glimpsing the underlying themes and patterns, unearthing the shadowy hidden issues and understanding what's at the boundaries of your territory. During the workshop we'll explore and articulate these connections".* (Aldridge 2012)

Fig 7: the landscape of my inquiry

My narrative, as I recalled sharing with the group, on the picture I created:

"So, this is my picture. James, when you were talking about your work earlier, the things that struck me most vividly were the image of you in the forest wearing the deer mask, and then, even more powerfully, what I will refer to as the "voodoo doll" - I had a very strong impulse to go and create my own doll. It really resonated with me, and also the fact that you had made it.

I should say that my influences are Catholic and Pagan: I started my picture with the Cross, recalling the monastery which was the first known building here on this site. I tied a wooden cross with twine and placed it over the paper cross which divides the paper into quadrants, fixing it with wire, and this above it is a wire "Crown of Thorns" – for Christ, and for Kings and Queens. I wanted to show in my picture not just Ashridge House, as it is today, but what has happened to people here, and to show the bloody, savage aspects of its connection with nature and the surrounding country, rather than just the romantic aspects of the beauty of the place.

I know this place: I live near here and I know the country around it.
This is a place of witchcraft and sacrifice, which is why I have shown blood. Not just blood of the Cross, and the phial of Christ's blood, the relic which founded the monastery, but also the violent blood of ritualistic sacrifice, the sacrament of Holy Communion, transubstantiation, alchemical transmutation and transformation in all its forms.

It is a deeply significant place historically. I think it is true that Elizabeth I, before she was crowned, was taken from here to the Tower of London, and the way was down the Golden Valley, just to the right of the college, down the Gade Valley and to London along the old Roman road, in fear of execution.

Ivinghoe Beacon is over there: the Ridgeway takes you from there all the way to Avebury near Stonehenge.

The ash in my picture means the ash trees which characterise the "Ash Ridge" – the forest now is mainly beech and birch with ash, and some oak. I have used quotations in my picture, mainly Biblical, such as this one here "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" referring both to mortality and to the cycle of life and death. And also, from the New Testament, "by their works you shall know them" – I thought this was relevant to Action Research, a dominant theme at ADOC. I have written the word Heretic on the Cross.

[JR then asked "why fire?"]

I am working with the elements: wind, fire, rain which are also used in magic as the fundamental elements. I was aware while we were working that the elements were working around us dramatically: we started in bright sunshine, then it rained, got dark, the wind blew strongly, calmed again, and sun came out. The quotation "then rain came" is a reversal of Nordic myth where often saga cycles are ended simply with "then fire came" which destroys then brings life. Hanging here at the top is a binding spell (five twigs bound with string, incanted in the tying) and this is a bunch of flowers, also tied with string.

I decided to frame my picture, as we have been talking about frames. This solid black rectangle is a frame, which I have positioned in the middle. It also represents Ashridge House, a geometric, non-natural feature on the natural landscape, built after the rest was here. (Sue Lloyd, 16th June 2012)

I asked for feedback from my supervision group about whether the above was a true representation of my narrative and received the following:

"This certainly fits with my recollections. I suppose the only thing missing for me is a description of how engaged you were in the session, the questions you asked of James, the passion, absorption and perhaps even 'fire' with which you both tackled the task and presented your picture. Yet this seemed to contrast with your apparent reticence to push yourself forward into presenting it to the big group. Why? What other interactions did you

have with others in the making of it? How did you feel as you were doing the task? What did being drawn to the doll feel like?" (AM, personal communication)

I reflected on this and wrote the following:

"The image of the "voodoo doll" in James' photo was intensely powerful. It invoked a sense of being the spirit of the place combined with very strong creational intent on James' part. I will ask him about the background to this piece of work and inquire into the deep meanings of creating dolls like this one. It reminded me of a time at Cybele, a house on the South African high veldt, where my husband and I stayed, when walking through the fields inhabited by estate workers, dolls were attached to posts and trees – quite large ones, and prominent, it felt not exactly threatening, but claiming as in "this is our land, tread carefully". Another time, in Venda, a dark country where brooding spirits dwell, a not happy place, of sullen people with none of the exuberance of Africa, I bought the wooden roughly-carved monkey which lives in our house. It is not at all benevolent but not evil either – but it is certainly a stranger in an English house, who does not fit well with the woodlands around it or the comforts of home. It feels as though it is waiting for its chance. Like the witchdoctor's shops in Johannesburg, where blood drips to the floor from recently slain monkey's heads, hanging from the rafters, menacing but incapacitated.

My strong impulse was to create a doll like James', simple, immediate – I looked for materials on the table and not finding them, considering going to the dining room or lavatories and using napkins and towels, and rubbing soil into them, stitching the fabric with wire, twine and string. I considered leaving the session, getting in my car and going home to make one."

REFLECTIONS AT THE END OF PART I

In Part I of this chapter on *Practice as Inquiry*, in which I examine the relationship between my practice and my inquiry and show how the two are entwined, I described three cycles of action and reflection:

First Cycle: Inclusion (it's not about that)

Second Cycle: Discovering the golden thread (myth and magic)

Third Cycle: Engaging with my inquiry narrative – two workshops

Time to Pause

If you wanted to share my experience in the telling, this is where you would go for a walk, make a cup of tea, open a bottle of wine or take the summer off.

That's what I did – I needed to pause for a while, and think a little bit, and recover from the shock of realising that my inquiry was taking on a life of its own, one which was exhilarating but taking me deeper into the metaphorical and very possibly, literal forest than I had intended to travel.

When next we meet …

In the next section, Part II, I describe how two vivas helped me to build upon the issues identified above and realise the true nature of my inquiry.

PART II: Critical Examination – a tale of two viva voce

After a period of extended reflection, I returned to my inquiry. I examine next how I was challenged by two internal viva voce which form part of the ADOC process, and how I responded in practice.

Viva 1: October 2012

Paper title: Enchanting: an inquiry into magical, inspirited practice

Examiner: Dr Steve Marshall

Viva 2: February 2014

Paper title: An action inquiry into magical metaphor and its practice potential

Examiners: Dr Chris Seeley and Dr Sarah Beart

Peer practitioner: James Aldridge

Reflections on Viva 1

At my first viva, I was presented with a challenge by my examiner, to "bring into practice" what I had been writing about, which included Greenwood's reframing of the notion of magical consciousness. In response, I arranged a workshop with my supervision group to make a gingerbread house. The preparation for this involved researching the Grimm's folk tale Hansel & Gretel, which features a gingerbread house, and I was soon hooked on a new method and process of exploring the themes and characters by working in the forest, taking photos and video recordings on my iPhone.

I found the process both fascinating and sustaining and it led over the next twelve months to my completing a trilogy of Hansel & Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel, a three-part cycle of inquiry into my emerging process. This trilogy is presented in a later chapter, *Field Studies: Folk Tales and Ogham* which describes my retelling of each tale, speaking in character. The telling takes place in the forest.

By September 2013, the reflexive interweaving of practice and inquiry was beginning to make sense. I felt that I was ready to begin the next phase in which I wanted to distil the essence of what I had discovered in practice terms and critically examine its relevance. I continued to work within what I had come to regard as narrative inquiry, recognising anew that the telling changes both the tale and the teller and wishing to honour the essential reflexivity and elemental volatility of my inquiry themes.

Below, I present extracts from my July 2013 paper and then describe how my inquiry was starting to crystallise around a few meta-themes which were starting to feel as though they belonged to me.

"The themes of being, belonging and becoming which gradually emerged in my earlier writing, I now regarded as early indicators of a deeper and more significant inquiry which at that time I could not name, but which became an inquiry into the nature of who, amongst our many past, present and future selves, we are here and now – in our "present sense". In terms of my own quest: where, when and to whom do I belong and who am I becoming?"

"I am experiencing a greater sense of confidence in the way the threads of my inquiry are connected: my affinity with the idea of magical consciousness and personal transformation are not only proving beneficial in helping me to process what is going on in my own life at present, but seem to be linked to some of the recurring themes which emerged during my early writing:

Nature and old ways of knowing: the forest, paths that wind, story-telling, folk tales

Postmodern ways of knowing: hyper-connectivity, multiplicity of truths, commensurability of paradigms, transience

Philosophical possibilities: Being, Becoming, Belonging and the simultaneous present of past, present and future selves"

"I have begun to examine why I expressed reluctance and rejection of the possibility that my work could have therapeutic relevance to myself and others – expressed by telephone to my supervisor."

"I have considered the myths of Echo and Narcissus and begun to admit the possibility of therapeutic relevance of my method and process including asking myself whether and how my choice of method and process relates to my own inner landscape.

I am trying to address the challenges presented by self-disclosure and authenticity.
I have started to have conversations with others about my iPhone filming work and to invite them to participate and share their experience of the process."

Reflections on Viva 2

My supervisor had alarmed me before this second viva: what I heard him say was that while my work had great value, it "absolutely did not" resemble a thesis. He asked me whether I actually wanted to write it up as a doctorate. This startled me and I fleetingly considered abandoning my inquiry or retreating to firmer ground.

I was galvanised into frantic action and produced a visual presentation intended to focus my mind during the forthcoming viva on four questions:

>   What are the connections between my inquiry threads?
>   What am I saying, or trying to say?
>   What is the relevance?
>   Why would anyone be interested – what is my inquiry in the service of?

And Question 5 – why do I find it so unusually difficult to answer the above?

I was extremely nervous at the start of the viva and decided to steady myself by performing the poem I recited at my first viva:

Heaven – Haven

A nun takes the veil

I have desired to go

Where springs not fail,

To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail

And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be

Where no storms come,

Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,

And out of the swing of the sea.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1864)

I didn't plan to do this but needed to stand up and step away from the group into my own space. One of the participant observers identified that this was a collecting spell and it worked well for me. It calmed me and during my recitation I felt a great sense of love in the warm, quiet room and I felt privileged to be able to be there, with you all, and the bright blue sky outside and the courtyard garden. After saying the poem, I felt safe and strong.

The poem itself gave rise to one of the great insights of the session: one of my internal examiners said that what grabbed her attention was "*I have asked to be where no storms come*". I heard the shattering of metaphorical glass when she said it as I realised that all my life I have avoided storms.

Another great insight, equally startling, was when my examiner pointed to all my beautiful photos which I had scattered over the table and the floor and said, "I see Spring here – where is the dark side?" My other examiner also commented that she wanted to see what was "underneath", indicating under the table or on the back of the photos, but referring to the dark side. Then she said – "maybe it's over there" and nodded to the table behind me,

where I had placed all the rest of the photos, the ones I did not spread around the room, face down.

When I glanced behind me, in an instinctive response to tracking her gaze, I saw that the pile of photos I had unconsciously chosen not to display were indeed the dark side photos: the princes dying on thorns, the blood.

At this point I felt two things with equal intensity: the first, an exhilarating thrill that I had disappeared something without even knowing it, and the second, a sense that I had been outmanoeuvred – as though I had intended to conceal something, and failed. That I had been found out: I didn't mind, I enjoyed the sheer mastery, mine in doing it, albeit unsuccessfully, my examiner's in spotting it. I had a sense that my supervisor had already noted the photos I had left out because when I looked to him, seeking affirmation of my amazement, he didn't look amazed at all, he was sort of smiling.

There were many more moments during my viva when I gained tremendous insight into my inquiry. I offer this as illustration of how my inquiry had ceased to be separate from me and become integral: I experienced the viva not as a detached evaluation of past events but as part of the process that Judi Marshall (2001) refers to as "living life as inquiry". It has become part of my telling.

REFLECTIONS AT THE END OF PART II

In Part II of this chapter on *Practice as Inquiry*, I examined my experiences in two internal viva voce which are integral to the ADOC programme and described how the insights generated were springboards which enabled me to perceive with greater clarity the nature of my inquiry and where I needed to go next. I found the internal viva process pivotal and essential to my learning process. I believe it is unique to ADOC and the opportunity of testing my thesis not once but twice in the process was invaluable.

Next, in Part III, I describe how I moved forward into the final stage of "crafting my thesis" out of the golden threads. I embrace and honour the fact that in all three stages, my narrative inquiry has been told by others as much as by me. I believe that the ADOC programme provided me with the acceptance necessary for me to hear and to receive the voices of others in my telling.

Part III: Crafting a thesis [April 2014 - date]

How I felt at the end of March 2014:-

"The result therefore of our present enquiry

is that we find no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end"

James Hutton, 'Theory of the Earth'

Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 1788, **1**, 304.

Much has changed

In the early days of my doctoral writing, I experienced a sense that what I was writing about was not really what I was writing about, but what I was really writing about eluded me. I accepted my supervisor's invitation simply to write what was sustaining to me and so I started simply to write. What I discovered was that the writing that comes most naturally to me darts around, jumping from one thing to another, following connections and leaping around.

The image comes to me now of a honey bee dipping into blossom after blossom, each choice of flower opportunistic without a particular plan or map of where to go next. I know now, from keeping bees, that honey bees are far from random creatures and follow highly systematic flight patterns which involve complex communication with other bees and radar-like navigational systems which take them home at night to the hive. They may not be aware of it and I believe this is what happened to me as I took flight early in my inquiry.

My reading method in those early days was to Google what I was interested in and then follow the links. This led me to consider what effect the internet and "hyper-connectivity" had on my learning. I concluded that it enabled me to cast my net wide and then to sort through the fish for the one I liked the look of rather than to research the feeding patterns of the fish I was after and then go and look in that part of the ocean. I acknowledge that this may not be accepted academic practice within conventional scientific paradigms and yet it felt more real and natural than the "form a hypothesis and test it" approach. Crucially, it opened the door for the catalytic role of theory in my inquiry. I could approach my work experientially and then be interested in theory which illuminated my experience rather than

interpret my experience in terms of a theoretical ground which I had pre-selected. This seemed to give primacy to my experience of the world rather than to disembodied intellectual theory, consistent with the phenomenological approach which I have chosen to adopt.

Throughout most of my inquiry, I had no sense of the meaning or significance of what I was doing or the consequences it would have on where I ended up. This was manifestly the case at my viva in February 2014 when my supervisor and participant observer both noted that at certain points they had no idea what I was talking about. I believe that there were two reasons for this.

The first, that I was grappling with "question 5"– namely, why did I find it so unusually difficult to explain what my inquiry was about? Question 5 felt similar to "Room 101" in Orwell's 1984 (referenced in my work on Sleeping Beauty, as the tower in the palace, the place of our worst fears
.
I became convinced that there was a kind of obscuring or concealing process going on, in which I did not want to share with others or express to myself what it was that I wanted to say.

The second reason was that the nature of my reading and writing method was so capricious and labyrinthine that frequently it made no sense, even to myself. While I was deep into developing my method, this did not seem important. It became a challenge only when it came to writing up the thesis, for a wider audience, and it was then too that the issue of form and register surfaced. How to make this look, sound and feel like a doctoral thesis?

These were the issues confronting me in the final stage of writing up and why I decided to "tell the story" of my inquiry in narrative form using extracts from my writing in order to "show not tell".

What I learned from "writing up"

This present chapter on *Practice as Inquiry* is drawing to a close but would not be complete without acknowledging the ways in which the process of writing this thesis has also influenced and illuminated the themes which concern my inquiry.

My original idea was to complete, so far as possible, the development of my iPhone method to the point at which I could describe it, illustrate it and place it in the context of the theoretical fields which had inspired me in the first place: Bateson's Level III learning, Stanislavski's Magic If, and Greenwood's magical consciousness. However, I realised that my inquiry was deepening in the process of writing about it, and that my writing was making a significant contribution to the sense-making process. I needed to include this within my inquiry rather than regard it as an after-the-event "writing up", separate from the inquiry itself.

Life and inquiry inseparable

I found that the boundaries between my life and my inquiry had shifted and blurred so that I was increasingly applying my iPhone method to help me address issues and questions that arose in practice in both personal and professional spheres.

First and second person inquiry are conflated

It was pointed out to me by a colleague that one of the consequences of my self-interview process (both within the context of what I regarded as first person enactment of folk tales and within a professional practice context which I regarded as second person) is that aspects of first and second person inquiry become conflated. When I interview myself as another, I am being a) myself who asks the questions, b) myself who answers for another, and c) myself the inquirer / observer. This is an extension of any reflexive practice as a consequence of the passage of time such that my action is contemplated, anticipated, enacted, experienced in the moment, observed and reflected upon, time after time.

Is seeing ourselves as others see us so different from seeing ourselves as we see us, given that what I observe every time changes as a consequence of shifts in my interpretation of the original event? Just as it is impossible to step into the same river twice, I find that it is impossible to tell the same story again, in the same way.

Fig 8: River road to Ashridge

Conclusion

I set out in this chapter to show how I have developed the *practice* of "telling tales" not only as a research tool but also as a way of knowing. In the process of inquiring into this practice, not only has my practice developed to include new methodologies but so too has my inquiry deepened. I have examined how the process of telling tales has revealed threads which I recognised only after the event, in the reflective cycle which followed. I experienced this as the tale telling me, at the same time as me telling the tale, in a way which is reminiscent of the Ouroborus, a symbol to which I return, concluding that in my process, discovery is not of the new, but of what is already contained within but concealed.

CHAPTER THREE: RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY AND THE NARRATIVE SELF

Some observations …

While considering how my theoretical influences manifested themselves within my thesis, I prepared a map based on Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) notion of *rhizomal* as opposed to arboreal knowing: it is de-centred with no definitive directional relationship between elements. I then developed it in practice by overlaying torn up photos of collages of my folk tale images to make a border, or a frame, with rhizomal root material, compost, acorns and autumn leaves (it was by now September 2015) and then I placed it in mud on the forest floor then scattered it with fallen leaves, gold leaf, copper wire and glitter, representing magic, fairy dust. I overwrote it with key words from my thesis, trying to convey how meaning is "written over" what happens in practice. This process is the opposite of trying to "illustrate" in the conventional sense of offering the reader an authorial explanation in diagrammatic form of what has been written in text.

While the map *represents* my theoretical terrain, it does so after the manner of the chess board in Lewis Carroll's (1871) Through the Looking Glass, a metaphor which I find highly relevant to post-modern epistemology. It presumes that being is always becoming and nothing ever (reliably) stands still. Inevitably, when reproduced on the page, it is frozen in time which is why it neither depicts "reality" nor is very helpful in achieving a destination. Over a long enough time-span, the same is true of all maps. A truer representation would have involved the elements moving and shifting in and out of focus but this was far beyond my artistic and technical ability.

What I think my map does achieve is a visual representation of my relational ontology and a clear sense of paradigmatic plurality. It was inspired by a photograph taken by a critical friend, Kathy Skerritt, discussed in the following chapter, *Reseach Methodology, Validity and Ethics* in relation to postmodern challenges to validity, signposted below.
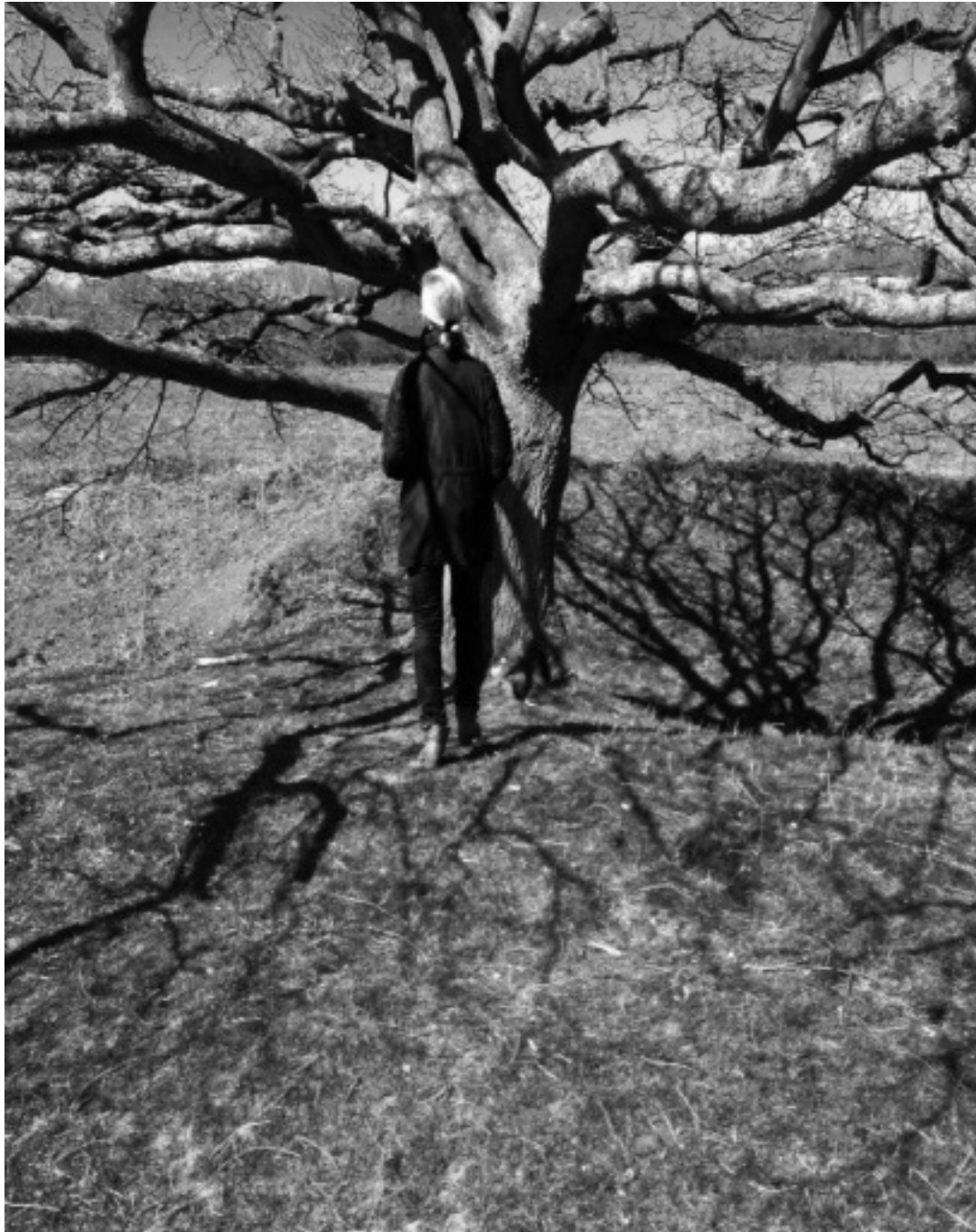
signpost to Chapter 4, Research Methodology, Validity and Ethics, page 116

Map of my theoretical terrain
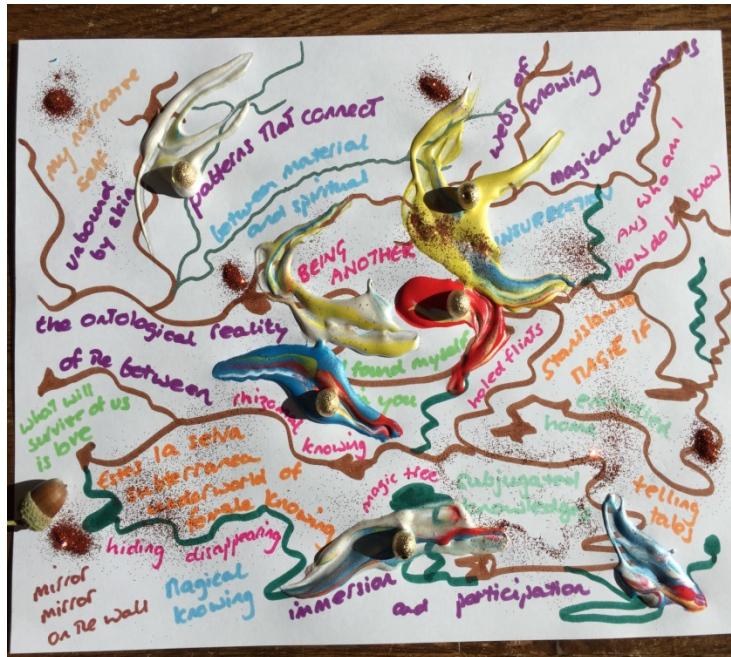
A freefall painting

which represents my theoretical terrain
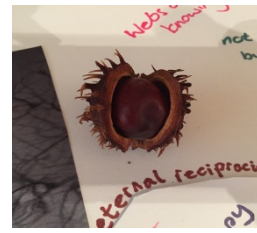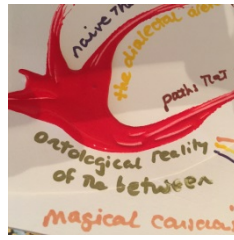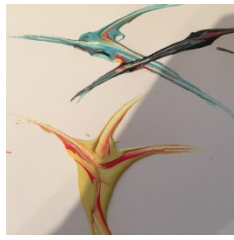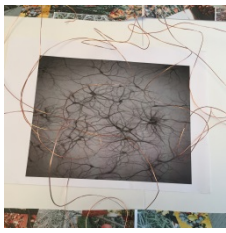
The map was developed in the forest in September 2015

It moves from abstraction to embodiment of my practice as I explored the relationship

between my theoretical and emotional landscape

What happened in practice, in the making, is that while my map does not really look like a map, even an "ironic" map, it feels to me very much like a map which took on its own life as I made it.   It is a map of my process not of my destination. Something strange happened in the making – the "birds" appeared except that I think they are not birds but manta rays that I saw a long time ago, in Mexico; their image has never left me as they swooped up from the deep and flew around our small boat.   Here is an extract of a letter describing what happened, saved by my sister to whom I wrote it in 1978, as I hitch-hiked through Central America. She gave it back to me recently.

...nd volca... The ...oast...
...ke us a few weeks to get That
...improve. Don't worry about us if
...ponts are bad, even if we can go ahead
...re good arrangements with The Consulate, and
...go it it seems risky.
...Before we left P. Vallarta we met up with
...e chums from San Diego and went on a little boat
along The coast to a village in The jungle which can
only be reached by sea! The trip took all day and
we sailed Through shoals of manta rays which
...ere basking on The surface and started to leap in
...e air so close to The boat we could almost touch
Them, I was quite scared at first They were so
big, 15' - 20' across, & it was really exciting. I
Think we managed to get some pictures.
            Anyway we're having a lovely time, and
hope everyThings OK at your end. Can you pass This
on to The Apperby? Lots of love, I'll write again
...

With thanks to my sister for keeping it so long

I was struck by the metaphorical resonance at this stage in my process of my returning to images that came from below, the unconscious, and broke through the surface of the water, powerful and primal, a little alarmingly, but with great beauty, to reconnect me with the past.

There is so much meaning contained in my map that I decided, rather than to try and tidy it up, I would present it as a *map-in-making*; and rather than a "mind map", I see it as a "soul map". I found making the map a deeply emotional experience. I have included on my website a photo gallery of the process and further commentary.

signpost to website Map of Terrain photo gallery

We now turn to discuss the theoretical grounds of my inquiry.

Introduction

Throughout my inquiry and indeed, in the writing of this thesis, I found that theory and practice were interwoven. I began by taking theories that intrigued and inspired me and asked, what would I experience differently if this theory were true? For example, how would I feel differently if Bateson's notion of "mind" was not simply an idea but a way of experiencing the world and my relationship to it? This approach proved a source of deep learning, encouraging me to explore and hold in balance the often opposing forces of the dialectic method and a more open, appreciative stance of paradigmatic plurality.

It taught me to keep an open mind and to accept that in the field of my inquiry, there are many ways of telling a tale and more than one of me, more than one of us, can be "right".

In the first section below, I examine

My relationship with theory

It is worth highlighting here that I regard the question of my relationship with theory as central to my inquiry. A more conventional approach, and the one which I would previously have adopted, is not to raise the question of relationship explicitly in this context. Generally, a scholastic stance would be to examine selected theories critically and in addition, to critique my theoretical choices as researcher, reflexively. However, this leaves unexamined the space between myself as researcher and the content of the theory in question: I am here and it is there; we are existentially unconnected. In examining the relationship which I hold not only with specific theories but also with the cultural meta-narrative of "theory" itself, I discovered how it felt to engage not only intellectually but emotionally with theory.

Why is this relevant? Because theories are not value neutral: they are charged with emotion, values and consequences. They are not rational, safe, predictable at all but unruly, disruptive, seditious and generative of (sometimes) unintended consequences. The reason I chose my theoretical field is not that it cast most light upon my research data (the question then would be 'to what end'): rather, my data was born of an inquiry process inspired by theories of hyper-connectedness which I

believed to be important in improving the way I live. I tried to enact theories of connectedness to see if it made a difference.

After examining my relationship with theory, I then outline the two closely related theoretical fields which inform my inquiry.

Relational ontology:

with particular reference to Bateson's Level III learning; and

Identity and the relational self:

primarily those founded on symbolic interactionism (Mead) and dramaturgy (Goffman, Stanislavski) and notably on the renaissance and reworking of symbolic interactionism, represented inter alia by Stryker and Burke's (2000) recent work on identity theory.

Taken together, I propose that these permit a *relational view of self* in which personal identity is constructed, construed and experienced in relation not only to other people but to the natural world. Regarding myself, my "self", within a relational ontology and a discursive framework had profound consequences for my practice. Firstly, I recognized that I had disappeared my domestic practice and thus devalued the political and gender-related significance of my inquiry. I had become unrelated to and disconnected with an important part of me. Secondly, it impacted my practices through the use of iPhone self-interview and techniques involving "being another" through which I engaged in intrapersonal dialogue with myself, as well as with real and imaginary others. Thirdly, it provided a supportive framework for my on-going first person inquiry by:

1.Creating space for tacit knowledge eventually to be brought forth (a long journey);

2.Increasing my sensitivity to metaphorical knowing and the significance of the unsaid; and

3.Revealing and legitimising expanded epistemologies such as artful and magical knowing.

Most of all, though, regarding my "self" in relational terms disrupted and decentred my fundamentally egocentric orientation to life, a development which proved highly productive and rewarding, to me and hopefully to others.

My relationship with theory

First, I describe how my inquiry questions were inspired by an increasingly appreciative and pragmatic reading of theory in which my natural curiosity prompted me to ask, "what does this mean in practice?" or in the words of William James:

> *"Grant an idea or belief to be true, it [pragmatism] says, 'what experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?'"* (William James 1891, p.97)

This then was the manner in which I approached my inquiry reading, while in parallel, my inquiry writing was flourishing along ley lines which eventually converged at the point of experiencing "being another".

An illustration of this is how my appreciation of the stepmother's experience was illuminated by "being" her in an inspirited sense and by "being" physically in the forest and at the cottage where she lived. This enabled me to experience a sense of connectedness not only with the characters of Hansel and Gretel but with the forest and with their time-lines and the archetypal knowing they represented.

Signpost stepmother video

One way of interpreting my iPhone method is that it is theory enacted in the flesh, in the forest.

For example, when engaging with the character of Rapunzel, who lived in a tower high above the forest, I considered that the best way of experiencing Bateson's notion of mind and his theory of a connected self, was to immerse myself, to climb a tree, and to act, in Stanislavski's terms, "as if" I were Rapunzel and more than empathising, to experience as far as possible, what it was like to be her.

How my relationship with theory has changed

Before this inquiry, my personal relationship with theory was ambiguous, best described as love/hate. What does theory look like? What words and emotions did I used to associate with it? As an abstraction, I see it as masculine, clinical, cold, propositional, pompous, boring, difficult, elitist, tedious, convoluted, depersonalised, superior, powerful, mathematical, conventional, academic, big brains, clever talking, excluding, obscure, formal, distant, removed, dominant, domineering. And yet, I loved the abstraction, which reflected part of me.

What changed? I chose to engage with theory very differently within this narrative inquiry, engaging in a far more personal, relational and feminised way. Gergen (1992) distinguishes 'man stories' and 'women stories', the latter being "fragmentary, multidimensional … and temporally disjunctive" and I found that the latter best described how the process of redefining my relationship with theory worked for me in practice . I found that as I worked with the theories that inspired me most, they became more conversational in tone. I imagined the voice of the author and the place where they wrote and what it would be like to walk alongside them. Theory became my companion and friend: we had good conversations.

Theories as webs of belief

In considering theory, I drew deeply on the natural world using images and metaphors found in the woods where I found a rich seam of inspiration. The classical anthropologist Evans-Pritchard proposed a "web of belief" in which every strand depends on every other. This seemed to me to provide an inclusive and flexible theoretical framework for my inquiry. (I realised this at dawn one other-worldly autumn morning in 2011 in Ashridge Forest, in swirling mist with ethereal webs hanging from branches and draped over ferns, glistening with dew). Clifford Geertz (1973) in describing "thick descriptions" remarked that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun."

> ***Note from my journal (14 July 2012):*** *In creating a web, a person (a spider) forges strong links between different points, by latching onto them, and connecting them, weaving a new space, a unique space, between those points which is a uniquely their place to be. The number of anchor points, the complexity and beauty of the weaving of patterns between them and crucially, the quality of what is caught in the web and what becomes of it, is a testament to a life lived alone, yet in communion with others. This is what a measure of life might be: the number of connections, the quality of them, the strength and endurance, the adaptability, the mutability, the commensurability of being able to change (to re-weave) and to regenerate and to embrace webs-within-webs, multi-dimensionally. Being able to give up the non-essential, and to build new links, new connections, in green fields, in new dawns.*

When writing this in 2012, I did not appreciate the extent to which it seeded my subsequent development of a relational ontology in which my being a person is judged by the quality of my connections with others and the natural world.

The dialectal arête

I longed for an ideal, conventional research world where a series of literature searches were presented in the form of a Venn diagram, followed by a detailed analysis of the common ground. In practice, I experienced something somewhat different: I dreamed of a map where borders were blurred, reminiscent of the fuzzy path between the political and

geographical boundaries and the linguistic dialects of the high mountain region, the Haute Savoie, at the intersection of France, Italy and Switzerland, where I spend much of my time. Here, dialects shift not only between villages but between families and generations. A habitation which falls within the political borders of Switzerland may hold a stronger affiliation with France but more usually, cultural identification is that of being a Savoyard, dwellers of the far more ancient land. The goat paths and mountain tracks are worn with scant regard to the municipal authority to which tax is paid and they weave back and forth between jurisdictions.

When mapping my theoretical terrain, I recalled Antonio Machado's (1912) observation to travellers in *Campos de Castilla* that "the path is made by walking". As a metaphor, this took hold and sustained me. I needed to walk the path of my inquiry, until I realised that this was a unique path, which I made. I came to embrace the fact that my inquiry does not fit neatly into any one established field of learning. I needed to keep faith and not to panic as I experienced a sense of walking a knife-edge "arête" between and across borders along a mountain ridge, being careful not to stray or fall far into fields about which I know little ("here be dragons") and to limit my knowledge claims to what lies directly within my experience and under my footfall.

Walking the Rochefort ice arête on the border between France and Italy 2007

(see the long shadows of the climbers on the left-hand face – if one falls, the other jumps the opposite way, to stop them)

There is a profound quality of ascent to high places which is both transcendental and paradoxically "grounding". The higher you climb, the deeper you go. The above image provides a striking example of how climbing in my domestic practice inspired my habit of climbing trees, rediscovered in adulthood during this inquiry. It transformed my appreciation of embodied knowing.

(See Louise Anthony's (2002) discussion of embodied epistemology from a feminist perspective which honours the epistemological validity of everyday experience. Her analysis of masculine bias in philosophy is mirrored by the masculine bias in high altitude climbing and this inspired me to inquire into the literal and metaphorical consequences of my own existential choices between getting high and lying low, themes explored in my folk tale retellings, particularly Rapunzel in the tower, see chapter 5 and my iPhone video on my website).

Walking the "dialectal arête" had two implications for the final form of my thesis:

1. I became aware of the interpretive, hermeneutic aspect of my relationship with theory. I began to relate this to the meaning of a work of art; to what extent does meaning reside in the intention of the artist/author or in the interpretation of the audience/reader? How much does the original intention matter? How much is given and how much co-created? I discuss this later when considering the validity of my inquiry methods.

2. I recognised that my interest in theory was practical and pragmatic. I found myself reading an assertion or a proposition and thinking "yes, and what use can I personally make of it?" And so the idea of consequences, which played such an important role in my discussions with self and others "in character" was transferred to my imaginary conversations with the authors of scholarly texts. I found myself arguing with Derrida, speaking in a YouTube video clip, and was reminded of Keirkegaard's habit of pacing up and down arguing with himself, rehearsing alternative sides of an argument. I asked them "if

your theory is correct, what difference would it make?" This was how I learned to dwell contentedly with paradigmatic plurality and to suspend disbelief while working with liminal epistemologies: it became possible to "be" with those who were not there.

In many ways, I see this as an applied philosophical inquiry in which I begin with a question which is general and fundamental "who am I and how do I know?" and examine a number of ideas which speak either directly or tangentially to this question. I do so not in the interests of a purely intellectual pursuit but to examine my own life experience and professional practices and to learn how to "be", better.

Having described my relationship with theory and illustrated my terrain, in the following section I locate my inquiry within a relational ontology and discuss the particular influence of Bateson's notion of mind and the significance of Level III learning.

Relational Ontology:

Appreciating a relational ontology

The importance of Bateson to my inquiry is his conflation of ontology and epistemology which places "relating" at the centre of being. It is the relationships between things that are significant, rather than the things themselves. Process is primary: the communicational web of relationship is what Bateson calls "the glue" that unifies all things and consequently there is no difference between the observer and the observed. This, I found, provides a most convincing account of my experience of "being another". It was not me *and* the witch or the woodcutter, it was the relationship between us, the commonality of their life and mine, of which I spoke in character.

Bateson taught me to look at the patterns that connect; and to drill up, not down, to zoom out. Also, that I must *immerse* myself in a phenomenon to understand it – I must *participate*. This participatory relationship with the natural world and openness to the possibility of altered consciousness is an important aspect of the appreciation of magic and sacredness within human consciousness and the natural world. It means that I have to get involved rather than stand outside and observe, participate, be there, attend, "show up" in order to achieve a truly relational practice. Implicit in the idea of participation is the sense that my own identity is not independent of my social and natural environment. As I immerse myself in phenomena and engage in interaction with others, my identity ceases to be a static construction and is experienced as a relational process rather than an event.

> Embodiment is crucial to this process: the gathering of artefacts (which I collected and displayed in bowls during each folk tale field study, for Hansel and Gretel, white stones and white feathers, breadcrumbs, chicken bones, children's sweets) and elements of the forest (moss, leaves, seeds, acorns, mushrooms) were important in contextualising the experience of being the characters. In phenomenological terms, it forced me to stay in the moment, to attend to the sounds, sights, smells and textures of the forest.

The part of Bateson's work that concerns me most occurred towards the end of his life and includes the "epistemology of the sacred" described posthumously in "Angels Fear". It relates to the boundaries of self and is founded on his earlier observation that:

> "*To the degree that a man achieves Learning III, and learns to perceive and act in terms of the contexts of contexts, his self will take on a sort of irrelevance. The concept of self will no longer function as a nodal argument in the punctuation of experience.*" (Bateson 1972, p.304)

Bateson proposes that the "resolution of contraries" involved in Learning III permits "a world in which personal identity merges into all the processes of relationship in some vast ecology or aesthetics of cosmic interaction" (Bateson 1972, p.306). He compares Learning III to "enlightenment", an experience that occurs at "moments of change". His idea that the self is not "bound by skin" and his definition of Learning III appears very close to a shamanic experience of inspiritedness and unity, through empathy and imagination, between oneself, others and the natural world. (I return to this later in the chapter when discussion magical consciousness).

Bateson seems to propose that *self-knowledge* comes first and once achieved, is capable of being replaced by the understanding that connectedness with the universe requires a *letting go* of frames which suppose personal identity to be at the heart of being. He suggests elsewhere that the self is contained in the more-than-self and I was intrigued by the mutability of being and becoming that this could imply in practice.

"Every detail of the universe is seen as proposing a view of the whole. These are the people for whom Blake wrote

> "*To see the World in a Grain of Sand,*
>
> *And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,*
>
> *Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,*
>
> *And Eternity in an hour.*"
>
> (Bateson 1972, p. 306)

> *The reason time, I think, is important here is that the "processes of relationship" must include temporal as well as spatial relationships in order to provide a full account of "being in the world" as opposed to (just) "being". It follows that truly "being in the present" must involve all our being contained within each moment. I discovered that this was reflected in the time-shifts when each of my characters told their story: their personal narrative was not bound by time, as I enacted it. Their past, present and future tales became one and they seemed not to be concerned about temporality or chronology.*

Bateson's fusion of human and natural worlds

Bateson's seminal idea that all the systems of the natural living world are "minds" or "mental processes", immanent throughout the living world, suggests that the living world can be regarded as sacred without appealing to the supernatural. The fertile relationship between rational, propositional knowing and other forms of knowing – such as intuition or divination - is through suspension of what he terms "self-conscious purposiveness", enabling the use of our wider, deeper, more-than-conscious minds.

> In practice, I see this as a form of "giving up" rational control and "giving in" to creative and integrative processes which permit community of self and others. I find, specifically, when "being another" that I need to let go and allow another consciousness to emerge / merge with my own. In this way, my relationship to the other is not one of observer / observed but of "being together", being in the presence of each other, in fleeting moments of oneness and co-creation.

Bateson's understanding of wholeness, oneness and monism (the essential unity of all living systems) provides a powerful ontology of inclusion. In practice terms, it provides me with the inspiration for believing that I can relate to myself and to others in a way which accesses an underlying, pre-existing state in which we hold *being human* in common, rather than a forced, effortful attempt at second guessing or analysing the other in an object-subject relationship. It allows the possibility of believing that we are included in and by each other.

A note on empathy

Theories of empathy (experiencing the feelings of another) focus primarily on: the adaptive development of pro-social sentiments such as sympathy and compassion; whether empathy is a trait, a state or a process; the role of vicarious experience in personal growth and whether empathy itself is egocentrically or altruistically motivated. Zillman (1991) provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical field.

While the experience and development of empathy is relevant to my idea of a *relational self*, my inquiry is more deeply concerned not with experiencing the feelings of another person but with realising a far deeper connection in which selfhood is intrinsically determined with and by the other and with different manifestations of oneself.

Phenomenological perspectives within a relational ontology

Bateson's theoretical contribution to my inquiry, outlined above, is to propose an account of connectedness with the natural world, through concepts such as the notion of the mind or mental processes which are immanent throughout the living world. This coming close to nature physically and existentially was at the very heart of my field studies. I describe a phenomenological process of reflective attentiveness – learning to experience the world at a deep, direct and unmediated level.   The epistemological device for achieving this appreciation, "epoche", involves the suspension of prior judgement and presuppositions, in order to rely upon a more intuitive, "naïve" and primordial experience of the natural world. This was why it was important for me to climb trees and become absorbed in the forest, as far as possible to enter the world of the characters. In conversations with actors, some of which are described in my Directing Actors practice account, signposted below, it was

apparent that often, it was necessary to learn the script only to abandon it and then, having "learned" the character, to permit the character's spontaneous reaction to emerge in the moment. This quality of intensely personal and emotional relational practice opened exciting possibilities and I began to use imagination and intuition more freely, not only in the forest but at work and at home.

Signpost to Chapter 7, page 217 to read more about this

The phenomenological concept of intentionality, the "stretching or reaching out" of consciousness towards its object (or more specifically, the simultaneous making of meaningful contact between consciousness and the object or phenomenon of which it is conscious) suggests the merging of object-subject in which the two become one, in the sense that Bateson speaks of the "glue" that connects us. Crucially, Heidegger proposed that *consciousness* is not the defining aspect of a person's existence: "Dasein" (our being in the world) comprises both that of which we are conscious, and that of which we are not. The role of the *unconscious* in my inquiry method became increasingly apparent as I worked in character and is discussed in the following section.

Jungian archetypes and relational ontology

My fieldwork with folk tales draws deeply on Jung's work on archetypes and the collective unconscious, a place of transition between the material world and the world of the soul or spirits. Stories are the way in which I accessed aspects of myself which had been disappeared, subjugated. The folk tales present archetypes (witch, mother) which are containers for the cultural motifs which define my social being. Exploring them produced both a sense of recognition and a sense of departure: I wanted to interpret them *my way*, to overlay or interweave meaning that resulted from my own experiences. A way of conceiving this is to imagine colouring in an outline drawing, another would be to imagine joining up the dots on a page of randomly distributed dots – what's hidden there that only I know, or that only I can reveal? And what if the process itself creates the meaning, rather than it pre-existing me, waiting to be discovered so that there is no "being" only "becoming"?

> Whatever I am, is embedded in others – how else could I
> recognise myself in them? Whatever they are, resonates within
> me; I know the regret and pain of the stepmother, I know how
> the mother felt when she regarded her daughter's curse and I
> know how Rapunzel felt when she reached the point of leaving.
> I am mother, daughter, queen and pauper, witch, bitch and me.

During my fieldwork, I experienced Estes' (1992) observation that, "If a story is seed, then we are its soil. Just hearing the story allows us to experience it as though we ourselves were the heroine who either falters or wins out in the end." (p.387)

Estes relates this in Jungian terms to "participation mystique", a term used by Levy-Bruhl discussed below when I consider the nature of magic. It is described as a state in which a person cannot distinguish herself as separate from the object or thing she beholds. It is a form of projective identification which is similar to sympathetic magic in that it involves merging consciousness with another reality.

Jung uses the concept of the nekyia as a metaphor for the introversion of the conscious mind into the deeper layers of the unconscious psyche, a theme which runs through many classical interpretations of traditional folk-tales. For example, Estes describes how "The Handless Maiden" story has many different versions, but they all entail descent to and return from a place of learning, *La selva subterranea*, the underground forest, the underworld of female knowing.   I wonder whether this was what led me to the paths in the wood theme of my first cycle writings. The maiden survives several cycles of descent and transformation, each involving, in alchemical terms, negredo (loss), rubedo (sacrifice) and albedo (coming of the light).

Este's reference to "the underworld of female knowing" is a theme which gained traction as my inquiry progressed and is intimately related to the domestic practice of magic. Jung's theory of archetypes provided a helpful conceptual framework for my work with the folk tale characters: their cultural familiarity provided a touchstone of recognition that connected me with emotions held in common, as a basis for interpreting my own specific situation. As an example, speaking as the archetypal stepmother gave permission and created space for me to voice my own experience of being a stepmother, and indeed to examine my relationship with my own stepwife and to do so in a safe imaginary world, in a situation where the real enactment would be fraught with familial danger.

Jung speaks also of soul loss and soul healing and the unfolding of the soul from birth to mid-life and death.

My inquiry has certainly involved a process of healing myself: early on, my supervisor coined the phrase "*naïve therapy*" and I see now the wisdom of it.

The question of time acquired great significance in my healing. I came to realise that I had a particular quality of relationship with my past self / selves and that my recollections of my personal past were infused with negative emotion. I missed myself. I wished things for my past self. I wanted to comfort and speak with my past self. I felt that I wanted to reach out to myself across the future and past and present. This was amplified by my mid-life musings and the experience of the death of loved ones and the sense of mortality. It was a bittersweet thread that ran through my contemplations of "being another". It changed the way I relate to those I hold dearest: I cherish each moment far more than before.

> ## Nekyia
>
> I believe also that my inquiry has consisted of a great battle against my own fears and demons. In the process of telling the tales of others, I have told my own tale in a way which I found impossible to do without adopting the persona of the characters. I discovered for myself what others have intuitively known, that there are parts of me and my ways of being that I have unconsciously hidden, even – or especially – from myself.
>
> I saw how my own inquiry journey resembled the nekyia in the way in which knowledge is acquired, challenged and deepened in a series of reflections which can resemble ordeals. I experienced a moment of dread when my examiner during an internal viva referred to the "dark side" photos which I had unconsciously hidden on a side table and which I discuss later in my thesis.
>
> Signpost to website Dark Side Photo Gallery

I remember the difficulty of speaking to iPhone about things which I had not said before and how I felt a sense of despair sometimes at the depth of the soul work which I had embarked upon. The sense of being lost in the forest, like Hansel and Gretel with no way home, and being balanced precariously on the "dialectal arete" wishing that I had chosen a safer route, an easier way.

The brightening

And yet Jung's theories also infused my inquiry with light and joy. The potential of transformational story-telling was demonstrated powerfully to me in the Tate Liverpool exhibition entitled *Making an Exhibition of Ourselves* (June 2012). It was curated by Marianne Faithful and created by Clare Campbell "mistress of authenticity and juicy permission giving" who "dances between the derelict and the divine", a poet who runs a

social enterprise in Liverpool. She produced a series of 10 archetypal portraits during recovery from a breakdown and the community initiative grew out of this process. Over 100 women painted self-portraits depicting themselves as warriors, goddesses, mermaids:

Gallery Archives: Art in Liverpool

I was excited and inspired when I discovered these paintings. They represent contemporary visions of Jungian archetypes and mythical images of women and led me to discover the metaphorical potential of archetypes as they are reflected in folk tales and reinterpreted by me, the teller, in the process of reflexive, participatory research. They ground my inquiry in the quest for knowing that cuts through past, present and future being and connect me with others through our shared human experience. I created the following collage as an homage to these women and a gift to myself.
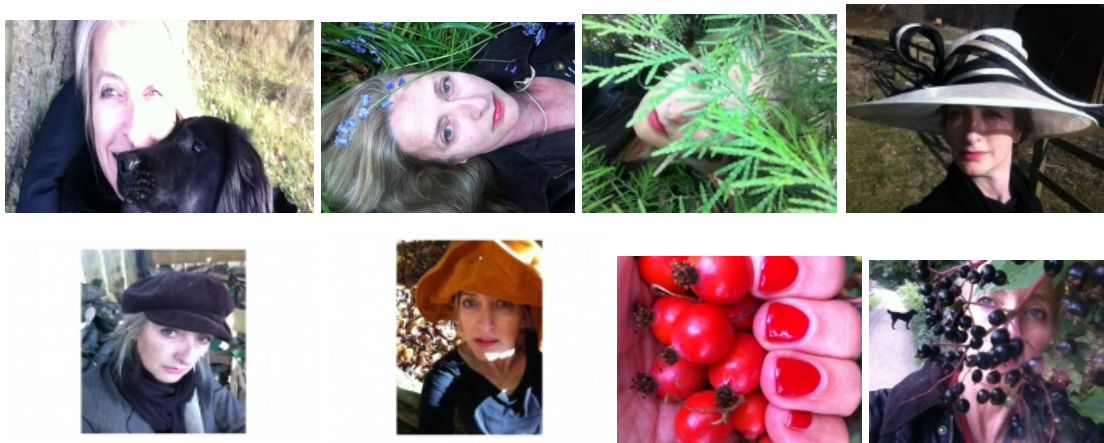
My own archetypal collage: Being and Becoming (2011 – 2015)

Magical consciousness and relational ontology

In this section, I explain what drew me to examine magic as a phenomenon and how it came from observations in practice and a deep longing to find and rediscover my own power. I draw upon a contemporary account, that of Dr Susan Greenwood, which proposes an *inclusive epistemology*, encompassing both scientific and magical knowing. I claim magic as a form of subjugated knowledge, which was surfaced through my inquiry method. Although not an exclusively feminine epistemology, I claim it here as a woman's way of knowing (my way), an argument which I develop further when discussing my domestic practice in Chapter 9, *Politics and Gender*.

Signpost to page 279 to read more on "Women's Ways of Knowing"

Why engage with the theory of magic?

One of the questions which I asked of my practice when embarking on this inquiry was, "*Where did all the magic go, why did I stop valuing it, and why do I not speak of it?*" It dawned on me as I examined my early writing that woven into everyday language are metaphors and allusions that refer to magic and the natural world. It made me take notice of expressions such as:

"I can't just wave my magic wand"

"Come and cast your spell on this"

"You've got to kiss lots of frogs before you find your prince"

I noticed that in organisational life, so much transformational language derives from plants, trees and natural cosmology:

> *"Organic growth, seeds, branches of knowledge, sap rising, roots, bearing fruit, cutting back the dead wood, blossoming, unfolding, seed, lightning rod, digging deep, composting, pruning, buds, putting out shoots, low-hanging fruit, harvest. Stake in the ground, perfect storm, elephant in the room, best of breed. Even Boston Consulting Group's classic matrix for company performance features cash cows, stars, dogs".*
>
> (SL transfer paper, p.9, 2012)

I also observed early in my inquiry that many rituals deeply engrained in social and family life are infused with magical practice:

> *"Sending greeting cards, wrapping gifts, candles on birthday cakes, knitting baby clothes, flower arranging, flowers on graves, burning scented candles, mending clothes, photo books, friendship bracelets. Collecting things (string, shells, charms on bracelets). Dock leaves on nettle stings, mothers' spit on wounds, tooth fairies. In what sense are these spells? They are rituals which are performed by someone with another person in mind, charged with emotion, intended to produce an emotion or reaction, performed with ritual skill and carefulness. They are symbolic acts which contain symbolic meanings and which are handed down through performance, usually through the female line."*
>
> (SL transfer paper, p.7, 2012).

It seemed as though these were relics or memories of things, a kind of enacted folk tale which is woven in daily life and which is so familiar, its significance is lost. I wondered what I might discover by paying attention to the forces in my professional and personal life which were being disappeared or devalued. I continued to disappear or devalue this epistemological gift until nearly the very end of writing my thesis. But in the end, I wrote an entire chapter in the summer of 2015 developing this inquiry thread.

Signpost to Chapter 9 - Politics and Gender: The Insurrection of Subjugated Knowledges, page 275

So it is against this backdrop, that I consider the notion of magical consciousness and where it lies on my theoretical terrain.

Working definitions of magic

> *"Magic is a holistic orientation to the world that is essentially relational and expansive".* (Greenwood 1990, p.1)
>
> *"Magical consciousness is reciprocity between inspirited beings".*
>
> (Greenwood 1990, p.141)

Building on Greenwood's definitions above, I distinguish three kinds of magic:

1. Magic as in "magic tricks" – illusions which astonish and entertain (white rabbits, card tricks).

2. Magic as in creating transformations through processes which are not understood (spells, healing).

3. Magic as in expanded consciousness, through communion with the natural world and the cosmic forces that govern it (Bateson's Level III learning).

This is the working model which I applied when sifting through the literature on magic and trying to focus my thoughts. My main interest lies in the second and third, but not the first, although some of the mental and emotional processes involved appear to be the same or similar.

Magic in academia – a contemporary account

In *The Anthropology of Magic*, Greenwood identifies "participation" as a central concept in the apprehension of magic. In a passage reminiscent of Bateson's patterns that connect and Whitehead's process ontology, she cites Levy-Bruhl and suggests that "if we are to understand participation, we have to renounce our concepts of separateness of phenomena and entertain the possibilities of flexible, transient and transformatory boundaries between things". (1990, p.39)

Tambiah (1990) describes how magical connections are made between things by the use of charms and spells – based on the idea that one thing is like another and the uniting point between them is magical. That is, magic relies upon association and connectedness, rather than notions of causality. He proposes that people have two coexisting orientations to the world i) causality (atomistic individualism and distance), and ii) participation, where the person is in the world fully as a totality and where action is often expressed through myth and ritual.

"So, although 'causation' and 'participation' may seem different or contrastive orientations to the world, both are experienced and symbolized through the same human senses of touch, taste, hearing, seeing. Much of the discourse of causality and positive science is framed in terms of distancing, neutrality, experimentation, and the language of analytic reason, while much of the discourse of participation can be understood through sensory and emotional communication. Crucially, neither can exclude the other." (Tambiah 1990, p.108)

In "*Threads of the Spider's Web: new patterns for exploring magic and science*", Greenwood (2010) seeks to understand the experience of magic as an aspect of consciousness and to legitimise it as a source of knowledge. She describes how she achieves this in three ways:

1. In practice, she observes and directly participates in magic rituals.

2. In terms of theory, she develops the notion of *magical consciousness* as "an orientation to life that participates in an inspirited world through emotion, intuition and imagination". She regards magical consciousness as a type of associative thinking distinct from analytical thinking but not incompatible with it and in replacing the oppositional stance of science and magic, finds a place for magical experience within an expanded scientific explanatory framework.

3. Finally, she proposes an inclusive scientific framework, employing Samuel's multimodal analysis which features the metaphor of a web as a conceptual space for all knowledge. She argues that this requires a new attitude towards science.

In 2011 Greenwood presented a seminar paper entitled *'On Becoming an Owl: Magical Consciousness and Science'*. This intrigued me and I quote her below:

"*Early in my anthropological career I became an owl in my imagination. It happened during my first shamanic journey, a form of active meditation accompanied by the rhythm of a drumbeat. Afterwards, I came to understand the experience as a spiritual communication with the bird …. The experience had a profound effect on me. I was surprised that a neo-shamanic journey at a conference could have had such a deep impact and I came to realize the power of the imagination in the <u>mutability of body boundaries</u>. If I, as a person untrained in such shamanic encounters, could feel that I had become a spirit owl then some aspect of the experience must be universal to human processes of mind. My experience of such communication with spirit beings would have wide implications for my research over the years*".

Greenwood herself draws directly upon Bateson's two central notions of ideation and abduction:

<u>*Ideation:*</u> *the idea that we construct mental maps and organise connections and differences between things in a familiar pattern.*

<u>*Abduction:*</u> *the process of recalling such patterns in dreams, parables, allegory, poetry, religion and science.*

Essentially, this is a process of reasoning that organises information through metaphor: for Bateson, all forms of knowledge are connective patterns for understanding the world.

What excited me on reading Greenwood's account was the prospect of opening my practice to the possibility of a deeper consciousness of what matters and how to achieve change for the better in imaginative ways.   I enjoyed reading it and greatly appreciated the way Greenwood is prepared to step outside conventional paradigms to explore "paths less trodden".

I became intrigued by the interconnections between magical consciousness and other forms of phenomenological experience. It is the interplay of rational and intuitive modes of inquiry that I believe may prove most fertile in understanding how awareness of magic and enchantment in my ordinary life might be re-engaged. Bateson (1972, p.467) envisages this interplay as a meta-pattern, a "dance of interacting parts".

In practice terms, this dance enabled me to encompass all my forms of knowing.

It also provided a theoretical framework which permitted the rediscovery of "subjugated knowledges" and allowed my domestic practice to take its rightful place alongside my professional work.

A note on the commensurability of paradigms

I hope it is clear from above and from my map that I hold an inclusive relational ontology which does not seek to achieve paradigmatic resolution. I am happy to work pragmatically and to accept that there are many ways of knowing in the world and that my understanding will always be shifting and incomplete. I concur with William James (1891), writing in "Principles of Psychology", that consciousness is like a stream or river, always changing; and the mind is "a theatre of simultaneous possibilities" (p.288). There are multiple modes of consciousness and multiple epistemologies within my worldview.

Not everyone will be happy with this approach, however, so I want to conclude this section by considering how the relationship between scientific and magical paradigms might best be approached for those uncomfortable with paradigmatic plurality. Greenwood (2009) observes:

"Researching magic over the years, I have adopted an orientation that can shift between the analytical mode … and the actual experience of magic on the other hand. It might appear to some people that the two orientations of the analytical mode and the participatory, magical mode are mutually incompatible; however, in practice, I have found that it is entirely possible to accommodate both aspects within a broader stream of awareness of consciousness". (p.141)

Greenwood also observes that, "Magic covers a repertoire of related terms and has versatility and plasticity: in the past, it has been used as a vague marker of otherness" (Greenwood 1990). So much so, that Glucklich, in "The End of Magic" (1997) shows how academic study of magic has effectively "explained it away" – disappeared it. However, because something has disappeared does not necessarily mean that it is not still there: bringing (back) into practice my tacit but subjugated knowledges has been the result of holding open paradigmatic space.

Finally, I am grateful to Dr Greenwood (1990, p. 141) for seeding my realisation that there is a relationship between Stanislavski's "as if" and the experience of being another "as is". In a different context, in which she discusses the question of the reality or unreality of spirits, Greenwood proposes a stance of spiritual agnosticism, adopting the phenomenological

perspective of acting "as if" – essentially, to bracket disbelief – and simply to experience. This suspension of disbelief and openness to "being another" was a pre-requisite in developing my iPhone method. Narrative methodology allowed things that were true to be not real, and vice versa, and for reality and truth to take their many forms. I explored the consequences in practice during a film directing workshop which is described in Chapter Seven.

Stanislavski's theory of the role of emotional memory in acting and his subsequent theoretical shift to the method of physical action (Benedetti 2013) was a major theoretical influence on the development of my iPhone method. The significance of physical action – adopting the bodily stances that give rise to character development – is reflected in the embodied nature of my fieldwork in which I locate myself in forest locations (woodcutter's cottage, the ruined tower, the rose-hip thorn hedge and wearing hats to assume imagined characteristics). Much of what I developed in practice is closely founded on Stella Adler's (1990, 2000) and Lee Strasberg's (1970, 1988) extension of Stanislavski's original theories into what is now widely referred to as "method acting".

Emotional memory involves drawing upon one's own memories to "get inside" the character by applying to the role one's own previous lived experience. This is demonstrated in my iPhone videos when I overlay my own experience onto the folk tale character during improvised conversations. As an example, my own experience of being a stepmother is surfaced when I speak as the stepmother in Hansel and Gretel, particularly when I speak of the birth mother being an interior designer obsessed with big houses in the country where the children didn't want to go. This is a reversal of my own situation in which I, the stepmother, lived in a large house which I always felt was resented by my step wife, and I projected onto this her imagined feeling that the children did not want to come to my home. The process by which this occurred was unconscious and unscripted and just "came out" as I projected myself into the character in the tale. It caused me to examine all my step relationships through a new lens.

My method departs from the classical exercise of an actor asking "*what would I do IF I were in the same situation as my character*" in the way in which I became them while remaining myself so that in effect, our identities were the same in the way that Greenwood describes her first shamanic experience of "being an owl". This is an important distinction as it speaks to the way in which I am not acting the characters in the folk tales but being them in a way which surfaces my own issues. My process is less intellectual, and more emotionally driven.

Stanislavski himself was opposed to the idea of acting systems or even acting method, if either implied rigid application of techniques. His approach was rather that an actor should approach a role as directly as possible and then see if it "lives". If the actor connects with the role and the performance is such that the actor "becomes" the part she is playing, then no technique or system is necessary. The actor does not so much become someone else as he becomes himself. · This is the sense in which I found myself through being another.

I illustrate below how I perceive the combined theoretical contributions of Bateson, Greenwood and Stanislawski to inform my inquiry and how the key themes interrelate:
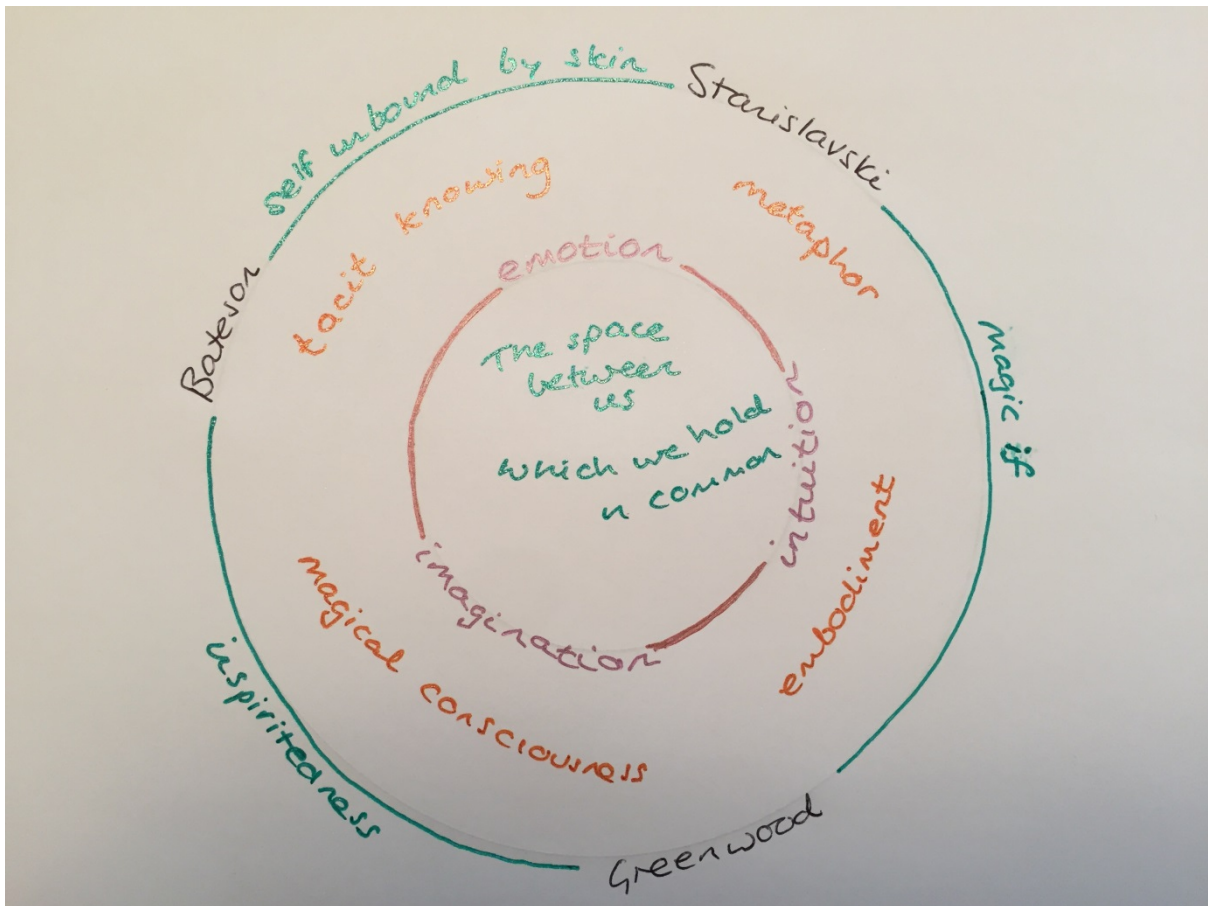
A Magic Circle

… in which personal identity is framed in relational terms, connected with the natural world and others through processes of emotion, imagination and intuition

Having described the theoretical ground of a relational ontology, in which primacy is given to the connections between us rather than you and me in isolation from each other, I will now examine the implications of this "ontological reality of the between" (Buber 1968) for my foundational inquiry question, "who am I and how do I know".

IDENTITY AND A RELATIONAL SELF

"who am I and how do I know?"

Dear Reader:

When first writing up my thesis, I was interested in questions of identity from an experiential rather than a theoretical perspective. I have described above my previously uneasy and conflicted relationship with theory.

Working with my iPhone method, I became increasingly concerned that focussing on theory would inhibit me. In the same way, I did not include the original Grimm's tales* because when I did so in earlier drafts, their very presence distracted me from the experiential aspects of my work. (I kept being drawn into a textual analysis of the meaning and significance of the original scripts).

However, on further reflection, I realise that the following discussion needs to be included in order to contextualise my iPhone work and offer a theoretical context for the notion of a relational self.

- *a choice which I acknowledge was an omission or at least an inconvenience to the unfamiliar reader – they are now included, see signpost below*

Signpost to Folk Tales synopses in Chapter 5, page 156

INTRODUCTION

The relational ontology discussed above raises the question, if human *being* is relational, who is relating to whom? Who is the self who relates? Who am I when I relate to the world and to you? Theoretically, how can the notion of self and the experience of *being in relation to others* be construed? And if my self is relational, what are the theoretical and practical implications for notions of "truth" and "reality"?

Below, I examine theoretical perspectives on what it means to be a person: to hold a sense of self and to be recognised by others as holding an identity. This is a huge theoretical field and I have restricted my interest to a very specific part of it: the paradox of the notion of "self" in a social constructionist, relational framing of identity.

I conclude that the "self" is not a helpful construct if viewed as being separate from the actual phenomenological experience of *being in the moment* and that a more convincing account of being a person invokes a postmodern figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions, created in and through others.

 I critique the notion of a reified, stable and unitary "self" and foreground the problems of self-attributions which involve an intermediary construct of "the self" compared with rich descriptions of what is happening in the moment as we co-create ourselves.

All this raises a further question: if my self is relational rather than purely individual, what are the implications for claims regarding authenticity? I examine the consequences of this important issue for research validity in the next chapter, signposted below: here, I address the phenomenological experience of identity.

WHAT IS SELF

In the introduction to his unpublished doctoral thesis, "*Psychological Reductionism About Persons*", Baggini (1996) observes that "It seems odd that although we would all of us agree that we are all persons, it is notoriously difficult to say just what a person is." He examines the consequences of Derek Parfit's (1996) claim in *Reasons and Persons* that the debate concerning what persons are and what their conditions for survival over time are, is not only a debate concerning facts, but also about "what matters" (p.2). The question of mattering raises questions of value of concern not only to the philosophical notion of identity but also, I suggest, to the notion of the *relational self*.

The consequences extend not only to research validity but also to personal "authenticity". If "self" is relational, then responsibility for creating and maintaining our "selves" is a shared rather than an individual one. It seems to me impossible to avoid the conclusion that we share responsibility for our own selves with those with whom we create them. In the same way, I am responsible to a greater or lesser extent, for the "self" which is experienced, presented and acted upon, by those with whom I relate. The moral and ethical implications are profound but not new: I am simply reframing on the basis of my iPhone work "in character" the view, for example, that society shapes individuals as well as the other way around and that "social deviants" are created not born and so on. However, I wished to foreground this socio-political aspect of my inquiry and to own the implications that it may hold for future interpretations of its value.

The idea that self is constructed acquires a dramaturgical frame in my inquiry, as originally suggested by Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The presentational self (construed as my presenting myself to you and vice versa in social life as opposed to putting on a theatre performance), is inherently relational, as I discovered in my Directing Actors Course, signposted below.

Signpost to my experience of relational selfhood in Chapter 7: Being Another Practice Accounts, page 216

The key learning point here was I cannot play my part unless you allow me the dramatic space to do so: this applies even in monologue through the presence of the unseen other (see Alan Bennett's introduction to his BBC series *Talking Heads*, for a fuller exposition of how interior dialogue is experienced by the actor as heard even in the absence of audience).

Your performance intimately influences, constrains and opens up the ways in which I can perform myself. There is no sense in which either my stage performance or my presentation of self can be regarded independently of you, "the other". Our performance is "ensemble" (definition: "all parts of a thing taken together, so that each part is considered only in relation to the whole").

I explored the dramaturgical metaphor while climbing trees in my professional and domestic practices (see practice accounts, signposted below). I refer the reader specifically to my Community Cinema "Kelly Anne" practice account in which she becomes another.

Signpost to Chapter 7: Being Another Practice Accounts, page 229

Later in the course of my fieldwork, I pushed the metaphorical boundaries of Goffman's stage-craft towards and beyond Stanislawski's "*magic if*" (which is not a theory exactly, more a non-prescriptive method, hence "method acting" of building character in performance), arriving finally at Bateson's radical idea of a self that is not bound by skin. Bateson's theory that self extends beyond the individual is a possibility supported and developed by Greenwood's work on magical consciousness, discussed above, which honours magical and metaphorical ways of knowing. Thus I arrived, through a process of engaging with theory in fieldwork to the theoretical position of a *relational self*.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM – SELF AS SOCIAL

My starting point is Mead's symbolic interactionism as developed by Stryker et al (2000).

The roots of symbolic interaction itself are stoutly embedded in the school of American pragmatism in which truth is largely a question of practical utility; the ideographic study of the particular rather than the nomothetic study of mass data; and the prioritisation of qualitative over quantitative interpretation.

While pragmatism is often regarded as anti-theoretical, I have described above my own particular relationship with theory: within my inquiry, it is a source of inspiration which serves to stimulate and inform a process of attentive engagement. My attention to the immediate and specific moment rather than seeking general application of "findings" is consistent with the methods of narrative inquiry, as is the importance within my fieldwork of "sensitising concepts" such as empathy, which encourage the perception of new relations, perspectives and world-views.

"*The knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness; knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties and more toward wondering about and imaging alternative possibilities*." (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007, p.632)

Working within a narrative inquiry frame, I found that the role of cognitive symbols in symbolic interactionism pays insufficient attention to *emotional* elements in the co-creation of meaning, something which is clearly illustrated in my work with folk tale characters and also in my practice accounts, which are infused with emotion which spills over the "factual" text.

NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND THE CO-AUTHORING OF SELF

My ideas about and experience of "being another" were enriched by Paul Ricouer's theory that the stories we tell write us and that the self is neither immediately transparent to itself nor fully master of itself. Self-knowledge comes only through relationship with the world and one's life with and among others in that world. We are subjects in others' stories, they are subjects in ours: we are each other's authors and our identity is never entirely our own.

We do not have ultimate control over these relational connections between our own stories and the stories of others in which we participate, much less the nature of our own identity. He describes three ways this happens, in increasing order of "spiritual density":

1. Translation, which is a kind of linguistic hospitality, like taking someone into your home, through which by translating someone else's narrative into your own terms, they are embraced, accepted and validated.

2. Narrative hospitality, which involves sharing stories about ourselves of which we were unaware, such as memories, which support, legitimise and enrich our self-narratives.

3. Forgiveness, which frees the other not from the effects of the past but from the debts of the past, making it possible for us to vision and create for ourselves a new future.

Ricouer proposes that the narrative constructs the identity of the character, in the process of constructing the story told. It is the identity of the story which makes the identity of the character and not vice versa. Our characters are determined by the stories of which we are a part.

"*The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.*" (1992, p.147).

Thus we make sense of our own personal identities in much the same way as we do of the identity of characters in stories. I make sense of my own identity – effectively creating an identity for myself – by <u>telling myself</u> a story about my own life. Until the story is finished (and what stories are ever finished?) the identity of each character and myself remains open to revision, improvement, change.

Ricouer describes how the narrative unity of a life is made up of the moments of responsiveness or failure to respond to others. The responsive self does not aim primarily to preserve a Kantian autonomy rather, "*It lives in hope that its responsiveness to others can and will bring about a better life for all of them, a life in which they all participate with and for others*". (1992, p.165).

Ricouer's analysis resonates exactly with my experience of telling tales from within the story, as the folk tale characters. They are each determined and feel constrained – often misunderstood and misrepresented – by their narrative involvement with the other characters. They do not stand alone, autonomous from the story of which they are apart. However, the process of telling the story within the oral tradition or writing down the story, fixes them like insects in amber, defined forever by the way they are perceived and judged by others. Each is a part of many other simultaneous stories, layered upon the other and intersecting.

I have a sense now that we are part of a shared story by nature of my writing this and you reading it, in the present moment and whenever we remember, revisit or refer to it. In this sense, both our identities extend far beyond this present moment and exist in our absence through our inhabiting of each other. We are both a reader and a writer of our own lives and the lives of others.

Co-authoring our stories is an inherently generative process. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricouer (1978) argues that fresh metaphors (ones which have not been reduced to clichés) reveal a brand new way of seeing their referent and are far more than rhetorical flourishes. Similarly, the act of sustaining a narrative produces new meanings upon each reading or hearing. New meaning is created and recreated such that a story is not itself fixed or determined by the teller, but is mediated hermeneutically by the listener – it becomes what it means to them, with each telling. Our stories of ourselves are thus always contestable and essential components of our being:

"Stories have to be told or they die,
and when they die, we can't remember who we are
or why we're here."

Sue Monk Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees (p.107)

AN APPROPRIATE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH

The conceptual relationship between theory and data is not therefore self-evident in qualitative research. Qualitative data shifts according the meaning attributed to it. According to Denzin (1994, p.508) "grounded theory", as developed primarily by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is the most widely employed qualitative interpretive framework. While grounded theory is rooted in symbolic interactionism, its focus on data and its codification and classification is distinctly positivist in orientation. My "data" (field notes, video recordings) are not treated within my methodology as capable of being generalised from in terms of content: their purpose is not to generate theory but rather a means, a methodology, of connecting with self and others. My methodology is based on narrative, not empirical inquiry. The notion that "data" test "theory" through hypothesis testing is inappropriate here. Rather, theory and data influence each other in what Glaser and Strauss (1967) term the hermeneutic spiral.

Of specific theoretical relevance to my inquiry is Mead's (1934) notion of a "parliament of selves", a theme which is developed by Burke's (2000) subsequent work on the internal dynamics of multiple selves. I now regard my iPhone method as a way of engaging with the psychodynamic processes described by Assagioli's (1971) theory of *psychosynthesis* in which he describes constant conflict between multiple sub-personalities struggling for ascendancy.

William James' (1890) much earlier vision of identity is that people possess as many selves as the groups with whom they interact and that persons thus hold as many identities as they have distinct networks of relationships. Identities constitute internalised role expectations; cognitive constructs are organised internally according to *salience*, where certain identities will be invoked more frequently than others across a variety of situations. The related concept of "commitment" refers to the degree to which persons' relationships to others in their social networks depend on possessing a particular identity and role; commitment is thus measurable by the cost of losing meaningful relations to others, should that identity be foregone. So, identity is not merely a cognitive construct, it reflects emotional needs, related to belonging. It is *commitment* that shapes identity salience. In my iPhone interviews, particularly in character, there is a palpable tension between maintaining and

challenging previously versions of self: the stepmother both retreats to and seeks to overturn the way she was originally written.

The Stepmother's Defence

"Did I kill children?

I might have done, but not to eat them. I'm not a cannibal despite what's been said. I wanted company. Yes, I encouraged children to visit, with their parents, before the famine. Then, after the famine started, alone but bringing their sweets. I needed them for the house. When I say, I might have done, I didn't actually kill them, but I definitely on more than one occasion gave them a heavy slap for ripping great chunks out of my gingerbread roof TO EAT.

How would you feel …"

THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE

In Gergen's (1991) *The Saturated Self*, he describes the crisis of identity arising as a consequence of communicational complexity, relativism and postmodern frames which result in a dissolution of the traditional sense of self.   I found early on as I developed my iPhone method, that the process of "being another" was not one of self-denial or loss of self-identity, but rather affirmation of identity in a form which was inherently relational rather than atomistic and individualistic.

The postmodern challenge to the traditional notion of a singular self is that of interpretation and particularly, self-interpretation. If we create ourselves, like works of art, what if our works, our selves, are interpreted differently by others? What if we are interpreted as fake? Where then, does our value reside? Do we become simulacra (a copy of something of which no original exists)? I suggest that this is the theoretical and ethical challenge which postmodernism brings to narrative inquiry – storytelling: a requirement to adopt a position of   paradigmatic plurality in validating or invalidating, ourselves and others. (In power and gender terms, this is foregrounded by Belenky et al (1986), speaking of women's ways of

knowing and asking, what would the world look like, if women's accounts were listened to and treated as valid? How much is lost, if they are not?)

IDENTITY AS PROVISIONAL

Furthermore, within the postmodern frame, identities are merely "points of temporal attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall 1996); created, maintained and revised in social contexts.   As my inquiry progressed and I worked more deeply with my iPhone process, the singularity and individuality of "self" appeared increasingly untenable. So where, I asked, does "self" reside?

SELF INHABITS THE SPACE BETWEEN US

The above framing of self not as unitary but as a plurality might imply a shattering of self. In Padraic Colum's (1944) introduction to the complete Grimm's Fairy Tales, he quotes Wilhelm Grimm's reference to "fragments of belief dating back to most ancient times, in which spiritual things are expressed in a figurative manner". He continues, "The mythic element resembles small pieces of a shattered jewel which are lying strewn on the ground all overgrown with grass and flowers … Their significance has long been lost, but it is still felt … and imparts value to the story."

Shattered jewels

As I walked in the forest, I found small pieces of this shattered jewel, of shared fragments of belief, ancient but still present though often unnoticed. I photographed them.

The signpost leads to the images.

Signpost to website Hansel and Gretel Photo Gallery

The perseverance of these images of myth and magic in the English forest of 2015 speaks to the temporality of being: the space between our own past, present and future and also the space between us and our forebears, our mothers, fathers, grandparents and far further back in time. Padraic Colum continues, "We have another past besides the past that history tells us about, a past which is in us, in individuals, more livingly than the recorded past". In this sense, it seemed to me when working in character and photographing the images referred to above, that my "self" existed not just in the present moment, the here and now, but somehow scattered across time. Not in the sense of dissolution or denial of my "self" but in the sense that I contained, and was contained by, others.

Martin Buber (1947) in *Between man and man* contrasts the relationship of "I-thou" with that of "I – it", the former involving "experiencing the other side" in dialogue with another. Buber's notion of I-thou dialogue does not involve *surrendering one's identity* but rather experiencing both sides of the conversation equally, while *holding one's identity*. Buber proposes that the I-thou relationship is not a dimension of the self but the existential and ontological reality in which the self comes into being and through which it fulfils and authenticates itself. When Buber refers to "*the ontological reality of the between*", I hear echoes of Bateson's glue and the patterns that connect.

BACK TO BATESON (ON SELF)

Bateson's (1972) observations on the nature of self are more than relational, they are transcendental. What Bateson proposes is not the shattering or denial of self but an extension of self which not only transcends flesh but transcends consciousness. I refer back to Jung's collective unconscious and the significance of archetypes, the universal, archaic and primordial images which form the psychic counterpart of instinct, of *a priori* knowing. Bateson proposes that:

> "The total self-corrective unit which processes information, or, as I say, 'thinks'
> and 'acts' and 'decides' is a *system* whose boundaries do not at all coincide with
> the boundaries either of the body or of what is popularly called the 'self' or
> 'consciousness' and it is important to notice that there are *multiple* differences

between the thinking systems and the 'self' as popularly conceived … the system is not a transcendent entity as the 'self' is commonly supposed to be … the ideas are immanent in a network of causal pathways … not bounded with consciousness" (1972, p.319)

Bateson carries on to state that this network is not "bound by the skin" but "includes all external pathways along which information can travel … [such as] the pathways of sound and light along which travel transforms of differences originally immanent in things and other people – and especially *in our own actions*".

I interpret this to mean that *through my actions* I can achieve unity with my selves and with others. The kind of unity achieved through empathy, for example, may best be accomplished not through imagination alone but by experiencing being the other and finding out from the inside. This approach is at the heart of the iPhone method described in my fieldwork later in this thesis.

SELF AS THE EXERCISE OF CHOICE - WHO DO WE CHOOSE TO BE?

Stryker and Burke (2000) in *The Past, Present and Future of an Identity Theory* examine the reciprocal relationships between self and social context, such that identity is embedded in social process. In terms of who we choose to be, they ask:

"*Given situations in which there exist behavioural options aligned with at least two sets of role expectations … why do persons choose one particular course of action*?"

Or, when faced with choices of who to be, who do we choose to be, and why? (There are of course constraints on the extent to which we are free to choose given our socio-political contexts, the power relations in which we are engaged and our psychological preparedness to consider options and to act upon them and the assumption of agency is open to challenge in any specific situation).

Notwithstanding this, Stryker (2000) observes that "Persons typically are embedded in multiple role relationships in multiple groups and they hold multiple identities. These

multiple roles and multiple identities may reinforce one another, but perhaps more often do not … when they do not, they introduce identity competition or conflicts" (p.290)

What intrigues me is the distinction between holding multiple identities, or multiple versions of selfhood which may be interchangeable, and changing/transforming the personal narrative account of one's own "real" story. In my iPhone work, I have the sense that the characters have a strong feeling of personal identity but feel misrepresented, rather than feeling that they have multiple versions of themselves.

The difference is one of agency: the important thing is to my folktale characters is to be allowed to represent themselves, to make their own voices heard over the voices imposed upon them, rather than to maintain multiple versions of themselves. The former feels proactive, an act of asserting narrative authority, whereas the latter feels reactive, in the sense that the version of self which shows up in the moment is determined by circumstance and is pragmatic and utilitarian – a way of achieving goals rather than asserting identity.

This is an important distinction when considering issues of power and gender, discussed later in the context of "subjugated knowledges". It is crucial when assessing the emancipatory potential of narrative inquiry, enabling the telling of my tale, differently.

Theory and who owns it

As a final observation, it occurs to me that perhaps a consequence of the postmodern rejection of metanarratives may prove to be the breaking of the spell which surrounds the creative practice of making theories. It seems to follow that the postmodern turn opens up space for democratisation and considering new ways of relating to theory. Maybe this will permit an epistemological recalibration which destabilises the hierarchy of "big ideas" and "local issues".

Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that "theory" has become synonymous with the theories of the "great men", the intellectual giants (Marx, Weber etc.). They assert that anyone can create their own theory, provided they start from reality, from their own experience. They describe how the masses as well as the "theoretical capitalists" can generate creative input as scientific entrepreneurs; they do not have to act as a subordinate

proletariat serving only to validate intellectual big business. Each of us is capable of being the architect of our own theories. They point out that while theories must certainly be critically examined and tested, this process should not be a deterrent to the novitiate or the outsider as it can lead only to modification, not to destruction or invalidation of the theorist *as a person*, or their experience, since a theory can only be replaced by another theory, equally contestable (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.28).

I return to this theme having already set out above my personal ambivalence towards "theory" in the context of the role it occupies in academic and social life. I am increasingly convinced that theory, and the academic activity associated with it, needs to be re-envisioned along the lines that Bateson suggests we regard our connection with the natural world, in the interests of a creating a world of beauty and inclusion. I also suspect, although this assumption is untested, that as with board appointments in my executive search practice, the attitude of many women towards joining the "great men" theory club is ambivalent. I intend to explore this in subsequent inquiry. Meanwhile, I refer the reader again to Louise Anthony, specifically to her paper *Different Voices or Perfect Storm: Why Are There So Few Women in Philosophy?* (2012).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my relationship with theory and the way in which theory and practice are interwoven in my inquiry in a generative, experimental and essential playful way. It became clear as I played that my inquiry itself concerned a certain kind of knowing and this was the cause of much confusion as I struggled to define my inquiry question, why it mattered and how it could be expressed.

I mapped a theoretical territory and concluded that addressing my question, *who am I and how do I know*, supposes acceptance of a relational, process ontology and as a consequence, the realisation that my "self" is not something out there, separate from my experience in the moment, but a quality of being described by my relationships with others and the natural world.

I also concluded that the kind of knowing contained within my inquiry is experiential and metaphorical: I am inquiring into the kind of knowing that exists at the boundaries, the edges, the between space, which is experienced mostly as glimpses. It includes intuitive, instinctive, tacit and imaginative knowledge, including women's ways of knowing; the kind that is sometimes, in some circumstances and by some people, and by many people some of the time, known as magic.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, VALIDITY AND ETHICS

Introduction

I begin this chapter with a 500 word "soundbite" produced for an ADOC masterclass in November 2013 which sets out my ontological and epistemological stall. I then locate my inquiry within the narrative and participatory fields of action inquiry and describe the advantages and problems I found in employing these methods.

I discuss the question of validity within my chosen research paradigms and propose four criteria by which I wish my work to be judged. I describe an ethical framework which I devised firstly to reflect the multiplicity of participants in my fieldwork, some of whom are imaginary, some of whom are constituents of my self and secondly to acknowledge and honour the improvisational nature and inherent volatility of my research methods with particular reference to boundary shifting.

I discuss my own epistemological status as teller of the tale of my inquiry and position myself relative to my methodology in terms of my learning style and how I have approached the craft aspects of inquiry: in what spirit have I conducted my research? I suggest that this is reflected in the form and content of my inquiry and the way this thesis is written and presented. I acknowledge its influence on my research choices and findings.

I then discuss my <u>iPhone</u> method from the viewpoints of tool craft, reflexivity, free fall talking and the postmodern turn as manifest in the rise of the selfie. I briefly consider performance in relation to altered states of consciousness and Stanislavski's "magic if", with reference to the multiple role-playing inherent in my method.

Part I: "Here I stand"

This section of my thesis is about the choices I made in my inquiry methodology. It recognises that despite my sense of subjective plurality, practice demands decisions, some of which are binary, like crossroads, and my choices define me.

In many ways, the early part of my inquiry, up until I recognised its golden threads, was about acknowledging old and making new epistemological and ontological choices. This was a process of deep reflection which gave rise not only to my iPhone methodology, starting with my curiosity about interviewing myself, but also to a working theory of inquiry, which recognises that my inquiry was generated by practice, by discoveries I made in the field. I gave myself permission after this realisation to take a wide open, exploratory approach and to leave the beaten track, a metaphor which reflects the searching, exploratory nature of my quest to find who I am and how do I know?

I asked participants in an ADOC Masterclass, November 2013, to write a 500 word piece describing their "ologies", framed in terms of an "elevator pitch", a film-making expression which imagines you have a very short space of time to pitch your film concept to a famous film director, between entering the elevator at ground zero, and them getting out at, say, the fifth floor. This what I wrote:

Sue Lloyd – 500 words on the "ologies"

"I am intrigued by the transformational potential of magical metaphor and I have been working on a first person inquiry with iPhone and folk tales. I recognise that my own experience of this old way of knowing and the practice of the rituals of the natural world is very different from post-modern knowing, which also excites and intrigues me with its creative and transformational possibilities. I wonder whether hyper-connectedness in the digital realm is in some way related to older ways of connecting to all things through expanded consciousness?

My -ological journey began with early observations from my doctoral supervision group that I was absent from my inquiry. Oops. Where is Sue? They asked in vain. I came finally to understand that I was attempting to inquire into issues of identity creation – the co-creation of self – without examining how I knew myself and how I related to others. From the start, I was unclear whether I had a self or whether I had selves. And if the latter, what was authenticity in practice? Who am I, who was I and who might I become? This seemed to me to be crucial in an inquiry into magical, or indeed, any kind of transformational change. Now I am experiencing a new way of knowing through audio-visual methodologies which I find illuminating and full of potential for my inquiry. This is where I am at the moment:

> **Axiology** – at the very first workshop, I was deeply concerned that axiology had dropped off the radar. What is of value? What matters? In terms of my inquiry into self, this translates to the following puzzles – how to live in the moment while caught in the web of past and future imagining? What is the relation between my past, present and future selves? What is the relation of myself to my various other selves and how is this illuminated by conversations with myself? How does the audio-visual process of talking to myself via iPhone – a very new form of presentational knowledge - create new insights?

> **Ontology** – I hold a process ontology in which "being" is always "becoming". This chimes with my experience of the world as unstable, volatile, tending towards equilibrium but subject to shocks. One aspect of my personal ontology concerns the relationship of the question to the answer and the dialectic as a meaningful – or not – way of generating high quality knowledge. I find this problematic.

Epistemology – I am working with experiential and presentational forms, mainly. I am using improvisation and the actor / director dynamic to see what kind of knowledge is created from "freefall talking". I am considering whether, and how, conversations with myself – as opposed to introspection – are generative.

Methodology - I have spent much of the last year developing a method which involves interviewing myself on my iPhone, either as myself or in the characters of folk tales – specifically, Hansel & Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. An important part of this process has involved being in the forest, often in trees, embodying the ancient archetypes. The space between new digital, hyper-connected social media and old, traditional, culturally embedded stories is where I am working and I believe that my methodology grew out of my -ologies, or it might be the other way round. Other times, I just ask myself questions, whatever comes up – it's always surprising."

My personal epistemology

I find it implicit in working with action research methodologies and post-modern paradigms that I attend to my ways of working and generating knowledge. Throughout this inquiry, I noted and critically examined my "personal epistemology"; my own ways of learning and arriving at what I think I know.

This is what I found:

High anxiety is my overriding emotional register

Derrida speaks of the fear of writing. I feel just like that when I am writing: he describes the impulse to edit out anything which might be regretted afterwards. I also experience procrastination (dithering) followed by impatience and self-loathing. The following link is an excerpt from the film documentary "Derrida" in which Derrida describes this experience. www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoKnzsiR6Ss.

Avoiding the final edit

It sets in stone that which I experience as fluid and indeterminate. I find taking a final fixed position very hard. I find that my opinions are formed at the point where I stop thinking and I experience constantly a sense of what T.S. Eliot(1920) described as "decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse" (The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufruck, line 48).

Searching, sifting through texts

I am always looking for something that I cannot describe until I find it. Pebbles on a beach: an intellectual equivalent of saudade, perhaps, a longing for something not yet found, perhaps not findable.

Inclination towards territory mapping

Seeking a vantage point of the landscape, to see the big picture (Bateson urges us to "drill up" not "drill down" in order to perceive the patterns that connect), then filling it in, joining up the dots. I like to place the significant, important-seeming ideas / concepts / experiences / emotions on the landscape and then try to work out how to get from one to another and to discover what it was about my choices that connects them. I frequently find that the connections are rhizomal, in the Deleuzian sense, such that the connections lie far below the surface, sprouting unexpectedly from the forest floor.

Obliqueness

Approaching things indirectly, creating and maintaining ambiguity, keeping doors open not slamming doors shut.

Experiential

My inquiry process is largely an experiment in experiential knowing; that which I associate with the deepest sense of personal conviction: I know this, I saw it, I felt it, I was there, I can feel this ground beneath me. Here I stand. For now.

I note the tension between "here I stand" and "for now" which relates directly to the framing of selfhood as something immutable at the core of being or something emergent and constantly in process of becoming. I know that I can seem insincere.

Pragmatic

I am a pragmatic epistemologist: I notice that I pursue knowledge not for its own sake but for its potential to deliver riches. I therefore approach telling stories and living inquiry instrumentally with limited interest or belief in objective universal truths. I am cautious with my knowledge claims.

Uncertain

My default epistemological mode is a pervasive feeling of uncertainty and doubt combined with suspension of judgement: I hesitate to decide or to jump to conclusions, preferring to dance upon the shifting tectonic plates or to walk what I have described in the *Introduction* as the "dialectal arête".

Contemplative

I am naturally contemplative; I ponder and wonder, which is somewhat unkindly referred to as having a "tortoise mind" (Claxton 1997); I am inclined to intuition. I am observant: I wait for the evidence on which things turns to reveal itself; this can be interpreted as being guarded. I don't rush towards knowing. I hold back from telling all that I know.

Ambiguity

I have a high tolerance of ambiguity up to the point of deciding, but then I am stubbornly fixed in my beliefs until they change, when I will readily abandon my former opinion. I am not faithful to past convictions.

Which way to jump?

I value both mythos and logos but I am more prepared to abandon logos if the two offer me conflicting versions of "truth".

Why is this significant? I think because I trust mythos more.

Part II: Research Methods

Why Action Inquiry?

The following is a journal extract (September 2013)

"*I hope my inquiry will achieve more than just knowledge generation, to include personal and professional development and organisational and community empowerment within the two worlds of my inquiry. In writing this paper and previous papers, including the ADOC acceptance papers, the narrative form feels good in that it supports reflection and a deeper personal connection with the issues which are important to me, but at the same time, feels rambling and indecisive compared with conventional ways of writing academic papers. I am concerned that when the actual inquiry commences, I may drown in reflection. It feels messy and I have been unable to locate my inquiry within a neatly circumscribed discipline or body of research. While I am enjoying the free-ranging aspect at this stage, I am hoping that my inquiry quickly settles down to something more focussed. I have already realised that doing research in a participatory way, within my existing practice is more difficult, as opposed to easier and more convenient, than performing it in the abstract, from a distance. There's nowhere to hide*".

I was drawn to action inquiry as my grounding research paradigm because:

1. It involves action (in the world) as opposed to theory alone;

2. It involves cycles of action and reflection;

3. Personal growth is implicit;

4. It is generative of new knowledge gained in the process of making / doing.

I wanted my doctoral research to be in the service of something that concerned me, rather than adding to a field of abstracted knowledge. I wanted to be able to speak with conviction about what I had spent several years working on and crucially, I wanted it to

enhance the quality of my life. I saw this in terms of it taking me to new places and opening up new opportunities. I wanted to learn again but this time with purpose.

I wanted my inquiry to matter, to me and to others.

"All research is for me, for us, and for them: it speaks to three audiences … It is for them to the extent that it produces some kind of generalizable ideas and outcomes which elicit the response "That's interesting!" from those who are concerned to understand a similar field (Davis, 1971). It is for us to the extent that it responds to concerns for our praxis, is relevant and timely, and so produces the response, "That works!" from those who are struggling with problems in their field of action. It is for me to the extent that the process and outcomes respond directly to the individual researcher's being-in-the-world, and so elicit the response, "That's exciting" – taking exciting back to its root meaning, to set in action". (Reason & Marshall, 1987, pp.112-113, original emphasis, cited in Reason & Marshall, 2001).

"First person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness and to choose carefully and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. First person research practice brings inquiry into more and more of our moments of action – not as outside researchers but in the whole range of everyday activities". (Reason and Bradbury 2000).

"Critical subjectivity involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing." (Reason 1994: 326)

I like the implicit recognition in action research that it is better to get started, to begin, "to get it up and fix it", rather than to procrastinate as I often do, formulating a perfect plan which never sees the light of day. I am grateful to my examiner for insisting at my transfer viva that I got on and did something in practice, rather than write about it. Undoubtedly, doing this was a turning point in my inquiry and it liberated me.

However, I worried a while longer about whether my inquiry methodology has value to anyone other than myself. I realised that this was part of a wider question: how can first person inquiry be generalizable? I wondered whether I should tilt my inquiry towards

quantitative methods enabling me to generate data in conditions that might be replicated. I became convinced that my inquiry will prove to be of interest and value to others in at least two ways:

1. by providing case studies of my iPhone process;

2. by contributing to new theory about the experience of "being another" that might stimulate further work in this field.

The improvisational and performance aspects of my iPhone method proved well-suited to action inquiry in the specific situation of my cinema work. For example, I was particularly excited when I first saw that the critical reflexivity and cyclical aspects of action inquiry are mirrored almost exactly by the practice of theatrical and musical rehearsal. Late in November 2013, we persuaded Nigel Kennedy to perform at the cinema of which I am a shareholder and director, for four nights on the basis that he would present some of the Bach / Fats Waller material which he had recently performed at the Royal Albert Hall 2013 Proms but that he would also introduce new material and put together an improvised set which would reflect the small theatre style environment.

The public performances were superb but by far the richest experience in inquiry terms was being involved in the improvised creative collaborations which began after the show and went on all night in the dressing room. This was only the second time in my life that I have been close to a live virtuoso musical performance (the first was at Liverpool University being allowed to sit on the stage with some student friends while Segovia played classical guitar). It was wonderfully intimate and inclusive and provided a fine example of what collaborative inquiry should look, sound and feel like.

"*Realising that action research methodology is implicit in performance art sounds obvious now, but I only realised it over this past weekend. I am excited by the prospect of incorporating this into my work with method acting within an action inquiry framework and determined to follow up my exploratory conversations with performers*". (Journal notes, 3 December 2013)

My research methods

I employed the following research methods: writing as inquiry, reading as inquiry; narrative inquiry; participative inquiry (using iPhone interview).

Writing as inquiry

Writing comes easily to me: what was less easy at the beginning was accepting feedback from my supervision group that my writing *failed to reveal me* and often seemed designed to conceal – the word *subterfuge* was mentioned; I preferred the word *masquerade* and in particular, I like the image provided by a colleague, that my practice resembled the trying on of many different hats. I subsequently took this image into practice and it helped me to distinguish characters by deploying hats which I already had. When challenged how much of me had actually been revealed in my early writing, I acknowledged that when I write there may be a process of subconscious filtering going on such that some of the narrative remains in my head, when I think I have written it down. When I read my work back to myself, I also read the unwritten text. Others, obviously, cannot. We discussed the abiding perception that I was <u>afraid</u>, and that there is tension between the two directions in which I might take my work: broadly speaking, in a conventional or an unconventional direction. To the extent that we agreed, it was that I was afraid of being afraid.

I started to work with free-fall writing, a form which I resisted at first and found hard to relax into, but when I did, it was a break-through. I came to regard my iPhone method as a form of freefall <u>talking</u>.

The process of writing in the early stages of my inquiry was a source of creative inspiration and it has proved even more so in the writing of my thesis. I have tried to retain within this text some of the chaos and volatility which characterised my inquiry process and not to over-process, over-explain or sanitise it in the same way that my video clips are unedited and my iPhone photos un-retouched. "Just do it" is essential to the spirit of my process and "just write it" follows from that. In inquiry terms, this proved a wise choice in that I have learned as much from the writing as I have from any other part of the process. I find now, that as I read over my text, more insights and meanings continue to emerge: I hope they always will.

In the process of critically examining my writing practice, I discovered asymmetries in the way I process information and emotional data / capta. I can't easily listen and write at the same time (I find it distracting) but I have good auditory recall. When I interview someone, I rarely write anything while they are talking. I make notes immediately afterwards when I find it difficult to think or to order my thoughts <u>without</u> writing them down, with a pen or at the keyboard. When I write, I find that ideas seem to go straight to the page so that I recognise them just after I have written them. I am paying close attention to these processes.

Reading as inquiry

At first, my ADOC reading was characterised by great restlessness and an inability to settle down to reading a text or an author with any degree of concentration or sustained attention. I would become frustrated at how long reading an academic article took, and would over-employ my habitual method of reading; which is to scan the author's biography, make a judgement about them and what I was about to read, look at the first paragraph, read the back page, see who reviewed it and jump around chapters looking for quotes / key words. This method of reading is functional in business but not necessarily helpful scholastically, and it utterly exhausted me.

I started as a positivist and an intellectual snob. I read hyper-critically. I notice that my early margin scribbling is full of angry asterisks, double-underlining and remarks such as "rubbish" and "bollocks".

I had to learn to read reflectively and scholastically again and I am thoroughly enjoying this re-discovered skill, overlaid with the new emerging skill of appreciative inquiry. This is the stance which I am adopting in the field, echoing Reason's observation on the Western intellectual tradition and scientific method:

 "Building knowledge to enhance the human condition is a noble one, yet its methodological starting point of doubt and negation undermines its constructive intent." (Reason & Bradbury (2001), p.165)

Cycles of inquiry as a methodology

Cycles of inquiry became central to my inquiry method and I found it generative and supportive of the reflexive process. Within my forest metaphor, I find cycles of inquiry map onto seasons and the natural cycles of the moon. I have learned to allow things to "compost" and not to be surprised when insights emerge long after the event. One of the consequences in my practice has been not to draw a line under conclusions but to retain an open space for "decisions and revisions" and to release my ego-attachment to previously held views.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is by nature nebulous and shifting.

Rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative inquiry frames a research puzzle that carries with it "a sense of a search, a 'research', a 'searching again', a 'sense of continual reformulation'." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.124)

"Narrative inquiry always begins in the midst of ongoing experiences … inquiries conclude still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up narrative inquirers' and participants' lives" (p.10)

Sarris (1993) notes that stories are often not shared in "chronological sequence" (p.1) and hooks (1997) observes that people's lived and told stories are not linear and do not necessarily move from point to point. These observations chime with my experience in practice that tales in the telling follow an emotional chronology rather than a temporal one: time is subordinate to experience in ordering and sequencing a tale. I believe this has profound implications for the notion of "living in the moment": I found it possible to live in moments past, present and future, to experience different times "at the same time".

Gergen (2003) cautions that "an analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles" (p.272) may well undermine the very point of the research. I found when conducting progressive cycles of reviewing iPhone material that attempts to classify or organise content

in terms of themes or chapter headings had a dulling effect. It is the difference between formal flower arranging and plonking bunches in the vase and letting them fall naturally.

I found the following to be true:

"The knowledge developed from narrative inquiry is textured by particularity and incompleteness; knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties and more toward *wondering about and imagining alternative possibilities*." (Clandinin & Murphy 2007, p.14, my italics)

I recognise that throughout and beyond my inquiry, my life continues to unfold inexorably into the future and my story changes, as does the way I choose to tell it. Change is part of narrative inquiry: tales are not fixed and neither is the telling.

Participant inquiry

iPhone interview

The iPhone method is simply to look into the iPhone and press record on the video function. Then replay and reflect. The most compelling aspect is its accessibility. Like many people, my iPhone is constantly in my pocket or bag and I often hold it as I walk around, ready to take or make calls. It feels like an extension of my hand, like a craft tool.

When I recently accidentally downloaded an iPhone 5 software upgrade which substantially altered all my familiar settings, I felt the same degree of frustration and hopelessness as, when gardening or cooking, a favourite utensil breaks or is lost: nothing else will do the job quite as well. This familiarity takes ages to re-establish with a replacement tool as the advantage of beloved craft tools, the exact balance and adaptation to my hand and way of use, is lost and has to be re-established.

As well as its accessibility, the most useful aspect of the iPhone as an inquiry tool is the reflexivity provided by playback. I contrast this with the tendency of authors and actors not to revisit and reflect upon finished works or past performances:

"Most of the authors I know, myself included, don't tend to re-read their books once they are published." *Ernesto Spinelli (2005)*

Actors rarely watch their films.

There is immediacy and ease in simply pressing "replay". It seems quicker and more immediate than reading past journal entries. The technique is "quick and dirty" in the sense of being unrehearsed, improvised, unscripted. It feels less invested with performance anxiety. (I note that this is contested by some of my collaborators who on first trying self-interview found it extremely "discombobulating"). In any case, the "delete" button means that the stakes are low. It can be made to go away, now or later: it is essentially a private act.

In Barbara Turner-Vesselago's book "Writing without a parachute: the Art of Freefall", I was struck by the parallels between freefall writing and my iPhone method.   She talks about the "ability to surrender" and "becoming truly present" and "getting out of your own way" and permitting an "essential vulnerability". She speaks of freefall writing as having "its own logic and its own power – both greater than and different from the power of your rational, thinking mind". She adds that "The only way to learn about these differences is to experience them". (1995, p.3)

This is how I find filming myself on iPhone. I have written elsewhere about the run up to the self-interview and how I incubate the characters gently, by living with them and walking alongside them. It's a gentle, slow process. I start to feel the character coalesce and sense that there is something they want to say. So, I say it. The process of speaking is improvisational, not prepared or rehearsed, it is as though it can only be said by saying it, not by thinking it in advance. It does feel like "freefall talking", a stream of consciousness vocalised.

Working with the folk tales

I have described what I am doing as a creative, generative process rather than an analytical one: it comes to me as I go about my life, as a kind of meta-narrative, never far away but occasionally demanding my immediate attention. Both the following statements are true:

It doesn't matter what the story is, the story is just a channel for insights to emerge through.

It does matter what the story is; its themes are relevant to the present narrative of my life.

I experience a moment of recognition of the presence of the tale which was instant and absolute. From that point, it feels as though my direction was set, as though "the story found me". There was certainly no conscious selection of my next story. After I knew what it was to be, I felt as though I had to step back from it, not to look directly at it, to avoid analysing or planning it, while it composted beneath the surface. The image comes to me that the story is a pond in which I see my reflection and from which, when I stir it with a stick, all manner of things come to the surface.

The temptation, which I give into frequently, is to research all the academic, psychological analysis about the folk tale; and because this is a reassuring activity, I print it all out and put it in a pile, for later. It's interesting to read but mostly I know it already and there is nothing I want to add, or can add, to other interpretations of the story. My challenge is very different. I can't name what it is yet but it is to do with the telling of my own story and the fact that the folk story releases and unlocks memories and prophesies and reveals patterns that enable me to speak of it. I have a sense that I am tapping into a common resource and that what resonates with me, resonates more generally to others. I often find that if I make passing reference to the story with friends or family or in general conversation, there is recognition and a comment which suggests that the story exists for them also, a little below the surface, a familiar presence which is rarely mentioned.

I have noticed that there are three distinct phases in the iPhone storytelling process described below:

The beginning: recognising the folk tale

I feel a great sense of release, elation and relief that we are on another journey – it's begun. When I say "we", I mean myself in the presence of the characters in the folk tale. I feel excited and apprehensive but mostly relieved that another world is opening up into which I can slip. It is like the feeling you get when a few lines into a new book you know it's going to be a good one and the evenings and afternoons become times when there might be the treat of a few minutes to read a bit more.

> *"After recognising that my second field study was Sleeping Beauty, it was a while before I began. It began suddenly one day in the woods when I saw melting snow on fallen wood. At the beginning I dwell with the story and slowly questions form in my mind that I want to ask the characters. In Sleeping Beauty, the first questions were "what would it have felt like, hanging to death on the thorns", "why did the old woman in the old tower nod at her", "why does the story say in one version that the King and Queen were out on pleasure bent, when clearly they were not" and "was the fulfilment inevitable". In this story, my initial questions led me to sudden recognition that it is all about a great awakening and soon after, a realisation that there was no spell as such. It was this which made it unbreakable: it was a premonition"*. Journal extract (undated).

The middle: reflection while walking in the forest

I reflect on what happened in the story and the images which come to mind.

I usually have our dog, Cybele, with me. It makes a big difference. It is as though she provides a warm and comforting blanket around what I am doing and connects me to a different, more direct conversation which paradoxically, is wordless, although I speak words to the camera. Her presence also provides a useful distraction which means that I have to actually get on with the filming quickly while keeping an eye on the dog rather than procrastinate. She gives me a reason to be out in the forest. It is companionable and the

dog walking combined with the filming pushes me out of the house and into the forest making me take time out from other things. It makes the process more tactile and also more light-hearted and entertaining. The process feels more like play than work.

It then becomes a process of noticing images, objects, themes in my day-to-day live which are present in the story: it might be anything which triggers recognition and then a closer observation. An example would be the bright red rose hips which shone brightly in the hedgerow and looked like drops of fresh blood and reminded me of the princes caught until death in the thorns which surrounded the castle in Sleeping Beauty. I feel that I have a heightened awareness of things which resonate with the story. In Hansel, I was excited to realise that the white feathers shed by the doves at my old house were those of the white bird that led the way to the gingerbread house. In Sleeping Beauty, I instantly recognised the social devastation caused in my own life some years ago by the thoughtless exclusion of a friend from a child's party.

The final stage: recording interviews: engaging with the characters

I begin to ask myself question that intrigue me about the tale and answer them in character. I also record video reflections on what is going on in my mind as I dwell with the story. My relationship with the characters begins with a feeling that we inhabit the same world which is entwined with my everyday world. Although these are soliloquies spoken by me it is very different from acting: I am speaking my own thoughts as though I have merged with the character. I hear myself saying things that I recognise to be true of them in the location within their story, and true of me, located within my own story. By the time I begin recording, I feel that I have engaged with them and we are known to each other.

There is a sense of shifting in and out of focus – if I try to "work", things disappear from sight. It happens particularly if I try to pre-prepare a speech for one of the characters. I can jot down ideas, in the form of questions, but if I try to write a speech and then read it to iPhone in character, it doesn't work at all. An example in Sleeping Beauty is the Queen's Speech, in which I tried to write for the character of the Queen a speech which put forward her position. The written pieces which I have presented in the Appendices were transcribed

afterwards from my improvised speeches to iPhone rather than being the script for what I said to camera.

In terms of process, occasionally, usually when walking in the forest, but often when driving, I have a compulsion to say something, and I want to capture it quickly. It would not work at all, I feel, if there was a technology layer and if things had to be set up. I considered whether a remote control to switch the video camera on and off would be smoother, but quickly concluded that seeing me reach out and switch on / off, occasionally dropping the phone, is an important reminder of the underlying process and forces me not to think of this as film-making. When I record something, I crave reviewing it, and I am usually thrilled with how well it captures my feelings in the moment. So far, I haven't edited and I am resisting finding out how to do so as I want to keep the material uncut.

The subsequent cycles of reflection are in many ways as important as the creative process: much of the meaning emerges later.

I have a very clear sense while working that it doesn't matter how it's all going to hang together at the end: it is not a linear or chronological process. This leads me to examine the relationship of my method and process to acting and improvisation.

Acting as process

Although I was convinced that I was not "acting" but "being another", I examined the field of acting theory and practice looking for insights into the dual notions of embodiment and altered states of consciousness, both relevant to my practice methodologies. Traditional accounts are unhelpful as they focus on theatrical arts and the process of public performance rather than the phenomenological aspects of being oneself and being another, in the sense of inspiriting or inhabiting simultaneous realities.

In "The Psychology of Consciousness", Farthing (1891) describes how actors routinely enter into an altered state of consciousness (ASC). Acting is seen as altering most of the 14 dimensions of changed subjective experience which characterise ASCs, namely: attention, perception, imagery and fantasy, inner speech, memory, higher-level thought processes,

meaning or significance of experiences, time experience, emotional feeling and expression, level of arousal, self-control, suggestibility, body image, and sense of personal identity. I sought research into the experience of this from the actor's perspective but found little in the literature which spoke to my core concerns. I decided to engage in further fieldwork and enrolled on the directing actors course described in chapter 8, Directing Actors: a p*ractice account*.

Lutterbie (2011) examines the processes, structures and phenomena that constitute the actor's embodied / experiential work both while acting and as a human being. In "Towards a General Theory of Acting: Cognitive Science and Performance", he identifies three approaches of cognitive science to the study of mind: a) cognitivism, where the mind is metaphorically conceived as a digital computer, b) connectionism, where the mind is thought of as a neural network, and c) embodied dynamicism, where the mind is an embodied dynamic system. Given the processual, experiential nature of acting when considered as a human phenomenon, Lutterbie proposes that this third approach offers an explanatory power commensurate with the complexity and creativity of the acting process. I found that this account did not provide a sufficiently rich or nuanced description of my own experiences and supported my view that my process was not on of acting, but of being.

Quite early on, when describing my method to colleagues, it was suggested that Stanislavski's technique of method acting provided a possible theoretical ground for my enactment of folk tale characters. My immediate reaction was to say, no! This is not acting; I'm doing something else, something quite different but I don't know what it is.

Stanislavski did not require actors to be the part, as is a popular misconception, but he did demand that they lived the part with the "magic if", acting "as if" they were the character. My method plays with this idea – although I did not know much about the "magic if" when I began to develop my process – and I extend it to incorporate the idea of inspiritedness, of being the character, not "as if" but "as is".

"As we know, tales do not only speak to us, they inhabit us and become relevant in our struggles to resolve conflicts that endanger our happiness." (Zipes, 2006 p.39).

Inhabit is the key word. It invokes inspirited, which is the same, almost, as being inspired by (having someone else's breath blown into your lungs). Inhabiting in turn, seems close to the concept of dwelling and belonging which are nested deep in what we hold in common, and deep within my wider inquiry, of being and becoming.

I believe now that acting is very close to the heart of my personal ontology – that "being" is always "becoming". I also recognised that I tend to regard all situations as being no more than "potentialities" and to seek the most richly experiential and (there is no other word for it) *entertaining* outcome possible given the circumstances. I realise that this is a defining aspect of how I go about my practice and how I relate to others.

Stanislavski's method enabled actors to bring body knowledge and symbolic knowledge of the self and others into consciousness which evolved through three steps: memory of emotions, the 'magic if' and physical experience.

The key to method acting is to draw from within you what is required to portray the character. There must be resonance with your own experience. One way of accessing this is "being in the character" by adopting the physical stance, facial expression and gestures of the character you imagine. A superb example of this is Robert de Niro in the film Taxi Driver in the "are you looking at me?" scene when he rehearses in front of a mirror. The following YouTube link refers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQkpes3dgzg.

Stanislavski stated that *no sane person* could actually believe that they were the character they were playing or that events on stage were real.

I disagree – and this is where my method moves in the direction of sympathetic magic and shifts of consciousness. Stanislavski thought the outer bounds of method acting were to behave "as if" whereas I propose that the outer bounds of method are the kind of "inspirited" experiences described by Greenwood (2005, 2011. This takes Stanislavski's method beyond acting practice and into the realms of exploring human consciousness and reflexivity.

It is in this transitional space – between acting "as if" and being "as is" – that my theoretical contribution might be found.

PART III: Validity

The research methods described in the preceding section presented me with serious challenges when I came to consider questions of validity. These challenges are complex and interwoven. They represent both a crisis within my inquiry, and a personal crisis. They relate to: choices of paradigms; issues and beliefs pertaining to truth and reality; postmodern challenges to the notion of validity in the light of these; my own position with regard to identity, gender and power; and a deeply personal challenge, to me as a woman and a researcher, of authenticity and trustworthiness. In this section, I critically examine the meaning of validity and authenticity within the socio-political context of postmodernity. In the light of this, I offer my own four criteria of validity for my work.

But before doing so, I offer two images which convey my ambivalence to the notion of validity in experiential research: one taken by myself and the other by a critical friend.

IMAGE 1: ABSTRACTING LIGHT AND SHADE

When viewed on my iPhone (it doesn't quite work in print), these transparent leaves appear as abstract, high-resolution images depicting validity as a construct "screen-printed" onto experience in order to justify it to an abstracted "Other"

IMAGE 2: EXTRACTING LIGHT FROM DARKNESS

Kathy Skerritt, artist and friend, emailed me this image on 14 April 2015.

"… I took some pics of you facing the camera but I find this one the most compelling - you facing your tree and being with it. The shadows extend the tree's shape and presence. I wonder, might they, like cambria and branches, conduct nutrients? Perhaps light itself finds the root through these darker passages to Mother Tree?
Thank you for today and the gift of your presence, love, humour, womanhood, and friendship."

Kathy's image was the inspiration for the visual mapping of my theoretical terrain.

There is a paradox in the above image, which Kathy and I did not discuss but which I found implicit in our conversation: it relates to validity and the distinction which Deleuze and Guattari (1983) draw between "arboreal" (structured, hierarchical) and "rhizomal" (discursive, decentred) knowing. The paradox rests in the way Kathy's image illustrates the latter using an image with the *surface structure* of the former: she produced a tree image which communicates exactly how rhizomal as opposed to arboreal knowing works: it demonstrates tremendous intuitive insight.

My own interpretation is that Kathy's image integrates the above and the below, the conscious and the unconscious, while at the same time showing the light and the dark, the shadows and doubles of my first-person inquiry. I found Kathy's observations profoundly moving in her recognition of the nourishment provided by the "*darker passages*". Of great interest is how the image positions me relative to the tree, the tree of my knowing. There is a trick of perspective in which I appear almost as tall as the tree, which is much taller than me, however I have long held the sense of having a dryad relationship with the tree (of my being a tree spirit) and I have often imagined while sitting in the tree that my body is merging with her trunk with my roots extending wide and deep into the earth below, anchoring us, with my arms outstretched to the universe above. Kathy's strange and compelling perspective reflects this. It also conveys the sense of my being both separate from, and part of, the tree in exactly the same way that I stand outside of my inquiry, as critical observer, and within it, as first-person participant inquiry. All this is relevant to what follows.

MY OWN FOUR CRITERIA OF VALIDITY

The question of validity in first person, experiential, qualitative research is somewhat contested and I have struggled to find a resting place. The sense of security provided by positivist paradigms in validating truth, reality and the meaning of experience is lacking here and we stand together on the shifting sands of trust, relationships and shared knowing.

Reason (1981) suggests that:

"Validity in new paradigm research lies in the skills and sensitivities of the researcher, in how he or she uses herself as knower, and as inquirer. Validity is more personal and interpersonal rather than methodological" (p.244)

Reason & Bradbury (2001) observe that "Each particular way of knowing raises questions concerning quality in its own right. How well is an inquiry experientially grounded? How is it embodied in sensuous knowing? What is the appropriate form of presentation given the audience? Is it aesthetically elegant? Is it conceptually clear to all involved? Does it promote further knowing by raising new questions, or by allowing us to 'see through' old conceptual frameworks so that these are newly experienced as more limiting than enabling?" (p.345)

Framing inquiry in this way shifts the dialogue about validity from a concern with idealist questions in search of objective truth to concern for engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent, reflexive sense of what is important. Reason and Bradbury (2001) also identify an important question of whether the work has been validated by participants' new ways of acting in light of the work.

In her unpublished doctoral thesis "Wild Margins", Chris Seeley (2007, p.337) described indicators of validity which were crucial to me in considering the quality of my own work. I acknowledge here a great debt to Chris, who passed away recently, for her many contributions to my work and for her inspiration.

Building on her work, I identified four criteria of validity:

Internal validity

When I examine my own work, does it seem to be true?

Peer validity

How real does it seem to my supervision group colleagues?

Community validity

Is it of interest / use to the people I work and live with?

Practice validity

To what extent has it changed me and my practice, and how?

As I began to examine each of these in greater depth, I realised how much within my work was implicit (and to others might appear to be hidden or obscured, intentionally or otherwise) and how much more I needed to work with and interpret the raw data of my fieldwork. This process of extracting meaning revealed theoretical and existential problems regarding the nature of truth and reality and the notions of identity and authenticity which needed to be explicated and I do so now, in the following sections, before returning to each of my four criteria in turn at the end of this section.

Before doing so, I discuss postmodern challenges to validity then consider the personal challenge of authenticity; I discuss self-disclosure and its troubled relationship to authenticity and ethics; and consider the implications of my inquiry for politics and gender, in the context of Foucault's "insurrection of subjugated knowledges".

POSTMODERN CHALLENGES TO VALIDITY

In its historical context, postmodernism represents the loss of absolute frames of reference. Philosophically, it speaks to loss of legitimacy with regard both to the *processes of knowledge creation* and the *criteria of validity* concerning what counts as knowledge. Lyotard (1979) in *The Postmodern Condition* memorably summarised postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives" and then asked, "where, after the meta-narratives, can legitimacy reside?" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxv). Others, including Kvale (1989) and Wolcott (1990) question the validity of the very notion of validity in the social sciences, the latter dismissing it altogether on the grounds that it is inextricably bound to the ideals of positivism. This sentiment is reflected in the following journal extract, which I wrote in the early days of my brooding restlessly on the issue of how my work would be judged:

> *"Validity is a word so embedded in scientific paradigms that it feels like an alien virus within the corpus of experiential knowing. Particularly when considered in the context of metaphorical knowing and the attribution of something to that which it is not. The word "virtue" works better for me. I have much work to do examining whether this idea itself has virtue, the work of another day. For now, I will define virtue as whether my inquiry holds value, according to myself or others. I imagine that given the nature of experiential knowing, the answer will always be in terms of approximations rather than absolutes. It will pass or fail the test by degrees".*
> (Journal notes, 2012)

When I read this extract now, three years later in my inquiry, I recognise my defensiveness combined with a certain fearfulness in the absence of any absolutes to guide me in my work. At that time, I decided consciously to proceed without very much a priori intellectual analysis of how my inquiry would be judged after the event, believing that if I pursued it with a "pure heart" and an inquiring spirit, then the journey, if it was worth making, would be justified to me and therefore justifiable to others. When I arrived at the point of "writing up" my thoughts on validity, at the very end of my doctorate, I was therefore wholly unprepared for the scale of this challenge.

Would it have been better to have proceeded from the end to the beginning, and to frame and couch my method, my process and the form in which I wrote my thesis, in such a way as to ensure, or at least insure, a verdict that my work was valid? Pragmatically, possibly. Creatively, I believe not. There is a a sense in which inquiring, researching and writing-up with the audience in mind contaminates not only the phenomenological experience, and threfore to my mind, the "authenticity" and thus ultimately the validity of the work, while in a double-loop of criticality, I find myself now examining and problematising the notions of validity and authenticity themselves. I remain convinced that conventional positivist criteria are inappropriate, indeed invalid, when applied to experiential, first person inquiry, however, I find that the alternative framings described below are also problematic. I am not alone.

Mischler (1990) examining the irrelevance of positivist approaches to validity, reframes it as "problematic in a deep theoretical sense, rather than as a technical problem" (p.417).

Dick and Cassell (2002) suggest that seeking to verify what counts as reality may be replaced by seeking to understand the *function* that specific accounts of reality serve. Perhaps then as researchers, we should be asking the question "what is validity for?" What's the point of it, in a world where the nature of reality itself is contested?

Echoing Lyotard, my analysis begins by asking first, where in the field of academic inquiry and their associated validity challenges, does my work reside? Certainly, narrative inquiry best describes my process of being and becoming through the telling of tales. However, the multi-genre nature of my inquiry process, involving iPhone video filming and photography, "free-fall talking" and "being another" in the sense of method acting, suggests that the artistic endeavour of representation, including not only image-making but also performance, is involved as well, these being the methods by which my tales are told.

In addressing validity from an academic perspective, therefore, I began by considering the postmodern framing of Barthes and Eco in terms of where the meaning of my inquiry might be decided and how it might be constructed, construed and validated.

BARTHES AND ECO – AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

In 1967, in *The Death of the Author*, Barthes announced a metaphorical event: the "death" of the author as an authentic source of meaning for a given text. Barthes argued that texts have many meanings and that the author did not possess authority over their meaning. The death of the author, Barthes asserted, was the birth of others as the source of the infinite expansion of possible meanings. Furthermore, in postmodern paradigms, the reader as interpreter replaces both the author and the text as the primary subject of inquiry. This displacement is often referred to as the "destabilizing" or "decentring" of the author, but it has an equally profound effect on the work itself which ceases to exist in a way that can be validated (or whose meaning can be owned either by author or by the critic) other than relationally. In the terms of my inquiry, my fieldwork comprises stories which may or may not be believed and their meaning may be accepted, or challenged, or reinterpreted without correspondence to any meaning they may have had at the point or in the process of their creation, by me or the fictional characters. My own and others' interpretations and disruptive re-enactments of the original Grimms folk tale texts require no validation against the originals, within this frame.

In a sense, my iPhone method, in which the characters retell their tales, is an enactment of the postmodern critique of the notion of validity: the original author's very authority is effectively assassinated by successive reinterpretations of the characters.

Umberto Eco's (1962) *The Open Work* proposed that the meaning of a work of art is necessarily undefined and that the role of the artist is essentially to provide and permit such indeterminacy or openness. These "open works" have then to be completed by each individual interpreter. The creative act, and by extension the scholastic act, is not completed by the author but requires and demands completion by the reader.

What has been termed the postmodern crisis of representation is not the end of representation per se, simply the end of "pure play", shifting the author's, artist's or researcher's responsibility from representing things in themselves as reality to opening up a web of "structure, sign and play" of social relations through which meaning is co-created by the author, the artist and all those who participate in the work by seeing / reading and

interpreting it. The researcher's task becomes that of bringing consciousness to what frames our seeing in terms of relational power and the social context of our knowing.

I asked how then, as a researcher can I approach this "crisis of representation" when considering the validity of my own work?

GETTING LOST WITH PATTI LATHER

I was bewildered at first but in *Getting Lost*, Lather (2007) examines the importance to the postmodern researcher of getting lost, and indeed the necessity of doing so. One of the first losses Lather describes is the loss of researcher expertise and authority, problematizing the researcher as "the one who knows" (p.11). Lather deconstructs this in a way that "instead situates oneself as curious and unknowing" (p.9) creating space in which new forms of knowledge can emerge.

> I relate viscerally to the epistemological value of lost-ness, with reference to the wild wood, the paths that wind and the folk tales within which I became embodied and embedded. I recognised the sense in which it is necessary to lose sight of shore, before being able to appreciate a new reality. This troubles conventional framings of validity, in which the researcher is tasked with delivering and proving knowledge. In Lather's framing of validity, the researcher is required to articulate a far higher level of knowing: to admit to / embrace / celebrate an awareness of not-knowing.

I welcomed Lather's radical framing of transgressive validity: it resonated with my experience in practice and in conducting my fieldwork. I discuss it below, and then critique another, non-radical, or perhaps "tempered radical", framing of validity in qualitative research as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985).

> **Transgressions and confessions …**
>
> I have frequently been referred to by my supervisor and others as "transgressive" and my sense was that this was directed towards me personally as well as me as a researcher. What does "transgressive" mean? Semantically, it means breaking the rules, not accidentally, but with intent. It connotes a desire to disrupt and destabilise, to undermine and rip up. Transgression is a purposeful act with destructive as well as creative "breaking eggs to make omelettes" intent. What is my emotional reaction to being described thus? What has been the impact on my decisions: to withdraw to a less transgressive space, or to move forwards into spaces of greater transgression? What are the boundaries of my transgression: what are the limits beyond which, I dare not go? I'm still not sure, but I have certainly used my inquiry as a means of testing those limits.

Transgressive validity: a radical framing

Lather (1993) developed the notion of transgressive validity in pursuit of her "fertile obsession" with validity within a postmodern feminist paradigm. She rethinks validity in the light of anti-foundational discourse theory. She chooses to retain the term "validity" both "to circulate and break with the signs that code it and *to position validity as an incitement to discourse*" (p.674, my italics). Specifically, she describes how "our framing is shifting validity from _a discourse about quality as normative_ to _a discourse of relational practices_" (2001, my italics and underscore). Lather cites Cornwell West's (1991, p.25) suggestion that validity debates are more fruitfully framed "as a way of rendering explicit the discursive space or conversational activity now made legitimate owing to widespread acceptance of epistemic anti-foundationalism".

I feel very comfortable framing validity in relational not absolute terms.

Lather considers what open-ended and context-sensitive validity criteria would look like and asks why validity has become the focus of such intense debate. Crucially, how much of the obsession with legitimation / validity issues in research methodology is coercive and restrictive of alternative voices?

Lather states, "My goal is to re-inscribe validity in a way that uses the anti-foundational problematic to loosen the master code of positivism that continues to so shape even post-positivism … My task is to do so in a way that refuses to over-simplify answers to intractable questions" (1993, p.674). She does so by proposing four new framings of validity. Their effect is to move the discussion from concerns about epistemological criteria of truth to concerns about criteria which are problematically grounded in the postmodern crisis of representation.

VALIDITY AS SIMULCRA/IRONIC VALIDITY

Lather's first framing references Baudrillard's observation that in the postmodern world of hyper-reality, the simulated realm is "more real than the real". (Simulacra are copies without originals which bring into question not only the nature of truth and reality but also, inevitably, the nature of authenticity). Ironic validity ("validity" in inverted commas) regards the notion of truth as problematic in itself: the truth value of research lies in its ability to show us co-existing binaries and opposites expressed as alternative perspectives which are not mutually exclusive. It foregrounds dissenting as well as consensual interpretations of what is real and true and proposes provisional rather than definitive responses.

Within my inquiry, ironic validity is represented by the manner in which, for example, the Queen in Sleeping Beauty is neither good nor bad, neither culpable nor complicit, neither perpetrator nor victim but through the method of iPhone interview, the prism through which my shifting interpretations both of her tale, and my own story are refracted. In Baudrillard's terms, the Queen is a simulacrum, holding many meanings, all of which are potentially, if ironically, "valid" and "true" simultaneously.

LYOTARDIAN PARALOGY/NEO-PRAGMATIC VALIDITY

Lather's second framing is a model of research legitimation that "attempts to create indeterminate space for the enactment of human imagination". This is an interactive and contextual way of knowing which invites, welcomes and celebrates openness to counter-interpretations. "The overarching goal of the methodology is to present a series of fruitful interpretations that demonstrate the multiplicity of meaning-making and interpretation", (citing Lubliano 1991, p.177).

Celebrating counter-interpretations

Of relevance to my inquiry and specifically to my iPhone videos, paralogical validity is the quality of research which legitimises it precisely by revealing meanings that are incapable of categorisation, such as my raw data unmediated and uninterpreted by me, the researcher. In terms of relational practice, this acknowledges that meaning is not resident either in the intention of the author or the participant but emergent in the shared social interpretations of concurrent and subsequent viewing of the texts. I do not hold the key to the meaning of my inquiry. Responsibility for meaning creation is shared, and distributed both in Batesonian and Deleuzian terms, across all the mindful and experiential networks of human knowing which in this very present particular moment, involves me as author and you as reader in an inescapable relational complicity. Neither of us alone, according to Lather's criterion of paralogical validity, holds authority with regard to the meaning of my work.

I embrace this framing of validity: it is the spirit in which I offer both my raw data and my own interpretation, acknowledging that it is one of many.

RHIZOMATIC VALIDITY

Deleuze and Guattari (1983) propose the tree as a modernist model of knowledge and the rhizome as a model for postmodern knowledge. The rhizome is a metaphor denoting the move from hierarchies to networks "connected to a mass of tangled ideas, uprooted, as it were, from the epistemological field" (Pefanis 1991, p.22). Rhizomes constitute decentred complexity which operates outside the constraints of authority, preordained structures, and common sense and reveals pathways to creative and open-ended reconstructions. They open a way for research practices which critically examine and decentre expert authority and permit rethinking (and in my terms, retelling).

In other words, rhizomatic validity speaks to the postmodern rejection of centred truth, coming from "the crossings, the overlaps, the meanings with no deep roots' (Lather 1992, p.58). Rhizomal validity "unsettles from within, taps underground, proliferates open-ended and context-sensitive criteria to work against the constraints of authority". In this sense, it is not only political but inherently subversive of dominant narratives.

VOLUPTUOUS VALIDITY

Lather cites Baudrillard's (1987) description of voluptuousness as a term "which sex and psychoanalysis have succeeded neither in annexing nor in discrediting with their discourse" (p.682). I wonder in Lather's feminist framing, must this necessarily relate to breasts and bottoms or is it metaphorical? I question this stereotypical anatomical metaphor of the feminine: not every woman is physically voluptuous. Lather regards scientific / positivistic epistemology as shaped by a male imaginary (I imagine "penetrating" questions, "hard vs soft" science, elegant solutions, seductive propositions and so on) and asks what the inclusion of a female imaginary would look like. The following are images of female voluptuousness:

Ermit and Sleeping Angelica

Rubens 1628

Benefits Supervisor Sleeping

Lucian Freud 1995

Playboy's Voluptuous Vixens DVD 1998

Model and photographer unknown

Dolly Parton

Pinterest retrieved 18 October 2013

I present the above representations of voluptuousness contemplating the differences in the male and female gaze and between 'high art' and 'low art'. The Vixens model and Dolly Parton appear to me consciously to be monetising their female images compared with the male artists Ruben and Freud presenting images of Angelica and Benefits Supervisor in the services of their own "art". There are of course many alternative interpretations.

Women and girls in folk tales are frequently described in terms of the polarities of beauty and ugliness, generally connoting the goodness or badness of character. Raising a teenage daughter in 21st century England foregrounds for me the issues that confront and haunt women down the years: "mirror mirror on the wall / who is fairest of them all?" The threats of teenage obesity and anorexia raise alternative spectres of destructive self-image exacerbated by the prevalence in youth culture both of pornography and an obsession with compulsive self-imaging. I interpret my iPhone method as being both a product of and a contributor to the narcissistic psychological environment which as women we have co-created: as methodology it is very much of its time. I am both proud of it and conflicted by it.

Lather goes further than voluptuousness in her feminist postmodern critique seeking "to play with calling the license that feminists have taken to theorise from the body "clitoral validity / pagan validity" (page 682). Her point is that this would serve to oppose normative validity in a language "so excessive as to render the term unthinkable/unreadable", marking the "emergent but not yet 'readable' discourse of women" (citing Con Davis 1990, p.106).

I disagree and take a certain transgressive delight in claiming the language descriptive of the female body and a perfectly respectable global "religion" (paganism) to feminise and radicalise academic discourse. (Quentin Tarantino claimed the word "nigger" to expose and critique its racist use by white folk, as well as sell films, in the same way that "queer" has been adopted to expose and radicalise the politics of gender and the way "cunt" is now used humorously by women – admittedly not all women - to ridicule and disempower its use by men as a term intended to be threatening to women).

I wonder, however, whether a more accurate term than clitoral/pagan would be vaginal / natural (natural in the literal sense of pertaining to nature rather than the pagan belief system associated with it)? Clitoral references a site of sexual stimulation and orgasmic experience whereas vaginal (with the possible exception of the so-called "G-spot") concerns both receiving and birthing, channelling and bringing forth (a theme intentionally undeveloped in my fieldwork but clearly present in my many photographic images of holes in trees ("tree vaginas") and holed flints ("holy stones"), through which magic is enacted but only through passage.

Tree vagina   Flint hole

Either way, voluptuousness performs in Lather's hands as a provocateur of validity. She eloquently describes a place "*between the no longer and the not yet*" which I relate philosophically to my description of walking the dialectal arête, a place balanced between epistemic worlds in a space of being and becoming.

All this decentres the idea that "validity" provides epistemological guarantees. A post-epistemic framing is that validity is "multiple, partial, endlessly deferred" (Lather, p.675). Lather proposes that validity should be regarded as a *problem* when previously it has been offered as a solution, allegedly offering assurance; a scholastic and normative kite-mark of quality.

I am increasingly aware that the question of validity extends not only to my research methods but to the form in which my material is presented and communicated within the text of the thesis. The form of presentation contributes to the validity of the data, illustrated below by Laurel Richardson (1993) in *Poetics, Dramatics, and Transgressive Validity* telling the story of Louisa May, who lives as a single mother by choice despite getting along alright with the father of her child just because "with no husband in the home there is less tension".

Richardson also challenges prevalent definitions of validity and like Lather, adopts a feminist-postmodern position that "blurs genres, probes lived experience, enacts science, creates a female imaginary, breaks down dualisms, inscribes emotional labour and

emotional response as valid, deconstructs the myth of an emotion-free science and makes a space for partiality, self-reflexivity, tension and difference" (1993, p.695).

She begins by examining how the convention of writing-up interviews in prose form re-inscribes an unexamined epistemic code regarding how knowledge in general should be presented within the academy.

In a radical provocation to the hegemonic imperative of writing in prose, Richardson writes up her research interviews with Louisa May as poetry, finding that this enables her better to "vicariously experience the self-reflexive and transformational process of self-creation" (1992b, p.26).

Writing in poetry also foregrounds the hermeneutic presence of the researcher, in contrast to the notion that prose transcription offers an *objective account* of what was said. While Richardson acknowledges that Louisa May is the speaker in the poem she adds, "but I crafted it". At this point, it became her story too. Her wish was for the poem to stand aesthetically and emotionally and for it to be, as Robert Frost defines a poem, "the shortest emotional distance between two points"; the speaker and the listener.

> **Prose / poetry as valid forms**
>
> I recognised immediately the tension between the phenomenological experience of "free-fall talking" in my iPhone interviews and transcribing them as prose texts. We do not speak in prose but in a fractured, tumbling waterfall of utterances, gestures and silences. I decided in my fieldwork that the transcribed text was such a distorted representation that this form of representation invalidated them at an experiential level, (although not in positivist terms at an "objective" or "factual" level). The words were the same as those spoken but the deep meaning was not, although it is also true that new meanings can emerge from reading the written word that are obscured by hearing only the spoken word. I see this as a layering of meaning and interpretation which relies for its validity not on the integrity of representation, but on the integrity of trusting and tolerating the multiple processes by which meaning emerges. (This is readily demonstrated by reading aloud what you have written, in a letter or an email, and noting the often profound difference in sub textual meaning provided by "giving voice").

I now consider a second, non-radical (or tempered radical), response to the postmodern challenge to validity as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This was influential in deciding my own criteria of validity but I find it less convincing now than Lather's radical approach, for reasons described below.

Qualitative validity: a tempered radical framing

Lincoln et al (2011) suggest that what constitutes valid qualitative research must be considered in the context of the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives of the researcher. Different paradigmatic choices provide different views as to what is "valid" research and how researchers judge the quality of inquiry. They propose a dual test of validity: not only should the method be appropriate to the task but the researcher should achieve *some form of consensus* (my italics) in the interpretations drawn from the results of applying the method. It is their requirement for consensus in interpretation which marks a departure from the postmodern analysis described above.

Four criteria are proposed for judging the soundness of qualitative research, positioned as substitutes for the traditional quantitatively-oriented positivist criteria:

Traditional Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research	Alternative Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research
internal validity	credibility
external validity	transferability
reliability	dependability
objectivity	confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Credibility

The credibility criterion replaces internal validity and involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable *from the perspective of the participants in the research* (my italics). They propose a number of measures to promote credibility, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation and member checking.

Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. In the case of my first person research, the participant is me. It follows that with first person inquiry, this is a process of self-validation. I equate this to the criterion of "resonance" – an emotional response of the researcher as to whether their research satisfies them in the sense of "hitting the spot". I cannot see that other than trusting the researcher to tell the truth, or conversely, alleging that they are lying about their experience, intentionally or not, there is any way that someone who was not a participant could substantiate their claim of invalidity.

Transferability

Transferability replaces the criterion of external validity and refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, in Lincoln and Guba's view, transferability is primarily the responsibility *of the one doing the generalizing* (my italics). The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability, should they wish, by providing thick descriptions and articulating underlying assumptions. A person who wishes to "transfer" results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment as to whether the transfer is valid. With regard to my first person inquiry the consequence is that this criterion is not one against which the researcher or her research is judged *per se*: it is a judgement which applies to the decision of the one who proposes the validity of the transfer. Lincoln and Guba do not require *explicitly* that the researcher should seek to ensure the transferability of her research findings or that she essentially "underwrites" this by her choice and application of methodology but it implicit that if possible, this is a good thing.

Dependability

The traditional quantitative view of reliability is directed at ensuring the research study is repeatable, employing suggested techniques such as data audit and double-checking. It is concerned with whether I would obtain the same results if I could observe the same thing twice. However, with qualitative research it is impossible to measure the same thing twice: if we are observing it twice, we are observing two different phenomena. "The same thing" does not exist.

In order to estimate reliability, quantitative researchers construct various hypothetical notions (e.g., true score theory) to try to get around this but I suggest that the hypothetical has no place in experiential, qualitative research. Hypothetical events are intellectual constructs, not qualities of experience. Lincoln and Guba's idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing *context* within which qualitative research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached similar studies subsequently. There is no validity requirement to reproduce the same results, rather to account for contextual differences. I question, with reference to my iPhone research process, whether and why I would seek to show dependability between one situation and another. It is an inherently unstable, unreliable, improvised and emergent process.

Confirmability

In this model, confirmability replaces the traditional criterion of objectivity. Qualitative research implicitly assumes that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study and there is thus no requirement of objectivity: indeed, within postmodern and social constructionist paradigms, the notion of objectivity loses its meaning.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results *could be confirmed or corroborated by others* (my italics). Lincoln and Guba describe a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Another researcher can play "devil's advocate" and this

process can be documented. The researcher can actively search for and describe *negative instances* that contradict prior observations and after the study can conduct a *data audit* that examines the data collection and analysis procedures and makes judgements about the potential for bias or distortion. These techniques speak not to the data themselves but to whether or not the *interpretation* of data is sound. Applied to my iPhone process, the question is whether the interpretations which I attribute to both process and content are thorough and transparent: essentially, whether I have demonstrated reflexivity in terms of what I chosen to report and then to comment upon.

My conclusion is that the criteria proposed above are derivative of positivist validity criteria and effectively do no more than paste over a reformulation of the original criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity to achieve the same effect: that to be valid, the results of inquiry need to be demonstrably "real" in an objective sense. The realness need to be corroborated by other, critical observers who were not party to the inquiry, as well as by participants. The implication remains essentialist: that there is an objective, independent truth constituting the outcome of an inquiry which needs to be discovered by the researcher and confirmed by others. I do not propose, however, that there are no valid tests of quality in qualitative, first-person, experiential research.

Of greater relevance to my inquiry is the suggestion that a validity of the research is judged by its "authenticity" involving notions of resonance, richness, depth, multi-vocality and personal responsibility (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003); and of transparency and reflexivity (Johnson et al, 2006). This acknowledges that qualitative and in particular experiential inquiry is enacted in local contexts where meanings are co-created between the researcher and participants. Empirical data arises from the researcher's own interpretation of events in the light of alternative interpretations with acknowledgement that interpretations reflect the socio-political contexts in which they arise.

However, one challenge of deep reflexivity is to avoid being drawn into endless navel-gazing through which I as researcher become the sole focus of my research. In Lather's terms, the challenge is "how to address the dilemmas without entanglement in an ever-more detailed self-analysis, an "implosion" into the self" (1993, p.685). In my first person inquiry, I ask how I can achieve a self-reflexive balance between my multiple roles.

Given that my process involves merging my identity with others, real and imaginary, how can I ensure that "my true self" (if there is such a thing, which is contested, or something resembling it, if not) shows up sufficiently that I am regarded as authentic and trustworthy by you the reader? Working with the postmodern paradigms above, what is the impact of the shifting and emergent qualities of truth and reality mean for the validity of my inquiry?

This speaks directly to the question of what constitutes being oneself, authentically.

I critically examine the notion of authenticity below, with specific reference first to my epistemological status as first-person inquirer and second, to the ethics of self-disclosure.

The epistemological status of myself as first-person inquirer

Here, I explore issues in my first person inquiry which relate to validity, in academic terms; to authenticity, in personal terms; and to confidence and trust. I raise these issues in terms of interpersonal relations (can you trust me) and intrapersonal relations (am I true to myself) and in both spheres I ask the question, "how do you / how do I know?" What are the criteria by which you judge me and by which I judge myself in the very specific context of my present inquiry?

It might seem self-evident that I am a reliable source of information and evidence regarding myself. In speaking of myself, I speak of what I know. And yet, even in writing the previous sentence, it becomes apparent that this is not at all self-evident. Even on my most confident, integrated, emotionally stable, optimistic and unquestioning days, I would hesitate to claim that "I know myself".

Goldberg (1999) observes that, "A person's opinions about her own standing states of mind seem to enjoy a unique epistemic status. These opinions are highly reliable (i.e. are generally correct) and they appear particularly immune from (certain kinds of) error" (p.3) He uses the expression "first-person opinions" to designate opinions that a person forms regarding her own standing states of mind and he terms the unique epistemic status of such opinions "first-person authority". He asks, though, exactly what makes one's first person opinions authoritative? And he concludes that this becomes problematic once we appreciate that neither of the two traditional models of epistemic justification (inference and observation) can account for the authoritativeness of one's first-person opinions. He suggests that what is missing is an account of the ways we come to form first-person opinions: Goldberg suggests that a person's *self-regarding beliefs* are what determine their first person opinions.

This bears on the reliability or otherwise of the first person narrator, highly relevant to my re-telling "from within" of the folk tales. The authorial narrators, the Grimms Brothers who wrote down the tales, are deemed expressly unreliable within my inquiry. I present alternative tellings but so too may the characters be deemed unreliable as they tell their own tales because they are inevitably partial accounts, mediated by myself. Indeed the reliability of the teller is particularly problematic. We see things through the lens of the

teller but the characters they tell of, lack voice in the telling. Does this matter? Not from the point of view of telling a good tale but it holds profound ethical implications for practice. It also raises significant issues concerning knowledge claims in an inquiry such as mine. In the words of a colleague: how do we know what you are telling us is true? By which, they mean "authentic" and not "spinning".

What aroused her curiosity was the following image, Chanel Rouge Noir (the name of an iconic nail polish) which I was wearing when I photographed rosehips for Sleeping Beauty.

The image reveals my presence, in this case unintentionally as I just happened to be wearing Rouge Noir on that particular day and didn't notice the coincidence of the colour with the colour of the rosehips until it was pointed out to me. When first I looked at the photo, I saw only rose-hips, not my nails - a form of "self-blindness"?

This raises questions of how and why I disappeared myself, whether it was coincidence that I chose the rose hips when I was channelling (Chanel-ing?) the colour on my nails. Why was I wearing "slut red" nails, an urban colour in a rural setting, and was I wearing it ironically? Sleeping Beauty's name is Briar Rose and she was put to sleep by a prick, vernacular for penis.

Note: My supervisor's observation on above paragraph in my draft thesis suggested that I could not just end this section here, however provocative. I have considered this, and decided that I have nothing to add or retract. I'm not sure what I mean but I like it and it feels truthful. My mind is spinning as I write this. And again, on rereading the final draft, I noticed my use of the word "spinning". I refer back to Patti Lather's "clitoral/pagan validity" and "the emergent but not yet 'readable' discourse of women" (citing Con Davis 1990, p.106).

AUTHENTICITY AND ITS TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ETHICS OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

I referred at the beginning of this discussion, that issues of validity constituted not only a crisis in my inquiry methodology but a personal crisis. The theme of perceived personal authenticity has recurred throughout my work with my ADOC group and caused me considerable concern: I have felt at times frustrated at not being believed and at a loss to know what it is in my writing and interactions that gives rise to this sense of "where is Sue?" I am foregrounding here the sense of epistemic crisis aroused by the reaction to my photograph of rosehips/Chanel Noir.

Authenticity works at two levels: the normative and the relational. In normative terms, it speaks of processual validity which serves the needs of legitimation, examination and authorisation. In relational terms, it is a container of consensual beliefs about truth and reality. I deem you to be authentic, or to be acting authentically, if your behaviour is capable of being validated against previously observed qualities of consistency, reliability, transferability. In other words, can I rely on you to be who I think you are; to be who you have represented yourself as being in previous encounters? I also deem you to be authentic if I am convinced by you in the moment. Can you reassure me regarding your motives in our current interaction and do I believe that you will honour our co-created relational identities in our future interactions? Will you be there next time we meet?

The distinction between process/content and implications for disclosure

I uphold an ethical distinction between *process* and *content* with reference to my iPhone videos. In terms of the validity measures described above, it is important for me to describe and show the methods I adopted and the processes which I followed to conduct my fieldwork and to produce my iPhone interviews. In terms of content, that is, what I actually said in the interviews while speaking in character, there are three levels of disclosure:

1.   Simple disclosure of content: presenting the raw video material for inspection.

2.   Deeper disclosure of content: providing my interpretation as to the meaning to me of the video material.

3.   Sharing my subsequent reflections on the deeper still meanings of the video material as it composted and was subjected to my successive cycles of inquiry.

As participant researcher I held multiple identities within this process. I was the researcher who made the videos; I was the subject of the videos; and I was the interpreter of the videos in my role of *first person narrator* when it came to interpreting my own meanings, and in my role of *participant observer* when it came to interpreting the meanings of the characters. These are complex psychological interactions not only because at one level, all the participants have a single identity, myself, but because at another level, my own identity merges with and I speak through the characters. As the boundaries of the real and the make-believe shift, so too do the boundaries of self-disclosure. I find myself not so much asking if what I am saying is true, but discovering truth and deception as the narrative unfolds. I observe a moving line between that which I wish to acknowledge to myself, and that which I wish to ignore or park and come back to later, and that which I wish to speak of, combined with a disorientating sense that even what is make-believe is true and vice versa.

Karl Ove Knausgaard's autobiography *My Struggle* renders an account of his life in mesmerising, forensic detail in ways which transgress generally accepted boundaries of self-disclosure (several of his disclosures caused family rifts and personal humiliation, for example, his persistent penile erection dysfunction). However, he states:

> "For me, there has been no difference in remembering something and creating something … When I write something, I can't remember in the end if this is a memory or if it's not – I'm talking about fiction. So for me it's the same thing. It was like I was writing a straight novel when I was writing this but the rule was that it had to be true. Not true in an objective sense but the way I remember it. There's a lot of false memory in the book but it's there because it's the way it is, it's real". (quoted in The Observer, March 1st, 2015)

This illustrates the subtlety which is demanded of validity criteria in the field of qualitative, narrative inquiry. The question of what is real, what is truth, cannot be avoided. I argue that in both the normative and the relational senses, the term "authenticity" works as a proxy for positivist rather than postmodern criteria of validity: the former asserting and the latter denying the existence of an underlying, discoverable truth:-

 "To speak of the externalization of the internal or the making visible and graspable of what is private and on the inside are ways of conceptualizing the eternal conflict of authenticity.

From the seventeenth century onward, this wedge was driven between the inner, "real" self and external, "fake" self…. With the onset of Romanticism, authentic selfhood became aligned with emotional honesty and artistic genuineness. Authenticity referred to some deep, internal "core" of the self, controlled by and ultimately in conflict with expectations from the outside." (Straub 2012, p.14).

Orvell (1989) describes in *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture* how the need for authenticity arose in 19th century with the rise of materialist consumerism. Authenticity began to matter when the possibility of fraud arose "when the society becomes so large that one usually deals with strangers, not neighbours" (p.xvii).

Authenticity in the postmodern and relational frames becomes not an attribute of the individual, expressed in binary terms of presence or absence in the moment, but a function of relationship with others which is co-created over time as a contributor to social relationships of trust.

Virginia Richter (2009) in *Authenticity: why we need it although it doesn't exist*, examines the perseverance of the notion of authenticity and claims that "our collective investment in it is so high that even after decades of deconstructivism and anti-essentialism it is impossible to get rid of" (p.73)

Similarly, in *Paradoxes of Authenticity – Studies on a Critical Concept*, Julia Straub (2012) asks whether "authenticity" has become a "versatile alibi for taboo concepts such as 'truth', 'original', or 'real', all of which threaten to re-evoke the spectre of essentialism" and continues, "The question that scholars need to ask is how they can account for the persistence of such apparently essentialist needs and demands [for the notion of authenticity] in a postmodern world." (p18).

Straub asks what can be our stance towards the notion of authenticity "when the necessary philosophical and epistemological grounds are no longer available? How can the use of authenticity as a critically valid term be accounted for, if it is so conspicuously contaminated by its own paradoxes?"

Authenticity as a contested concept is seen by Straub (p.12) as an epistemic device that can help us gain knowledge about things as different as rhetoric, representation and identify

formation. On the other hand, it is a marker of personal integrity, a highly value-laden notion: authentic is equated with moral integrity and goodness (although surely authentic can also refer to the authentically bad, representing conflation of epistemic and moral worth).

As an epistemic concept, responsibility for personal authenticity tends to be laid firmly in hands of the person/researcher whereas I see it as emergent and relational, a process of sharing and showing born of the co-creation of trust between one and another. Bateson (1972) speaks to this in his description of schizogenesis and the phenomenon of "holding back" in which "mutually aggregating spirals … lead people to hold back contributions they could make because others hold back contributions they could make".

Critiquing Ferrara's (1998) contention in his book *Reflective Authenticity*, Claviez (p.90) proposes that in order to gain a better understanding of the "symbolic capital" that authenticity possesses, it needs to be rethought in the light of notions of intersubjectivity, community and identity so strongly influenced by the linguistic turn.

I entirely agree: the view of the liberal humanist self, characterised by autonomy, ability for self-reflection and capacity to maintain a culture of interiority is severely challenged by notions of "discourse" or "performativity" which dismantle essentialist notions of subjectivity.

I reflected deeply on my sense of nostalgia for the "found" as opposed to the "constructed" world and the fact that regardless of intellectual debates regarding the possibility of "being real", there is a need in personal relationships to establish and maintain narratives of self.

In many cases, personal authenticity is reducible to self-disclosure expressed by others in terms of "we need to see more you", "we don't see enough of you", "I have a sense you are hiding", "show us more of you" and here I found the ethical boundaries to be somewhat unclear. The issue is complicated further by the absence in my own experience of an essential self, with fixed attributes, the fidelity of which is capable of being disclosed. It raises the prospect of the *impossibility* of authenticity, or at least of "authentic" authenticity – of having to behave in ways which are normatively deemed authentic in the eyes of the

beholder, requiring a level of "parallel-process" editing which militates against the very notion of authenticity.

Straub notes the discomfort this causes in terms of human relations:

"Moving away from art and literature to the human realm, authenticity becomes an emotional minefield and very messy" (p.17). I found myself at this messy place where validity meets authenticity meets ethics.

Challenges to my personal authenticity

I discovered six possible challenges to the notion of my personal authenticity, described below, which bring me to the crux of this chapter: the unpacking of my own four validity criteria, in the light of the challenges presented by postmodernity and the notion of authenticity.

1. Discomfort experienced as an impending crisis of identity / self-denial / self-image – am I a deluder, a deceiver of myself and others, is this practice the shadow-side of being a magician?
2. I claim ethical limits on disclosure on the ground of "Them – it's their story too". But is this an excuse? Am I effectively disappearing these others and colluding in their silencing, preventing them from having voice (perhaps for fear of what they may say?)
3. Fear of being "trivialised-as-commonplace" particularly with reference to my domestic and community practices and in the sense that "what's so special" about my iPhone work? Everyone takes selfies.
4. Fear of being found out, the "imposter syndrome".
5. Fear of misconstruing, of getting it wrong, awkwardly.
6. Fear of starting a conversation from which there is no way back: safer not to take the first step for where the path might lead.

So much fear!

But "being another" changed me, personally and unexpectedly; I found myself in "being another": the point of personal validation was when I realised with a sense of exhilaration: I like what I am doing here in this inquiry. I feel I am integrating my sense of who I am at the professional, political, and personal levels. I love what I'm doing. I love this process. I felt that I had arrived at a place of authenticity, where I could be real, which paradoxically is the place at which authenticity is contested.

And still, I was beset with doubts: Did I have permission to say this, to challenge the holy grail of "authenticity"? What are the risks to myself and others? A related problem: when I transcribe this into academic speak, will that then become the "definitive" or "valid" version of my work particularly to those who privilege the published edited version over the "original" or who privilege the polished performance over the raw and messy lived experience of my field work?

My fieldwork incorporates the blurring of oral and written texts, the conflation of present, future and past selves, and the identities of my selves and others, archetypes, and those trapped in stories.

I heard the critical voices of others, like Laurel Richardson:

> *"Does the original … relate to anything? Did you actually do this interview? Who is the real Gretel/Witch/Queen? How can we trust you? What is the truth here? How do we know that you haven't made the whole thing up?"*

Richardson, at one point in her description of how she made a poem out of her interview with Louisa May, was overwhelmed, as I was with my iPhone videos, by the reactions of others. She reports the responses of her seminar participants as they heard her poem:

> *Patricia says "I thought it could be about Laurel – a poem about herself – and I at times I thought it was about me – my divorce."*

> *Laurel reports "I'm stunned. Pat thinks what really slipped out in the reading was my concealed identity … and [she] identifies with Louisa May. Identifies. Can merge."*

Richardson concludes, "It is this feminist process of "knowing/telling" which led women listening to Louisa May's poem to feel that I was talking about my own life". I found in the

process of my own knowing and telling of the folk tales, that I recognised not only myself in the characters but also their shadows and doubles, all interwoven by our common threads of experience.

And on the dark side:

> *"I know you were talking about yourself Laurel … but when we disguise and hide our identities, we just feed the woman's problem – the denial of self"*

It took courage to proceed with my inquiry beyond this point and I still hold concerns regarding where it might lead, for me and for others. I turn back again now to my four criteria of validity and discuss each in turn, having problematized them already.

UNPACKING MY FOUR VALIDITY CRITERIA

Internal validity

When I examine my own work, does it seem to be true?

This is a subjective test of validity, the most important aspect of which to me as participant researcher in my own first person inquiry, is one of "resonance" (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). When I read my journal entries and fieldwork accounts and when I watch my iPhone videos, do they resonate and represent a truthful account? This test operates at two levels: does the work accurately and honestly reflect the process and the emotional orientation with which I conducted the research? Have I consciously left out or avoided accounting for anything of significance without indicating this to the reader or to other participants, present or future? What might have been omitted or avoided unconsciously is beyond my knowing but the crucial distinction in the preceding sentence is "without indicating this to the reader or other participants".

In terms of resonance, when I review my own work, yes, I absolutely recognise and endorse it as authentic. I find it emotionally engaging as I connect and reconnect with issues which are revealed in the process which I have never before been able to access or engage with.

> *An example is the complicity with entrapment described by me as Rapunzel and how it served to bring into consciousness my own complicity in entrapments which I had hitherto blamed on others, as captors. I chose to say no more about this.*

The important distinction to make here is the difference between the process and the content of my iPhone videos. While I believe it is vital in the interests of valid research to provide a full and unflinching account of the process, a different rule applies to content.

> *There are things which resonate with me which I do not wish to share and to set in writing. Either because I require more time to process them or because they have the potential of placing myself or others at risk. Ethically, I believe that I must set clear boundaries and respect them and to err on the side of extreme caution, to protect myself and others.*

However, I need to indicate to the reader, as above, that I have intentionally decided not to disclose or comment further upon the content of my videos. Failure to signpost these

moments, I have discovered, may otherwise be construed as evasion, or hiding, or lack of authenticity, or lack of reflexive capacity. But it is sometimes difficult to signpost unwillingness to disclose or to enter into a conversation about disclosure for the following reasons:

1. The uncomfortable feeling of being pressurised, pushed or even nudged to disclose emotions which are still being processed or repressed;

2. The fear of being judged unauthentic and untrustworthy;

3. Anxiety regarding having already gone too far and transgressed the boundaries between the public and the private, knowing that what is said cannot be unsaid; and

4. Lack of trust on my part with regard to the motives of the inquirer/interrogator.

Peer validity

How real does it seem to my supervision group colleagues?

The process of peer supervision at ADOC extends beyond peer support and involves working intensely over a prolonged period, reviewing and critiquing each other's work in group meetings, challenging each other with regard to every aspect of our inquiries, including validity and whether or not we are truly engaging with our inquiry reflexively.

I chose peer validity as my second criteria in the conviction that assessment of my trustworthiness, integrity, transparency and reflexivity (Johnson et al, 2006) can best be made by those who have accompanied my on the journey and who have witnessed my struggles.

I have chosen to respect the privacy of our engagement by not asking them for endorsements. But I believe if asked them, do you trust me now, they would say yes.

Community validity

Is it of interest / use to the people I work and live with?

My communities of interest include my executive search clients, the community cinema participants and my domestic practice (friends and family). I have provided practice

accounts from each of these to illustrate how my inquiry work is beginning to be reflected in those communities.

This is essentially a first person inquiry and my claims for impact on these communities are limited to date. I hope to develop my work into second person and third person inquiry but this is the work of another day. I have, however, been greatly encouraged by the way in which the iPhone method and the idea of "being another" seems to intrigue and engage people in conversation. The response is invariable along the lines of "that sounds fascinating, if you want any help with it or to experiment with it, let me know".

I have received invitations from a film academy, a teacher in a secondary school, a film screen-play writer, an artist and a writer, as well as one of my executive search clients and a woman I have been coaching into her first FTSE 100 board position, to work collaboratively. Apart from the impact on my own practice, I have really not yet discovered in what fields the self-interview iPhone method will prove most fruitful. Many researchers are working in related fields and I hope to engage with them as I develop my own practice.

Practice validity

To what extent has it changed me and my practice, and how?

I answer this question largely by reference to the points made above. Personally, I feel transformed by my inquiry and I use the iPhone method of "being another" extensively in my daily life. I use it primarily to get a quick fix on what I think or feel about something – I find "talking it out" easier than introspecting. The key benefit is the ability to review and reflect, often over many cycles, on what came out when I spoke to myself. I also use it as a as a mantra which focusses me and enables me to make sense of the stream of conscious and conflicting narratives which tend to accompany my daily activities, like a film soundtrack. In recognising this feature of my practice, I came to understand observations that have frequently been made to me which puzzled me before – apparently I often "come out with things" which suggest I have been working on the issue or question for a long, long time. Now that I acknowledge and have come to terms with my "interior dialogues", I am learning to frame and contextualise them in conversation rather than just explode them into the room assuming that others are aware of the backstory. I feel as though my emotional register is catching up with my mind. Or the other way around; or synchronising.

In the iPhone, I have discovered a valuable technique which helps me to process and to work more effectively and relationally in professional and domestic contexts. A big step in my inquiry was when I was able to share my work with others and to stop feeling defensive about it, or devaluing it. I also think that developing reflexive "muscle tone" has helped me to diffuse potential conflict and to deal with it rather than bury and hide it.

I do not wish to overstate this transformational effect on my practice. It may well be that others have not noticed much difference and in conversation with the Quartet, we have often discussed the difference between "broken to fixed" and "good to great". I was never broken and I was always good at what I do, and very often, I was exceptionally good. But I now find occasionally that there is a spark of insight that I would not have discovered before which makes a huge difference. Many of the examples that spring to mind are too personal to share but some are reflected in my practice accounts.

Signpost to website page - My Practice

In the following section, I discuss Ethics.

Part IV: Ethics

When I began to develop my iPhone method, particularly when I started to discuss it with colleagues, I was challenged to consider the ethical implications of working in relatively uncharted territory. In particular, I was urged to consider my responsibilities to myself and others in ensuring that while boundaries are tested, they are also negotiated, marked and respected. The method can be deeply revealing, unpredictable and emotive.

I was intrigued to discover how the ethical issues which emerged themselves began to inform my inquiry and my practice and to suggest new directions. I found that areas I found sensitive and difficult fed back directly to the kinds of questions I was asking.

None of the ethical frameworks employed by others working in presentational or action inquiry fields exactly met the requirements of my work, based as they tend to be upon informed consent. The reasons are primarily to do with the merging of identities between myself, characters and different representations of myself and also with temporal aspects of my identity. One of the unforeseen consequences of adopting a process ontology, in which being is always becoming, is that it denies a fixed point in time at which interests are determined – the ground is constantly shifting. Bateson's ecology of mind holds implications for boundaries between identities and I found no ethical map to help me to navigate this territory.

So as my inquiry progressed, I found it necessary to develop my own ethical framework which recognises the unique challenges of my own inquiry rather than simply reflecting general best practice.

For example, experimenting with boundary shifting raises particular issues. In "A Crucible for Actors: Questions of Directorial Ethics," Suzanne Burgoyne (2013) suggests that the blurring of boundaries between actor and character and the actor's ability to control that blurring may influence whether an acting experience leads to growth or emotional distress.

Burgoyne quotes one of her university student participants in the research programme:

"In theory, we're supposed to learn this in class, but it's really not what you get taught even when you're taught Stanislavski method or Lee Strasberg or any of that stuff. You're just really not taught how to attune yourself psychologically and how to get back out of that state. It just . . . sort of happens for most people, and, quite frankly, there are a lot of actors I know who can't get out of roles, who step into a part once they're cast and . . . whenever the show ends, that's when they start losing the personality aspects of their character in their daily lives". (p.169)

Burgoyne concludes that awareness of boundary blurring appears to be a first step for students to develop strategies for boundary management … "*Although teachers may understand that acting can have psychological side-effects, our interviews reveal that young actors may be unaware of that possibility until they have an emotionally distressing experience. On the basis of the theory emerging from this study, we suggest that the theatre profession address boundary management as an aspect of acting pedagogy*". (p.179)

I mapped an ethics territory which is complex, bi-sectional and hugely generative, in the sense that it contributes to the question "who am I" in the inquiry process and what is my stance to myself and others, real and imaginary.

My first observation about my ethical territory is how crowded it is, including:

Authors whom I quote and the use I make of their work;

The characters in the folk tales, whose identity I adopt, and whose views I represent;

Co-inquirers – my doctoral supervision group, faculty, work colleagues;

Family and close friends, including my dog;

My selves in my various roles and guises;

Readers and viewers of my work;

Participants in the iPhone process; and crucially

Those who were excluded / not invited / whose stories were not told.

My second observation concerns the temporal aspects of my ethical concerns: what does not seem to matter now, might matter later. It is impossible to predict the meaning and interpretation given to research after the event both by people known and those who are as yet unknown. Some of the material and interpretations which I placed on it may hold implications for them which I did not intend or foresee. How far do the borders of my ethical responsibility extend?

My fieldwork develops a life of its own and I was conscious of the need to be careful with beginnings; it is impossible to foresee all outcomes.

It follows that the relational responsibilities of narrative inquiry are long-term and need to be attentive to participants' lives both throughout the formal inquiry and as their lives unfold. It is essential to recognise that "a person's lived and told stories are who they are and who they are becoming and that these stories sustain them" (Clandinin and Huber 2007, p.15). It is necessary to honour participants' narrative authority over their told stories and thus over their lives. To re-write another's story – with or without consent - is a highly significant relational act. Clandinin highlights the need to attend to the requirements of *discourse communities*, rather than just individuals, recognising that even private stories implicate others.

The core challenge when considering the ethical dimensions of my methods arises from the fact that the notions of expanded consciousness and "being another" extend beyond the boundaries of the individual "self" whereas conventional ethical frameworks regard the individual self as the relevant unit of currency.

I needed to address the transpersonal as well as the individual "self" to develop an adequate ethical stance. Epistemological individualism needed to be expanded to encompass epistemological community. However, as an individual researcher, I have agency which is relatively well-understood whereas collective agency is almost entirely unexplored in terms of research ethics (it is different conceptually from group agency, which I define as a collectivity of individuals rather than something which pays attention to what

Bateson terms "the glue" that connects us). I present this as a puzzle which I have been unable to solve: it is best expressed as, in a participative process, how can we frame an ethical stance which is capable of accounting for events which are emergent and unpredictable and which relate to what occurs between us rather than in each of us individually? This arose in practice during my directing actors' workshop: it puzzled me at the time and continues to do so.

> The ethical dilemma I faced came down to:
>
> *"How can I tell my own story in a way which does not impede the way you tell your own?"*

It became clear to me that as co-actors in each other's stories, where our stories are multiple and intersecting, the way I choose to play my character and the choices I make in terms of how I play my part, influences and determines your degrees of freedom to play yours.

I took this observation into my executive search and community cinema practices and I found it had profound consequences. When describing a situation in the workplace, a candidate would inevitably colour my perception of the other participants and either lend them credibility, or take it away from them. In the boardroom, when a colleague offered an interpretation of what occurred in a given situation, it reduces the space for others to offer alternative interpretations. When someone in the classroom claims the sassy teenager role, it closes off that opportunity for others. When someone dominates the conversation at dinner with sparklingly witty observations, it makes others seem dull.   Therefore, I asked myself, how – let us say, in a family context or a work group – can I tell my story while still leaving you space to tell yours, in the way you would wish, without being pre-empted or undermined by my story?

The way I am addressing this ethical imperative at the moment is to seek way of telling tales which hold open an invitation for others to reframe them. I do so by making explicit through narrative and rhetorical means that my tale is no more and no less than that: my

tale. The tension lies between asserting my authorial voice (my right to tell my own tale) and achieving an appropriate degree of what might be termed post-post-modern relativism. This is very much work in progress and forms part of my ongoing inquiry.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described my research methodology and how it arose from my ontological and epistemological orientation in which being is always becoming. It raises the question, what does it mean to live in the moment while caught in the web of past and future imagining? I described narrative inquiry as a methodological "coming home" and acknowledge how my own distinctive ways of learning and inquiring are contained within my research choices. I offered my four criteria of validity and proposed an ethical framework for my work which involves the notion of epistemological community in addition to the considering the ethical interests of individuals. I describe an unanswered ethical puzzle at the intersection of our stories which is "how do I tell my story in a way which does not constrain yours?"

I learned that my ability to address the question "who am I and how do I know" is much more intimately relational than I had previously imagined and involves a high degree of reciprocity which holds deep ethical responsibilities.

CHAPTER FIVE: FIELD STUDIES – FOLK TALES

Introduction

In the course of this inquiry, I developed a research methodology in which I re-tell folk tales "from the inside", by improvised freefall talking in character, while filming myself on my iPhone. These filmed videos became the source material for subsequent inquiry. In this chapter, I present notes which accompany the audio-visual files which you will find on my website.

The first section of this chapter comprises for each of the tales (Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel) a brief synopsis of the original Grimms tale, followed by a brief commentary on my re-telling. The re-telling process itself is described in detail in the preceding chapter *Research Methodology, Validity and Ethics*.

It is also discussed later in this chapter on page 159 when I discuss my detailed process in the first folk tale field study, Hansel and Gretel.

The intention of this chapter is to describe the field studies themselves and to try to communicate in written form the richness of the experience of working in the forest. I hope to show how meaning emerged through imaginative application of techniques which draw upon method acting and notions of "being another". I do so by presenting extracts from my journals and Practice Notes in support of the primary research data, which are in the form of iPhone videos and photos. These are references throughout the chapter via the acorn motif and links to my website.

PART I: DIRECTOR'S NOTES

1. Hansel & Gretel Synopsis

A poor woodcutter and his wife lived in the forest with his two children, Hansel and Gretel. A great famine fell on the land and they could no longer afford to eat. His wife, the children's stepmother, suggested they should leave them in forest to die lest they all starve but the man was reluctant. Regardless, they took the children to the forest as planned but Hansel had left a trail of white pebbles which they followed back home. Same again the next day, but lacking pebbles, Hansel left breadcrumbs which were eaten by birds. After three days lost in the forest, they saw a white bird who led them to a gingerbread house. A woman as old as the hills came out. Angry that they were nibbling her house, she but pretended to be kind, took them in, fed them but then locked up Hansel behind bars, forcing Gretel to do housework. She was a witch who trapped and ate children. Hard of sight, she would feel Hansel's finger each day to see if he was fat enough to eat but Gretel tricked her by offering a little bone instead. After four weeks, she had Gretel light the oven anyway and boil the pot to cook the children. Gretel saw her chance, and pushed the witch into the oven, locking the iron door, and released Hansel. They seized the witch's jewels and treasures and ran away, helped by a white duck who carried them across a great river on her back. At last, they found their father's house and learned their stepmother was dead. They rejoiced with him and lived happily ever after.

Notes on my re-telling:

Each character is spoken "talking heads" to iPhone in the style of Alan Bennett's Talking Heads twelve monologues for the BBC (1988). Each piece is a soliloquy, addressed to a multiple imaginary audience which might at various times comprise myself as inquirer, myself as all the other characters and myself not in character but an observer as well as the characters in original and emerging relationship to each other. Time shifts and warps because these pieces are unscripted, unrehearsed and unedited and there are no concerns about continuity or plot. It is explicitly intended that meaning is emergent. There is no necessity to develop character or illuminate the meanings of original tales. The challenge is to speak as found in the moment in an improvised response to the questions I asked each character concerning their part in the tale.

2. Sleeping Beauty Synopsis

A king and queen longed for a child. Finally, the queen gave birth to a daughter, they held a great feast and invited everyone including the Wise Women but having only twelve golden plates, one was left out. The Wise Women bestowed magic gifts upon the baby girl, virtue, beauty, riches and so on but after the eleventh had spoken, the one left out appeared in a rage and cursed the child, that in her fifteenth year, she should prick herself with a spindle and die. The twelfth could not undo the spell but softened it so that the child would not die but fall into a deep sleep of 100 years. The king demanded that all spindles in the kingdom should be burnt. The child grew in grace and beauty and on the fifteenth birthday, alone in the castle, exploring, she found at the top of a narrow staircase, a room with a rusty key in the lock, which she turned to reveal a little room in which an old woman sat with a spindle, spinning. What are you doing? *Spinning*. What's that? *A spindle*. The girl took the spindle, pricked her finger and fell into a deep sleep. Not only the girl, but everyone in the castle fell asleep and over 100 years the castle was covered in a forest of thorns. Hearing the tale, from time to time princes came and tried to enter the castle and rescue the princess but they were caught and died a piteous death. After 100 years had passed, it happened that another prince, undeterred, tried to enter and as the spell was broken, the thorn hedge turned to flowers and he passed through unhurt. When he found the princess sleeping, he kissed her and she awoke. They went downstairs as the whole court awoke from sleep and their marriage was celebrated with all splendour and they lived contented to the end of their days.

Notes on my re-telling:

As with Hansel and Gretel, I continue with talking heads and crucially, speak to self. I am freer in this piece to engage with the forest and to take my artefacts (Ascot hats, wedding dress) into the woods. I am also freer in making props from the forest (willow and briar wands, the beech vs the birch as Queen of the Forest). I make direct reference to my flat coated retriever as co-inquirer. I am free to revisit the tree as a place of comfort and discourse. I reference the grief and anxiety that surrounds my work and I also acknowledge

its comfort. I draw upon images of thorns as way-markers and binders – ways of no return. I delight in the trapped decaying corpses of questing princes, without knowing why. I hang my wedding dress from an old apple tree against the cerulean sky, blowing like a handkerchief or a white bird in flight – like the white bird that I didn't know, leading Hansel and Gretel to the gingerbread house. I throw my Ascot hats on the forest floor and hang them from the tree. I lose my concentration and laugh with my dog on this darkest day "she's licking my face again!" I feel the greatest sense of joy.

3. Rapunzel Synopsis

Once there was a man and woman who longed for a child. From their window they could see into a beautiful garden surrounded by a high wall owned by an Enchantress of great power, dreaded by the whole world. When the woman finally fell pregnant she saw beds of fresh green herb called rampion (rapunzel) which she craved. Her husband, fearing for her health, entered the garden secretly at twilight and gathered rampion for his wife. Each night he returned until he was discovered and the Enchantress flew into a rage. He begged for mercy which she granted in return for a promise of the child, once born, which she said she would care for as a mother. The man agreed. When the baby was born, the Enchantress appeared and took her away. When she was twelve years of age, the Enchantress locked the child in a high tower with neither stairs nor door. When she visited the tower daily, the Enchantress would call to Rapunzel to let down her long, golden, braided hair for her to climb up. After a year or two, a prince rode by and hearing Rapunzel's sweet singing, waited until the Enchantress had come and gone, and called to her to let down her hair. When he climbed up, he asked for her hand in marriage and she consented, asking him to return each evening with a skein of silk with which she could weave a ladder for their escape. One day after this, Rapunzel remarked to the Enchantress, why are you so much heavier for me to draw up than the prince? Hearing this, the Enchantress was enraged and cut off Rapunzel's hair, and banished her into the desert. Later, when the prince came, the Enchantress let down the severed braids of hair and drew him up only to curse him and scratch his eyes until he fell off the tower, blinding himself on thorns only to wander blind in the forest for some years. Finally, he came to the desert and heard Rapunzel's voice and when she saw him she wept and her tears healed his eyes. He took her to his kingdom where they married and live long.

Notes on my re-telling:

This is about escape and the metaphorical significance of towers. The sense of height is crucial: ascent, descent, rise, fall. The fear of dropping – the waking from dream experience, of that sudden jolting, waking-up fall from a step. Fear is key to this piece. The idea that the means of escape is within you, literally grown by you – the rope is your hair, grown from

your head – but you need to lose your crowning glory, cut your own hair off, to unlock the puzzle of entrapment. Your motivation, as Rapunzel, is very unclear. Your entrapment and your status as prisoner is ambiguous. When you speak, you speak of the pleasure and the pain. When you escape, you don't fall or jump, you descend, as a ballerina or a gymnast, turning the fall to a dive and then a gentle stepping down on the grass, a slice, and a walk away, silently, through mists.

Bluebells grow in the woods all around. Rapunzel is a plant related to campanula (lit. bells), church bells live in church towers – they ring their sound out, as you sang and were heard and finally, you heard yourself and your voice was from below not from above – it echoed from your past lives and you walked towards it, towards your future lives.

PART II - Hansel & Gretel Fieldwork

Fig 9: Images from Hansel and Gretel fieldwork

My post viva challenge from my examiner was "to bring into practice" my paper entitled *'Enchanting: an inquiry into magical, inspirited practice'* in which I began to examine the potential of magical metaphor for advancing transformational practice.

Extract from Notes on my Post-Viva Challenge (November 2012)

My response to the challenge is this audio-visual project which took place over five days from the 4th to the 9th November 2012 mostly in Ashridge forest and in the London house of a co-inquirer, who invited us to hold the session in her home.

The work is inspired by the Brothers Grimm folk tale "Hansel and Gretel" and involved collaboration between myself, the characters in the tale, passers-by and my co-inquirers along with our doctoral supervisor and our family dog, Cybele, who came with me into the forest.

I chose Hansel and Gretel (or as one of the passers-by remarked, Hansel and Gretel chose me) because of the presence of the witch as a central character and the opportunity it provided of practicing the art of making a gingerbread house. I hoped to avoid writing entirely and to submit only photos and video clips, however, I included these notes, in case it was required for assessment and to provide as a record of my process.

My process

I began by reading the original story aloud several times and noticing the feelings it evoked. I felt outraged on behalf of the characters and to develop a sense that they were trapped within the archetypes they represent and that every time the story was read and repeated down the ages, they became more stuck. I note that I feel compelled when re-telling a folk tale from memory not to change the details, but to be faithful to the original; this somewhat reverential response only serves to reinforce the feeling of narrative stuckness and my sense that the characters wanted to be given back their voices.

I imagined that the characters formed and reformed throughout successive generations but essentially, their tales and relationships seemed immutable. Some specific questions and issues arose in my mind: Where is the birth mother? Why was the woodcutter so weak? What was the stepmother thinking, suggesting to her husband that they conspire to kill his children? Was the witch the real mother or another incarnation of the stepmother? Why did she need to eat children if she could magic up gingerbread? Why was she so kind to them at first, tucking them up in bed so that they thought they were in heaven? What was the white bird up to, leading them to her? And so on.

I immersed myself in the story until I could hear the characters talking to me. There was a sense of great sadness in their telling of the tale; and an overwhelming sense of self-justification and special pleading "you don't understand". The woodcutter was a defeated and a broken man, but proud that his son, Hansel, was now a professor at the university and his daughter, Gretel, was CEO of a major corporation. The step-mother was contemptuous of the real mother, who ran off to build a beautiful home in the country (I think of her as an interior designer) and all the step-mother wanted was to live out her life with her new husband, free of his kids. Gretel was psychotically contradictory – on the one hand denying that she murdered her mother, on the other hand expressing bitterness and describing a fight that led to bad things happening. She liked the strength of her character as it had reverberated ever since, defining her as a powerful female who takes control. I came to see hunger and the famine as metaphorical as well as actually relating to the Great Famine; they were each starved and hungry for love and redemption.

I wanted to talk to the witch directly and was surprised in conversation that I was more comfortable in her role, than in my role as interviewer. It felt as though we were different but the same – I liked her more than I liked me, she was more genuine. The interview puzzled me. When I was at the House in the Woods, looking for the characters to interview, I had a strong sense that the witch was present but evading me; with others, it felt as though they were waiting. When I found a place where I felt their presence, I simply put on the appropriate hat to get in character and filmed their answers to my imagined questions. I had a sense that they knew they were being judged and that they were anxious to know which of the others I had already interviewed: they knew that they all came out of the story discredited in some way and yet they differed in subtle ways in the extent to which they were reconciled with the past and how they were interpreted. I felt that they knew me, and held me in contempt as though they held me complicit in their character entrapment: yet at the same time, they could not resist telling me their tale over again.

When I took the still photos of me in character, I was surprised and delighted with the quality and the beauty of them and the way the characters merged into the surrounding woods, seeming to be integrated with the surrounding landscape and almost to come out of it. I have included in the Powerpoint album those photos where this seemed most to be the case; there is one photo, of me in the birth mother's hat, where it looks as though the flesh on my face is decomposing as in death into the compost of the forest floor. This strongly reinforced my sense that the characters were part of a natural cycle and so were integrally associated with the wood, the sawdust, the moss, the mushrooms and the fallen leaves. I felt that they were both constant and reincarnated.

After taking photos of a number of houses in Ashridge forest with witchcraft names (Witchcraft Hill, Faery Hollow, Witchcraft Bottom), I went to Little Gaddesden Church and photographed various things such as gargoyles, tombstones and the church broomstick. The themes of damnation and redemption seemed integral to the tale and I wanted to keep alive the tension between witch spells and church prayers as I did this piece of work.

Making the Gingerbread

I loved the feeling of coming in from the forest, to the kitchen and baking the gingerbread. The first batch was made by me alone, after filming in the forest, and I was interrupted by two workmen who came to install a new washing machine. One of them, Eugene, was from Hungary and instantly recognised from the smell that I was making gingerbread and said it brought back many memories. He used my laptop to go on Facebook to find pictures of his sister and her children with gingerbread they made last year: a plate of gingerbread shaped like pretzels. He knew the story of Hansel and Gretel and thought that the woodcutter was a good man and was enchanted by his wife to kill the children. He pointed out that my mixture was too sloppy so I added more flour and sugar. After they had gone, I left it in the oven too long and burnt it so my daughter made a fresh batch when she got home from school along with a better template.

It pleases me on reflection that people instantly connected with what I was doing: from two perspectives, the first that the folk tale itself was clearly well-known and they carried with them just under the surface and the second, that they did not regard it strange or eccentric that I should be engaging with the folk tale. This caused me to question my assumptions about many things, in particular, my reticence to engage in my practice for fear of being thought strange, whereas in fact, no-one seemed to think it at all strange to be inquiring into enchantment and enacting the Hansel and Gretel tale in the wood and in my kitchen.

At AM's house

In many ways, the filming and photography in the forest and the role-playing with the characters was preliminary to making the gingerbread house with my group at AM's house. The relationship between the making of the house and the reflecting on the story is complicated and I do not understand it exactly. In the video clips, I describe my sense of wanting to "bring the forest into AM's house" and to do the work outdoors as well as indoors.

When I arrived at AM's house, I left a Tesco bag by mistake on the pavement outside, full of my bowls of moss, autumn leaves, sawdust, white stones, a white bird made of sticks and feathers and other things which I intended to use to bring the forest in. When I went out again to find it, it had gone. So, I went over the road to a park and collected some more things, which were every bit as good as the originals, and placed them in bowls on the table alongside the prints of some of the photographs featured in the Powerpoint album. So the universality of my artefacts was interesting; they also lived in the city.

We started by looking at my photos and then got to work by mixing up the egg whites and icing sugar to make cement to stick the walls and roof together. I had been thinking about the nature of spells and their relation to prayers and decided that rather than cast a spell, I would say a prayer. The reason was that in a recent discussion with a Catholic priest about witchcraft in Little Gaddesden, he suggested that as the difference between tap water and holy water is only the Blessing, and for my purposes, it would be better to bless the people, than to bless the water.

I brought lunch of cheese, bread, pickles, figs, parsnip with ginger soup and mulled wine and we ate quite a bit of the melted chocolate (which was Plan B for cementing the walls together but which in the end was used to coat part of the house) with dipping strawberries which AM provided. Food is important in the story of Hansel and Gretel, along with gluttony, starvation and hunger and it was important for me to include eating and drinking in the practice of making the house.

Afterwards

At first, I felt that I could not let go of the story and felt a strong compulsion to try and edit and perfect my videos and to analyse what had happened during the process. I have found it hard to resist doing this, but believe it is important not to, but rather to allow the experience to "compost" and to walk away from it. But I find that I am still engaged with the folk tale and in the process and I have noticed that in spare moments, I reflect on the conversations I had with myself and with others, and feel that it was an important project and that I have found the beginnings of a meaningful practice.

Sue Lloyd
26th November 2012

PART III - Sleeping Beauty Fieldwork

Fig 10: Images from Sleeping Beauty fieldwork

Sleeping Beauty followed directly from my first piece, Hansel and Gretel, and in it I delve deeper into my emerging process and methodology using another folk tale as the inspiration.

Sleeping Beauty came to me in an Ashridge Doctoral Master Class during a quilt-making session. I recall the exact moment when CG was sitting on a wooden chair stitching a section of quilt in illustration as CC, standing, was explaining to the group how the session would run. I was sitting a few yards from CG, and to his immediate left. As his hand went through the motions of stitching, I saw him as the shoemaker in The Elves and the Shoemaker. As his hand descended, I focussed on the sense of holding the needle and thought of the spinning wheel, the needle, the prick and the drop of blood in Sleeping Beauty.

Extract from paper dated 8th April 2013.

"Since we met at Kingsway on 15th March, I have almost completed my exploration of Sleeping Beauty.

On day one I realised that some things about the new story I know with absolute certainty already – in the case of Sleeping Beauty: the colour of the story is white; it began in snow and ice in February with scenes of immense beauty; the skeletons of dead princes mark the passage of time; it is a story of a great awakening; it is a resurrection story; the wands are made of briar rose or willow; it's not a <u>spell-breaker</u> story, it's a <u>time-breaker</u> – the kiss was coincidental to the awakening and not its cause; thorns and crowns are related; the original story deceives us about what happened in the old tower; the princess was not wandering, she was searching and she found what she sought; the whole story is a time trick.

The second day, the first and most compelling theme took hold of me: the great number of princes caught in the thorns that engulfed the castle, hanging torn and trapped until they died "a piteous death". I had a wonderfully intense image of them hanging there, helpless, unable to move forward or back, the more they struggled, the more entangled they became. I wrote a piece about the stages of despair and what they might have experienced. I imagined after death that the flesh would rot and fall first, leaving skeletons in clothes which would blow in the wind, get torn to shreds, and fall, leaving skeletons hanging there, in a macabre but exquisitely beautiful collage until gradually, the bones would weather and whiten and eventually fall to the forest floor.

When I was walking the next day, my eyes fell upon the skull of a small animal – a muntjac, I think – which a walker had picked up and hung on the hedgerow by hooking the eye sockets through the bare branches of blackthorn. I photographed it and left it there.

Later in the walk, I went deeper into the forest and photographed the sun in the winter sky, breaking rays through the trees.

I went to the young oak where my wand got stuck (*a reference to my first video clip)*, and spoke about my belief that Sleeping Beauty is the story of a great awakening and wondered

why sleeping is spoken of in terms of water "deep", "sinking", "drifting", "sleep washed over me". The idea of the Sleeping Beauty spell not in fact being a spell at all, but a foretelling, began that day. And the associated idea that if there is no spell, there is no way to break the spell – this is developed further in the Queen's Speech video interview.

I then went to my old house on the morning of a dreaded day, and photographed my wedding dress blowing in the wind against an azure sky, hanging from the old apple tree. I also photographed myself wearing some of my Ascot hats and of them hanging on one of the old beech trees and discussed how beeches are regarded as Queens of the Forest, but strangely, are not loved in folk tales in the same way that the birch is loved as the ancient Lady of the Woods. I cut a very long willow wand and whipped it in the sky with two buzzards circling above. I left the forked end intact - it looks like a snake. I cut a long briar rose wand and whipped it also against the sky.

A key development was an inquiry into the location and meaning of the room at the top of the tower where the premonition is fulfilled (that before her 16th birthday, the princess will prick her finger and die – which was modified by the good fairy to sleep for 100 years). I began to think of this tower room as Room 101 in George Orwell's 1984. I see its threshold as the pivot over which the fate of Sleeping Beauty is delicately balanced. Orwell's Room 101 is the torture chamber in the Ministry of Love in which the Party attempts to subject a prisoner to his or her own worst nightmare, fear or phobia.

> *"You asked me once … what was in Room 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Everyone knows it. The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world".*
>
> (George Orwell, 1984)

There is a high degree of inevitability about the opening of the door in the already-knowledge of what is there. The original story obscures what I now know: Sleeping Beauty is not wandering aimlessly on that last day – she is seeking her destiny, determined to break out of the passivity that has characterised the first 15 years of her life under the threat of the curse, which she realises was never really a curse, just an attention-seeking premonition

by a deranged, angry and hurt old woman – who probably didn't even have magic powers. Sleeping Beauty is defying her parents as she stands on the brink, in the threshold, of becoming. Her attitude as she stands there: "bring it on".

My iPhone video suggests that the destinies of me, the Queen, and me, the Princess, are connected in ways that are linked to Room 101: my actions of the young Princess, in opening the door of the tower room, fulfil the potential of me as the Queen to confront reality without fear. I can hear my young girl's voice, shouting at me, the mother, "it's <u>still in there</u>, whether you open the door or not". In the exact tone of a teenage girl, frustrated by how her own mother could have got everything so wrong. And she so fearless in her youth.

Except I don't think it's me calling to my mother, I think it's my younger self, calling to me, because I don't remember anything like this in my past but I do see it in my present. I feel myself during this piece experiencing all stages of my life, simultaneously, as though instead of moving along a time-line from past to present, it's all happening in a flash. I can see how one thing that happened in the past is linked to another in the future but also, intriguingly, how the reverse is also happening and something in the future can influence something in the past. Past and future have very much been on my mind as I approach the end of Sleeping Beauty and I am asking what meaning they each have in my present.

I note that this reminds me of the wizard Merlin in T.H. White's "The Once and Future King", who travels backwards in time and so finds betting slips from the twentieth century in his pocket in Arthurian England. I wonder if I am alone in finding that it is very often easier to discern the future than to fathom the past; it seems to me that the present offers clearer clues to a person's likely future than it illuminates their past. This idea enters into my Sleeping Beauty exploration most powerfully in my conviction from the start that the moment at which the fulfilment of the premonition becomes inevitable, the eleventh hour just before the princess turns 16, is the moment which has dragged all of us in the story through time towards itself, like a force of nature, a magnet or a beacon or a plughole. Alice's rabbit hole is the same: it draws us down like a vertiginous fall.

Post-script to Sleeping Beauty

I was intrigued, much later in June 2014 (while in the process of writing this thesis), to see the re-interpretation of the wicked folk in the newly released film of the Sleeping Beauty story, Maleficient, featuring Angelina Jolie. In the film, the wicked folk, a young girl from an adjacent magical kingdom, is courted and betrayed by the young prince who slices the magnificent wings from her back while she sleeps and thus robs her of her powers of flight. After the king's marriage and the christening of his daughter at which Maleficient delivers her curse, the story takes an unexpected turn as Maleficient grows to love the princess during the latter's clandestine childhood visits to the next-door kingdom. The twist in the tale is that the "love's first kiss" which breaks the spell is delivered not by a prince as in the original tale but by Maleficient herself in despair that she cannot release the girl from the unbreakable spell. So it is a kiss between two women that releases the child and heals the wound of the Maleficient who inflicted it.

Practice Note

Jolie has recently been honoured for her humanitarian work as a UN Special Envoy and recently accompanied the UK Foreign Secretary to an international summit on the prevention of "conflict rape" in war. Interviewed on BBC Woman's Hour, she described how she and the writer, Linda Woolverton, regarded the forced removal of her wings as a metaphor for rape and the subsequent story one of recovery and redemption. It struck me as a powerful example of how the folk tales act as crucibles for personal sense-making.

It also references Foucault's (1976) "*subjugated knowledges*" in its subversion of the boy/girl kiss in which the awakening is not only inevitable but same gender.

PART IV – Rapunzel Fieldwork

Fig 11: Images from Rapunzel fieldwork

This was the third in my trilogy of folk tale fieldwork and like the first and second, it came to me rather than my choosing it.

Extract from journal (20 May 2013)

Rapunzel had been on my mind for some time but whenever I tried to think about the story and the reason why, it receded and went out of focus. I was aware of the tower and the height of it and then on 13th May, it came to me in a flash. I imagined her hair as the traditional pale straw coloured rope that coils in boats and on the seaside and I recognised the image from way back in my inquiry – the figure of eight knot, the climbing knot, and I saw that this meditation would involve a high abseil descent and the fear which that entails.

Then I saw that Rapunzel's rope, her only possible means of escape, was part of herself, it was attached to her head in a myriad golden strands, as her own human hair which she herself had grown, and had she known rope craft, which she did (in Grimm's Folk Tales, she "wound them round one of the hooks of the window above" p.74) – then she could have self-descended the tower, which was "without stairs or a door" and walked on earth again.

At this point, I strongly identified this part of the trilogy as one about confronting fear and I remembered my supervisor's comment that "if you begin the conversation, there may be no way back" and then I saw again in a flash my first images of the forest of thorns that grew

up around the castle wherein waited the Sleeping Beauty, that as you move forward, there is no way back and at the time I saw that as entrapment and indeed, the princes died "a piteous death". I think if they had kept going, they would have survived.

So, without anticipating or foreseeing, I imagine that this meditation on Rapunzel would involve ways of no return.

This already evokes memories of woods and forests and paths where the way back is forbidden or where the way closes behind. I am thinking of Orpheus's journey to the underworld and the injunction not to look back (and thus, surely, the absolute inevitability of the backward glance – the forbidden, for [ever] bidding). And the one with hair like serpents whose glance turns you to stone: Medusa.

The bells

Rampion, or Rapunzel, is a type of campanula, with bell-like flowers, an edible plant with roots like radish and sweet tender salad leaves. I wonder if it is addictive or if it was simply pregnancy cravings? The picture of the flower in my seed catalogue looks remarkably like the bluebells which fill the woods and the air and my spirit as I begin this story.

I am reminded of bells tolling:

> *"Therefore send not to know for whom the bells toll: they toll for thee"*
> John Donne, 1624

I have no doubt that these campanula bells toll for me. They are a foreboding, or a welcoming, of what is to become. And what that might be, I am about to discover. The church bells toll the hours: I am writing this, on 20th May 2013 in Ashridge Library; the bells tolled 7 pm as I arrived.

The Enchantress

In the original Grimm's tale, the woman was an Enchantress who "allowed her anger to be softened."

Journal notes (21st May 2013)

"I note how my own anger is softening as I engage with this inquiry. I am starting to see many things that I did not see before. I am seeing them now, because I am seeing them through the eyes of others, and hearing the voices of others speaking through me. I am beginning to understand something which seems profound: that within me there are the hopes and fears of all the other people in my story and that "to understand everything is to forgive everything". I question what it means to understand. I am beginning to see that understanding (as in under-standing, or standing under) may mean in the context of relationship of another to myself, to bear the weight of, to feel the pain of, to appreciate the burden of, the other side of me. By which I mean, that I cause pain to others as they cause pain to me, and understanding me my self might involve understanding the pain of what it is to know me and to be in my presence."

How tall was the tower?

"An ell (derived from elbow, forearm), is about the length of an arm. Originally, it was derived from the length of the arm from the shoulder (or the elbow) to the wrist, although the exact length was never defined in English law. Rapunzel's hair was 20 ells, about 75 feet. It fascinates me to wonder whether the height of the tower was determined by the length of the hair: this is an idea which haunts me as a metaphor for self-entrapment.

I want to pause here to consider the towers both real and metaphorical which feature in my early writing. Glancing back through my previous papers:

"I have built my love a Tower, by a clear crystal fountain / and on it I will build all the flowers of the mountain". (trad.)

"And Childe Rowland to the Dark Tower came." (Browning, 1855)

"I began to think of this as Room 101". (reference the tower room in Sleeping Beauty)

During a call on Friday, 31st May, PB identified immediately that Rapunzel was a tale of escape. She alluded to a progression of ideas through the trilogy of Hansel & Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel and as a consequence, I will attempt to draw together the learning themes and to frame this as a separate and concluding cycle of inquiry. I recognised when PB said this that to a very great extent the tales have become intertwined as I work with them and themes from one tale informs work in the others.

I wish to record here that in the process of performing this trilogy, I have become far more deeply attached to the tales and their characters and what is more, I felt a connection with the tellers of these tales and I can hear and almost feel in a tangible way the layering of meanings and the whispering of voices of story tellers as they spin and weave their tales. I am reminded again of Lucian Freud's observation that he paints his characters as a way of getting to understand them: the working with the tales in a physical way has been a crucial part of my process and has unlocked far more powerfully than purely reading and writing about them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented extracts from my fieldwork and tried to convey the richness and emotional intensity of my experiential learning in the forest. I conclude with the observation that "being another" was an experience which I found instinctive and enjoyable. The process of writing about it was also enjoyable but would not have been so, had I not experienced their stories first-hand, from the points of view of the protagonists. While "writing up" enabled me to settle into an <u>authorial</u> space, it did not feel like an <u>authoritative</u> or a comfortable space. I am unsure whether my way of writing up their stories does them justice which I suppose, in a way, is the point. As one of my actors said on the Directing Actors course described in the chapter *Practice Accounts*, my characters stay with me: I became them.

CHAPTER SEVEN: BEING ANOTHER PRACTICE ACCOUNTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present three practice accounts. The first, Directing Actors, describes how I took my inquiry into practice by participating in a film directing course which illuminated how it felt to practice Stanislawski's "magic if". The second and third practice accounts show how in my cinema and executive search practices, I began to apply my inquiry in practice, by exploring with others how it felt to be another.

Directing Actors Workshop: practice account

When I was stumbling around in the dark, mid-January 2014, when the days were dark enough metaphorically and otherwise, I decided to stop thinking and writing and do something else.

Intrigued by aspects of my iPhone process that resembled the actor / director dynamic, I enrolled on a two-day course at the London Film Academy, entitled **Directing Actors**:

> *"Learn how to get the best out of actors in this practical acting workshop tailored specifically for directors, using the techniques of various practitioners such as Meisner and Keith Johnstone"*.

I was pleased to see that the next course was on the final weekend of January, Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th.

I was prompted to attend the course by a Sunday Times interview with Ralph Fiennes (Appleyard, 2014) in which he describes the concept of *"the totally inhabited moment"* on an actor's face: *"Vanessa (Redgrave) showed me that moment could be transcendent".*

I approached the course in the spirit of inquiry: the following are extracts from my notes written during and immediately before and after the course.

Friday 24th January 2014. Evening, my sister's house in Surrey

Feeling excited about tomorrow, I can't believe it happened so quickly and easily. I'm a bit anxious about the fact that I am not a film director and have no experience at directing whereas the other participants are practitioners. I must come clean and explain about my inquiry and the experimental nature of my iPhone work, and the fact that I am doing the course in the service of my inquiry. I wonder what will happen. I'm hoping it will answer some questions I have about my experience of being in character, and to find out more about method acting, in theory and practice. Very excited now, I think this is going to be a blast. I have a sharp, sudden tingling on the back of my hands, which I imagine is an adrenalin rush, as it happens when I have a nasty shock such as slipping while climbing, or nearly pranging the car.

Saturday 25th January 2014. 10.15 am, London Film Academy, intro session

When I arrived, I was intrigued to meet the other three participants: a Mexican film director specialising in reality TV shows; a Portugese photographer / film-maker for Prada and other fashion houses; and a cinematographer who also facilitates film-making workshops and wants to deepen his understanding of the actors' experience from the other side of the camera. The course was run by a method actor (AB) who trained at the Lee Strasberg Actors Studio in New York and who in addition to acting in feature films, works as a casting director, her particular passion, believing that casting is a creative act in its own right. As a head-hunter, I agree with that. We started with introductions:

SL*: I'm coming at this from two directions, the first is that I am involved with a cinema project and we are intending to make a film about the restoration project and the community involvement in the cinema since it was built to up to today, assuming we can get Arts Council or other funding. The second is that I am in the final year of a doctorate during which I have been filming myself on iPhone inhabiting characters from folk tales and interviewing myself using replay. It's an experimental method and I need to understand the actor – director dynamic better, so I thought I would come and do this course.*

AB: *Cool. And the second question was what do you want to be doing in 5 years?*

SL: *I really don't know.*

AB: *Try it again. What do you want to be doing in 5 years?*

SL: *Um … Well, as I said, I really don't know.*

AB: *You need to answer my question.*

SL: (Mind blank, bit stressed and flustered). *Well, I suppose what I really would like is, I really honestly don't know. (Awkward silence). ….. I want to still be doing this, my inquiry, but doing it with other people and experimenting with how acting and authenticity play out in work and life. I want to see what happens if this takes place in the open, out in the world, what would change.*

AB: *Cool. OK, so everyone notice how Sue tried to edit that. Here in this room, we're not editing – you need to accept that.*

In the discussion which followed, we agreed that we would not film or record the sessions but that we would make notes if we wished to do so, at break points. What goes on in the room, stays in the room, in terms of each other, explained AB. We could discuss or write about our own experiences but not about anyone else. There would be no debrief or opportunity to revisit what went on in the room afterwards – when this session is over, it's over. We were told by AB that we might find some of the exercises emotionally challenging and we didn't have to do anything we didn't want to do. If we wanted to drop out, we could either leave the room or move to the side and observe but once we dropped out, we couldn't join in that exercise again. At this point, I felt my anxiety level rising and I realised that I had no idea what we might be asked to do. My heart was racing and adrenalin was tingling the back of my hands again.

I thought of inquiry ethics and whether what AB had said was okay or not. I asked whether there was any ethical governance around workshops like this and how to avoid people being hurt if the exercises were so challenging.

AB replied that people do get hurt in these workshops, if by hurt I mean emotional breakdowns, crying and so on. She said that we were each responsible for being here and we were here for reasons which only we knew. We were each responsible for our experiences here and for our onward journey. There were no "safe words" to stop an exercise and she advised us that if anyone did become distressed or something unexpected happened, the most dangerous thing to do is to stop. So we must carry on whatever happens. "If you stop in a place of pain, you will be stuck there. You need to move through that place of pain to another place". We were working in places which are emotional and volatile – it's a directing actors course, and that's the kind of place it is. I got the impression that she was used to working in emotionally unstable places and felt it was essential to do so for her own development. This was confirmed later.

Exercise One: Role-playing the actor /director role relationships in an audition

The scene: casting for a feature film. The roles: 1 x director, 2 x actors auditioning, 2 x non-participant observers. AB took the actors out and gave them secret instructions on how to conduct themselves (slightly drunk, disruptive of the other actor's performance, challenging the script etc.) AB then gave the director secret instructions (e.g. the film production company has already chosen these two lead actors, this is a sham audition, you have to take them etc.) At the beginning of the exercise, the two "actors" were invited into the room by the "director". Three chairs were arranged in a triangle, the observers sat at the back of the room.

My learning points – as actor

I was immediately acutely aware when playing an actor that my performance was constrained entirely by the way the other actor played their part. It was impossible for me to play the script in the way I wished if he did not reciprocate and support me. I was compelled to respond appropriately to the way he played his part, otherwise my reading would be awkward. If he read his lines angrily, I had either to be angry back, or conciliatory, to make the dialogue hold together. It quickly became quite a battle between us, to assert our own script interpretation over the other and to edge the other into playing their role our way. There had been no opportunity to read through the script together first and compare interpretations. It was also difficult not having memorised the lines, to manage my body language, looking down to read, then up to regain eye contact to deliver the lines.

 As the exercise progressed it became much easier to coerce or encourage the other actor into a particular stance and after quite a short time we picked up on this and silently negotiated our way through our roles to improve our mutual performance. We all later reported experiencing an interior monologue along the lines that we wanted the director to pick out our performance and yet, we were also aware that our real opponent was not in the room, but in my case, the other female actors auditioning for the role. It dawned on us all eventually that as an actor, our best strategy was to support our partner into giving their best performance in order that we could reciprocate with our best performance.

Learning points – as director

I recognised the feeling as soon as I opened the door to welcome the actors waiting in the corridor and invite them into the audition room. It was similar to my feeling as a head-hunter when I welcome candidates for interview. An instant initial evaluation, instinctive: how do they look, what energy do they project, how comfortable are they, how confident, do they greet me appropriately, do they navigate the initial exchange with ease.

During the introduction to the course, we had tried to guess the two key words which are essential for actors to demonstrate at audition: can they "take direction". If not, then as a director, you will find them difficult / impossible to work with.

I had been instructed by AB to try and increase the rapport and intimacy between the actors; unknown to me, they had been instructed by AB to be hostile to each other on the grounds of a previous failed sexual relationship on the set of another film.

I sensed the hostility between them immediately and took the view that it was their audition to ruin as they saw fit, and not my responsibility if they blew it. I did not acknowledge or respond to their hostility to each other. I wanted to avoid "coaching" them as I sensed it would simply provoke their antagonism and drag me into their conflict.

My first strategy was to praise the performance of each in turn, "good", "that's nice", "yes, keep going like that" and their innate egotism led them to seek more praise and to continue to read their lines rather than continue to be deflected by sabotaging the other. The two individuals playing the actors reported afterwards that they found that this strategy led to them wanting to excel in their individual roles rather than pursue destructive behaviour towards the other. They said that they found my strategy of saying "Go when you're ready" and then gazing impassively at the floor between us until they began before making eye contact with them again, both effective and disorientating. They felt that if they continued to bicker, their time would be up. I was pleased that my strategy worked. The observers remarked that I came across as "incredibly patient and self-possessed" and that this made me powerful

I thought I would have had a better outcome if I had surfaced the antagonism and worked in the open to resolve it. I felt that I had achieved an okay result but that a better

performance would have resulted from confrontation of the issue – it was later pointed out by AB that given that the script itself involved conflict between a married couple, their antagonism could have been harnessed to good effect. I considered how much more dangerous this would have felt to me: deliberately to inflame and provoke them into further conflict and negative emotion.

Group Discussion and Q&A

We were invited to ask questions of the actors / directors who joined us for the session. I had a long list of questions. I informed the group that I would like to write up my findings from this session and everyone agreed, however, I have referred to the speakers quoted below as AB, AC, AF and AG. The following questions are mine and the responses are paraphrased from my notes, taken at the time and from memory.

What's your relationship with your character, can you describe it for me?

AB: Well, my characters are real people, I know everything about them. I know stuff that they don't even know about themselves, I know stuff they've forgotten. They are as real as I am. Afterwards, I think of them as someone I've known for a long, long time – someone who has always been there in my life. It's like they're a friend or someone I used to know really well but haven't seen for a long time.

AC: For me, it's a bit like I have met someone I always wanted to meet. I choose my roles, when I'm lucky enough to be able to choose, because I want to play someone in that position. So, I'm talking at the moment about a feature film about a female marathon runner, someone who is obsessive about running, who wants to push herself to the limit. This psychology has interested me for a long time. I go out looking for roles that let me create characters that I think are in there somewhere and need expression. Or, I need to express them – maybe a better way of saying it.

AC: It's like keeping someone alive inside you. When you start, they're a small part of you, but they grow inside and keep growing. I feel as though I need to pay attention to them, not just in rehearsals but in my daily life, I need to nurture them, feed them.

What like a baby?

No, not a baby, more like an imaginary friend, someone only I know is there. But they're inside me. Then, at a certain point, they start to become more real, so I'm not just feeding them, they're interacting with me and I'm responding to them.

AF: Yes, I experience that as well. My character starts to take shape and grow inside me, it's like a private thing, I never talked about it, it's like a constant presence. The character gets more and more real, at first, it's as though I can see them but I don't know what they're thinking, like someone on a train.

AB: When I was starting work on my character (B) in [film] it was exactly like I was over here (right hand held high, palm out, waving fingers) and B was over here (same gesture but with left hand) and we kind of danced together coming closer, then further apart for weeks and in fact months because the film got delayed but I couldn't get her out of my head, her stayed there. And then, when I started the film and we were working together every day, there was a point like this (slaps her palms together in front of her face, to show two things colliding and becoming one) when we became the same person. I had become her, there was no difference. I thought her thoughts. If I had a headache, B had a headache. I was in the character, she was in me. When I was at home, I was still the character but I was aware that I needed to act normal. [SL: So at that point then, you were basically acting being yourself?] Yes, I guess so.

Do you ever get stuck in a role and you can't get out again?

(Everyone starts to talk at once).

Yes, no, kind of, it's not really like that, I wouldn't say it like that – it's not that you're stuck, it's just that you're in a place that you don't want to come out of because it's more real than anything else. / I always drop my characters straight away after the part has finished / well, for me it's not immediate, it does actually take time for them to disappear / I find actually that my characters stick around quite a long time / it's actually dangerous not to drop characters but although you want to drop them intellectually, emotionally, it's not that easy, because it's like you're in a relationship and sometimes it's like they don't want to leave you even if you want them to go, or fade, it's like sometimes my characters are hanging onto me

/ it can feel empty without your character / yeah, who are you at that point – you want to hold on.

What would happen if you were asked to reprise a role – could you get the character back again?

AB: Yes, it would be very easy for me. It would be like she was in a coma for 5 years, like asleep and then woke up. So even though my past characters are asleep, they are still there. I can wake them up. Actually, sometimes they wake up by themselves and I need them to sleep again. Something can trigger this, anything, usually an emotion or it could be something someone says.

AG: Yeah, or sometimes I can find myself doing something and thinking "that's (the character)".

Does your own character – yourself – take on permanently any of the attributes of the character you have created and acted? Do you learn from them, or steal from them?

AB: I do, yes. So for example, I played Blanche in Streetcar on Broadway for 6 months and after for way too long I was in bars talking like Blanche – really bad. I knew I was out of line at one level but that was who I was in my head. More recently, in London, I filmed B for three and a half years and had to keep her alive – filming was intermittent and we had lots of time out of filming while money was being sorted. Once, I felt that there was too thin a line between realities, I was finding it really hard to hold onto my "real" identity while holding onto B for so long.

It's a really interesting question, whether I have been changed by my characters. I think that I have. I think that being them gave me permission to be parts of myself that really, really exist but are not allowed to exist, or don't fit in with the so-called real life that I have created around me. So has this been a positive thing? I don't know. Creatively, certainly, yes, it has. It's also made me reach deeper within myself to find out what's there, what am I capable of being. And yes, it has certainly made me happier. I get huge satisfaction about being people I'm not. Maybe happier is the wrong word. Satisfaction is better. I feel a connection and energy that I would not have otherwise, no way. But there is a price to pay, I think maybe I have lost the safeness of a quiet heart, of stability, of just being one person

and uncomplicated. (Everyone laughs). It is, it's like being in love, and it's not always good for you.

Exercise Two: Connection

During this exercise something intensely dramatic happened with the weather – an electrical thunderstorm – which I have described elsewhere as an illustration of day to day magic. I have written it up as a folk tale "Method and the Magic Thunderstorm" but the following is an account of the exercise itself and my reflections on it.

AB – This is without doubt the exercise which transformed me as an actor – in New York (at the Lee Strasberg acting studio) we did it every day for years, hours at a time. There are a few rules. One, you never break eye contact. Two, you just have to keep going whatever happens. Three, I will be there and occasionally guiding you – you will not be aware of me most of the time.

We worked in pairs, seated on hard wooden chairs facing each other, knees almost touching, maintaining eye contact. Then, we both began to talk not to each other but about our perceptions of what was going on in the other person's head:

"*You're wondering what this is about, what are you going to say, feeling uncomfortable, never done this before, looking tense and anxious. You just clasped your hands, you're leaning back now, you're feeling that I'm too close to you*".

And so on, for 90 minutes without a break.

From time to time, maybe six times in total, AB would say, "*now take up the script*".

Then, we would take our scripts and read our parts still maintaining eye contact while we spoke. So, we would glance down at the next sentence or phrase, look our partner in the eye and say our words.

This was a disorientating and mentally and physically demanding process. It was difficult to filter out listening to what my partner was saying and I noticed that I had a visceral semi-conscious reaction when something negative was said, "*you're getting tense now, you don't like what I said about how your expression is becoming aggressive*". I remember him saying,

"you're pleased with how you're dealing with this, you think you've got the upper hand, you're trying to psyche me out well it's not working". It was hard not to talk to my partner and to respond to what they were saying in dialogue.

At first, the process itself felt objectifying: we were talking at each other, not relating to each other. Later, it felt as though I was getting inside their head and I was free to speak without editing and boundaries shifted between what it was okay to say in this situation and what would normally have been okay to say in usual discourse. It did not feel intimate but it did feel disclosing and exposing.   I experienced some fascinating but fleeting thoughts about the extent to which our words were masking or providing cover for a gateway into what was going on behind our words. But it was impossible to analyse or reflect because in the moment, it was about relentlessly keeping going.

Sometimes it felt like being in a fast-flowing river, sometimes like being strapped to a runaway train, getting faster and faster, waiting for the crash. Once, I had a strong sense my life itself was like that, racing away with me blown on the wind of a storm. My eyes filled with tears which poured down my face and my voice was breaking up but I kept going and calmed down after a while – it was overwhelming.

When we switched to the script, there was a palpable sense of relief from both of us at getting time out from the exercise and I noted that when I was speaking my lines to my partner, I saw him with greater acuity as the exercise progressed.   I felt that I was giving something to him. We were both together in the script: we carried with us into the script-reading the intense connection between us which we had established in the exercise. I related it, afterwards, to the ideas of Bateson and Whitehead and others, that the true phenomenon is the link between things – the relationship they hold – rather than the thing itself. I remember all this flashing through my mind in a nano-second.

The relationship between my conscious and my unconscious experience in the exercise and in the script-reading which was interspersed throughout continues to intrigue me. It revealed to me a more visceral sense of the effect my partner's words were having on me, and mine on him. I felt that free from "real" dialogue, I could communicate more instinctively. I wanted to understand more about this process and relate it explicitly to my iPhone experiences and to research any theory there might be and yet, at the same time, I

wanted to keep it pure and free from analysis, to keep it at the level of unprocessed experience for as long as possible. I am trying in writing this to avoid analysing it and to concentrate on recording the phenomena. Not entirely successfully.

The film script that AB had chosen for this exercise was challenging (Closer, 2004) and I noted a strong shift as the exercise progressed between me reading it as the character and reading it as me and how I came to really feel the emotion behind the words. Although I had not experienced the exact situation described in the scene, I recognised the primal emotions of jealousy and betrayal and the overwhelmingly uncontrollable emotional responses.

We did the exercise twice, with different partners.

The first time, I think because the experience was new to both of us, it was more confrontational and competitive – it felt like a psychological battle, as though we were each trying to find the chinks in each other's armour and expose them. This shifted during the 90 minutes, my experience is that we were both worn down by the effort, and what I said – and what I filtered him as saying – became more appreciative. It was as though we became less of a threat to each other and we were heavily invested in getting through the session. It was towards the end of this first session, that the thunderstorm happened.

We were working in a semi-basement studio with windows along the street-side wall which were at pavement level, so you could see people's feet passing and see up to the sky. I was unaware of the weather – it was an average dull day when we returned from lunch, mild, cloudy, dull.

I was seated with my back to the window, my partner facing me in the position described above, knees close but not touching, so he was facing the window. After around 60 minutes, the script-reading became more powerful and when we came back into the exercise after each brief reading, it seemed as though we had moved into a more collaborative space. I recall after quite a long time (maybe 10 minutes) the room went quiet and the observers moved in towards us and stood together just out of my line of sight.

The tension grew in the room, I was aware of it but didn't know why particularly until my partner began saying things which alarmed me slightly, like "something's going on now,

you're doing something you think you know what it is but you don't, I'm seeing a change in you, I can see your diamonds flashing, I didn't notice them before, the room's going dark".

Then, there was an almighty flash of forked lightning followed by torrential rain lashing the windows and rattling them and the room went dark followed by a really loud thunderclap. At the same moment, my partner leaped out of his chair, looked really rattled and shouted "SHIT!!" ran to the wall and then started to laugh. I was bemused and realised that in some way, my partner had thought that I, or we, had conjured up the storm, which was continuing to lash the windows and throw lightning over the sky and thunderbolts.

AB was shouting "keep eye contact, keep going" and pacing around the room and my partner carried on, but standing not sitting so I stood. Then AB said, "script" and we got back into script-reading for about two lines and she said "that's it" and it was over.

I found, as AB had done after months of daily practice, that this exercise had had a profound effect on me. In terms of my inquiry, it illuminated other aspects of expanded consciousness than the ones I have been working with so far: namely, the capacity to dwell upon another and focus upon them deeply over a sustained period, and a demonstration to myself that there are conditions of spontaneity which I had never imagined. Which are akin to, but not the same as, improvisation – the experience of speaking aloud about my perceptions of my partner's experience of a shared reality which were uninfluenced by reciprocity at the point of giving. Our commentaries were unconditional.

COMMUNITY CINEMA – A PRACTICE ACCOUNT KELLY-ANNE

The Regal Cinema, Evesham

This is a practice account which describes encounters with one of the employees of the Regal Cinema. Kelly-Anne is an employee and I am an investor and director of the company, and I have many areas of interest in the project. My interests and Kelly-Anne's are different: she joined because she was unemployed and regarded herself as unemployable: and she needed an income and was attracted by the fact that relatively speaking, the cinema is a good place to work.

Relationally, my economic and social status is far higher than hers (she regards me as her employer, and perceives me as a highly-educated and successful career woman, with boundless confidence and an enviable life-style, and I am more than 30 years older than she is, so there is also a sense in which she likes to regard me as a mother / protector / nurturer). I regard her as someone who I would like to help if I can, within the bounds of my main concern being to ensure the sustainability of a project which relies on customer service and has limited resources to spend over and above the already onerous task of recruiting and training a local workforce. I specifically do not regard myself as her "rescuer" or as having any responsibility for her work conduct and I actively resist this role. As the encounter unfolded its informality and unconventionality seemed to release us both towards the beginning of a real conversation.

Originally my interest in the project was in rescuing and restoring a derelict art deco cinema and particularly in re-engaging with community projects – something I had not been involved in since my university days in Liverpool 8, with Reclaim the Night marches, working with claimant groups and co-operative bartering economic schemes and living in a student flat with three other girls above a brothel from which we ran a rigged up security system. A thin rope went up three storeys on the interior of the building drilled through the floor boards to our attic flat, which if our neighbours rang it, meant we would set off a rape alarm and activate external blue strobe lights like a police car on the street which protected them from rough trade and would-be pimps, in return for cosmetics, cigarettes and occasionally, shoes and gin.

As my inquiry progressed and I became intrigued by the processes of method acting and the practice applications of "being another", I developed another interest in the cinema project which was working whenever the opportunity presented itself, on applying my iPhone method, and / or experimenting with being someone else as a way of imaging and enacting alternative, co-existing, realities.

The following describes one particular encounter. My motivation was initially to improve business performance and to try to salvage Kelly-Anne's employment prospects but it became increasingly reflective as the brief engagement progressed.

The organisational challenge

The greatest management challenge of the Regal Cinema project is recruiting, training and developing people. Evesham is surrounded by towns of far greater affluence and better job opportunities: generally speaking, if someone lives and is seeking work in the town, it is because they lack the ability or motivation to seek and secure employment elsewhere. It's where you stay if you can't get out. Employment opportunities within the town are extremely limited: since the recession of 2008, many employers have closed down and the work that remains is either agricultural or in down-market retail outlets. Unskilled people tend to work until they have enough to pay the rent and then go sick or not turn up until next month when they have run out of cash. It is a feature of the depressed local economy that many suffer from physical, emotional or family problems which they do not disclose until after they begin work, for fear of being discriminated against in the recruitment process.

We are committed commercially and ideologically to creating local employment and are heavily invested in providing training and development opportunities (apart from altruistic ego-related considerations, it was a requirement of some of our original grant funding). However, the reality is extremely frustrating, as once they have been trained and gained experience, the small number of staff who perform well, choose to leave Evesham having secured better jobs elsewhere. It's their ticket to freedom: recent leavers have taken up jobs in London, Birmingham and Bristol using the training and experience gained here to leverage themselves into better, more highly paid jobs with greater opportunities for promotion and career progression. We entirely support them in this and indeed encourage

them to use their Regal experience to improve their long-term employment prospects, including coaching them for interview and helping them fill in forms, however, the result is that we continually struggle to find, train and develop people with the ability and motivation required, and then to keep them. This is without doubt partly a result of our failures as a management team to achieve the right balance of support and challenge arising from the fact that because we are still paying off debts arising from the development phase, we are always under severe cash-flow pressure.

Working here is extremely demanding, entailing not only high energy levels but also a capacity for team work and "emotion work" such as that described by Hochschild (1983) in her seminal study of airline staff and the commercialisation of human feeling. While perhaps experiencing less anxiety than that of passengers about to miss their flight or indeed board their flight, customers arriving at the cinema tend to be anxious about whether their tickets will be available for collection, whether they booked the right show or the right seats, deciding what they want to drink and wondering will there be a queue at the bar, where are the toilets, what time will the film end and where are their friends. People bring their weather with them, a minority of every show arriving in an anxious, angry, disappointed or stressed condition which has nothing to do with the cinema but which is a "presenting condition" which has to be recognised, navigated and if possible resolved by our staff. It can feel like bomb disposal.

So, while it might appear from the outside that working in the cinema is easy, fun and relaxed (young, smiley team, beautiful art deco interior, luxurious surroundings, art house feel) the reality can feel very different when you work here. Every day, up to five shows each produce 300 customers all arriving within 30 minutes of the show starting: a tide of humanity with high expectations of the venue, the film, the food and drink and most importantly, the warmth of the welcome they receive. Frequently, the cinema has over 1,000 customers per day and the evidence is that the team does extremely well with customer service: we have excellent customer service scores, generally achieve No. 1 status on TripAdvisor, and receive huge numbers of emails saying how much people have enjoyed their visit and in particular, how lovely the staff are. I am always reminded of the Hard Rock Café's motto "Love All, Serve All".

However, mostly, behind the scenes is a complete mess of chaotic confusion, with orders lost, staff disappearing on mystery errands, phones ringing off the hook, the kitchen running out of basic supplies, staff forgetting to clean the loos, etc. etc. It gets by on a generally good-natured muddle of good intentions, luck and customers who seem to appreciate the amateurish eccentricity of it. But it's stressful.

One of the problems is that many of the staff are impervious to basic training. They attend training sessions, receive detailed pre-show briefings by the duty manager on where they will be stationed and what they need to be doing, and then forget everything and the whole service falls apart because, for example, the two staff who were supposed to remain in the circle bar went off to find more peanuts or to help a customer to find their mobile phone, and a huge queue develops, resulting in the show starting late. Afterwards, everyone on the team is remorseful and is determined to doing better next time but frequently, the same problems are encountered over and over again. It's like ground-hog day. The usual round of recriminations ensues, and frequently staff end up in tears or having emotional outbursts back-stage when the pressure gets too much.

The practice account

The following is a fictionalised exchange between me (SW) and Kelly-Anne (KA), a 20 year old team member who was unemployed since leaving school other than working part-time at Subway and MacDonald's, both of which "let her go". She is passionately committed to the cinema project and loves her job but is almost entirely lacking in the ability to take instruction or to perform even basic tasks reliably.

The scene: KA and I are talking in the coffee shop before the after-show briefing after a particularly disastrous shift. I'm there in my capacity as director and co-owner of the business, occasional visitor, informal mentor and observer: I have spoken to Kelly-Anne previously about the fact that she needs to improve her performance as her colleagues are getting fed up with her and I have had extensive email correspondence with her helping her to deal with the demands of the job, her disability and the fact that she is carer for her brother who suffers from mental health issues. Our relationship is positive and candid: I am a supporter of her efforts to improve and she regards me as an ally and to some extent, her protector.

KA: Oh my god, I know I'm going to get fired (crying).

SW: The thing is, Kelly-Anne, you've just done it again. Everything was a complete mess. Your part of it was a total disaster. Why didn't you just stand there where you were supposed to, and serve people coffee?

KA: I don't know. I just didn't. I went to the sweet cupboard to get more Maltesers.

SW: But why? That's why everyone's cross with you again. Patrick even painted that black cross on the floor look, so you'd know where to stand. 300 people piling in and there's no-one here in the coffee shop to take their orders. It's not as though you had no support. And why not tell Alastair where you were going? He's your manager. You just disappeared for about half an hour and left him and Amy on their own. You were hiding in the cupboard weren't you?

KA: I know! I'm sorry.

SW: Well, you definitely will get fired at this rate. It's not fair on everyone else or the customers. That poor man's coffee was actually cold when he got it and it was all slopped in his saucer – that's why he complained. It looked disgusting. And no-one got their food on time. What happened to that lady who never got her change from a tenner?

KA: Oh god, I know, I gave it to her after. Please don't fire me.

SW: I'm not going to fire you, no-one is. Stop crying and get in the car.

[in my car]

KA: Where are we going?

SW: Frankie & Benny's

[a fast food restaurant chain on Evesham's retail park]

SW: OK. So while we wait, watch the bar staff and tell me who you think is best.

KA: She's good, the tall one, he's not, no, that one, the little one with dark hair, she's the best one.

[A good choice, KA had chosen a waitress called Chastity (CH) who was already known to me for her bubbly personality, hugely positive attitude and the fact that she treats all her regular customers like long-lost friends]

CH: [Approaches table, squeals loudly at me] Oh my god, you look amazing, I love your hair, how's your little girl??? How's the cinema??? Large pinot? And what can I get you, pinot as well? Your food's on its way – will I see you on Saturday? I'm coming with my mum for *Budapest Hotel*. I just love that cinema, I'm coming for my birthday as well.

[Back in the car]

KA: Problem is, I could never be like her.

[Back in the cinema before the next show]

SW: Kelly, you need to step up for this show. *Just be Chastity*. What would she do? Pretend I'm a customer. Go on, do it now.

KA: [Squeals] Hiya! Are you OK? [big fake smile]

SW: That's good – what else.

KA: [silence]

SW: We're in a bar – so what do I want?

KA: Oh, OK. What can I get you, madam, large pinot?

SW: Err, I don't know, what else do you have, is there a menu?

KA: Have a pinot, it's really good. Do you want a cheese platter to go with it?

SW: Cheese sounds lovely, can you make it a bottle of Chablis, two glasses, and one cheese, one pate platter? With pistachios and olives.

KA: I can do that – just take a seat and I'll bring it over.

Result: big improvement. During the shift, Kelly-Anne maintained high energy levels, high levels of engagement with her customers and never left her post. One of the duty managers remarked to me that Kelly was behaving randomly, and questioned why she was asking

everyone if they wanted a large pinot, but she did really well with the service and looked a lot happier.

Afterwards …

SW: How was it?

KA: Yeah, it was good. I really felt like Chastity, I think the customers liked it as well.

SW: Do you think you can keep it going?

KA: I think so – can I change it a bit so I say other things?

SW: Yes, that's the point, you just need to kind of *be Chastity* but still do your own thing. And you don't have to ask everyone if they want a large pinot, you could just ask them what they want. Not everyone's going to want pinot. Particularly if they're a bloke.

KA: But I think they liked being asked that. I sold a lot of pinot.

SW: OK, so keep asking them if they want pinot. What else do you want to say?

KA: Just things like are you looking forward to the film or something like that. Or maybe ask them if they're having a nice time.

When I discussed this at the end of the night with the duty managers in the regular de-briefing, there was some resistance to the idea of my getting KA to act, as opposed to be herself but better, which I tried to dismiss as definitional but which they seemed to recognise was to do with authenticity. In the following conversation, AB, CD and EF are duty managers.

AB: I can see she was way, way better on that last shift, totally, but did she actually get what she was doing or was she just acting? Did anything actually sink in? Does she understand what she was getting wrong and really understand how she needs to improve?

CD: Or was it because she'd had a large pinot at Frankie & Benny's – maybe we should all get pissed.

EF: Also, do we actually want people not being themselves, don't we want them to be themselves and kind of genuine, not faking it like in some cheesy cocktail bar or MacDonald's, have a nice day?

AB: Yeah, what if they suddenly all revert to type and they haven't actually got better at all, they were just faking it, and then they wake up and it was all a dream and we're back to base?

SW: What's the difference being acting better and being better? It's not like a religious conversion. We pay people to do things right. That's how it works. When they show up as themselves, the real KA, and they're useless, we tell them if they don't get better at it, we'll sack them. Then she freaks out and then we have no staff left.

AB: Well, that's not fair; we invest a lot in training and support.

SW: But the message is the same: change or get fired. We don't want them to be themselves.

AB: Well, lest we forget, we do need to have people who can actually serve customers. KA, unless she's acting, apparently, just cannot be allowed to work here anymore. She's totally and utterly crap at her job. It's embarrassing.

EF: Maybe we should hire actors.

SW: Maybe we should help people to act the part they need to act to keep their jobs. It's not just KA, most of them are crap at the job, despite training, coaching whatever. It just doesn't sink in. They don't get it. It's too different from their ordinary lives. They've never been to a five star hotel or eaten at Gordon Ramsay's. Their benchmark is Kentucky Fried Chicken. How we can expect them to get it?

CD: How's KA feel about tonight?

SW: Happy – she liked how the last shift went and she thought the customers liked her.

AB: She liked fucking off to Franky's with you and drinking pinot.

SW: What's wrong with that? Look at the results. When we talked about it, she said it made her feel more important and she really wanted to come to work tomorrow. What's that about? I think she likes being Chastity.

CD: I think it was probably really good for her because she found out what it felt like to be not crap and not about to be fired.

AB: Also, it is still her – it's not like she morphed into someone else like a werewolf.

SW: She just pulled out of herself what was already there because she finally "got it".

CD: Yeah, the normal training sessions don't work, they just get talked at.

The next day Kelly-Anne emailed me to say it was the best shift she'd ever had and she carried on being Chastity for a few more weeks, with a few calamitous lapses, but generally did really well and won a staff award for best team member along with earning bonuses on top of her living wage. Then she left.

She resigned three months later to take up a teaching assistant course because she feels much more confident now.

Post-script

I happened to be in the cinema when KA came in to collect her P45 for her new employer.

SW: Hi Kelly, how's it going? Good to see you. (air kisses)

KA: I really wanted to thank you for everything, it was great working here.

SW: Thank you as well. You did a great job.

KA: Well, I hope I did in the end – I'm much better now thanks to you. That was great what we did with the acting.

SW: I don't know any more. Maybe it's best if we're just ourselves.

KA: Not if you're me it's not. I was rubbish. I needed to be someone better. But if I was you though, I'd just be myself.

SW: That's the thing, isn't it, you see people, you think you know what it's like to be them but you don't really. I'm rubbish as well.

KA: No you're not - you can't think that – look at everything you've done. You're really clever. Everyone loves you. You're the only person who ever told me I was rubbish.

SW: What? Well that's not good. I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

KA: It was good, it was great. It was funny, it made it OK. I'm not just Chastity now anyway, I'm other people.

SW: Who?

KA: I'm being Mary Poppins for now until I qualify but then I'm going to be Anna Kendrick and escape like she does in the video. I'm going to be someone else.

Then we both laugh a lot and I say good luck with that, Kelly, I know you will.

EXECUTIVE SEARCH – A PRACTICE ACCOUNT JAYNE

The following is an account from my executive search practice. The scenarios are not unusual: conflict and disappointment arising when a candidate's ambitions are thwarted; differences of opinion on the board regarding appointments; the need to navigate client relationships which encompass both private and professional anxieties; conflicting agendas; highly emotional and volatile interactions; the tension between what is a properly commissioned consultancy assignment and what is semi-informal support provided on a goodwill basis in the hope of work to follow. It's muddy and messy and I have presented it "warts and all".

The account which follows is fictionalised, in view of the confidentiality and sensitivity of the appointment and the public profile of the individuals concerned. I have merged two separate but very similar scenarios; the conversations are rendered as closely as possible from memory and brief notes and the characters are based on real people.

In the following dialogue, IG (Ian) is the CEO of a FTSE 250 technology company, JM is the newly appointed candidate, and SW is me. I am IG's informal advisor in this exchange, JM is a woman whom I have known for some years and assisted in her rapid, arguably too rapid, career ascent. Geoff is a board member who opposed JM's appointment; Jenny is IG's PA.

Today – breakfast

08.15 Voicemail (to me from Ian):

It's Ian. Call me. Shit storm about to kick off here.

08.20 I call Jayne on her mobile:

Jayne, Ian just left me a message about a shit storm. What's up?

JM: I'm in the car, we've got to talk, I'm in floods, I can't believe this. Unbelievable, they promised me, it's that bastard Geoff. I'm fucking furious. I'm not staying if I'm not on the board. I was promised this. I'm fucking, fucking furious.

SW: No you're not.

JM: I fucking am.

SW: No you're not. You *totally understand* that these things take time. It's a *big decision*. You *understand* that. PAUSE. You haven't said any of this to Ian, have you?

JM: Not yet but I'm on my way in – I've told Jenny I've got to see him first thing.

SW: Well call her back and say you can't, say you forgot a meeting. I'll text Ian and I'll see you for lunch at Scott's. Do not speak to anyone else!

SW text to Ian: Seeing JM for lunch, all OK.

Background:

Ian was concerned that his company was behind the curve on board diversity and asked me to work on introducing a couple of female executives into operating board positions, not main board positions, across the group of companies, over "*the next couple of years*". There was no specific brief and no retained search assignment so effectively, I was working informally as a behind the scenes advisor, waiting for the opportunity to transition to a fully-retained, fee-earning search. I would normally insist on retained fees before lifting a finger, but it quite suited me at that moment to be semi-accountable. There were no internal candidates for these prospective roles as the executive team, and their respective management teams, are exclusively male with the exception of human resources, so I saw this as an opportunity to place a couple of high potential women into influential roles with a clear if vague mandate from the top to do so.

I took on the diversity agenda at my current firm as something of a hot potato following the Davies Report, to which we contributed significantly, which laid a good deal of blame on head-hunters who failed to provide women candidates on shortlists thus, the argument ran,

effectively narrowing the gender options available to clients. The threat of European-style quotas was weighing heavily on the minds of many UK chairmen; quotas and all women shortlists are almost universally opposed. The official view of most headhunting firms and most chairmen is that it is important to appoint "the best candidate" irrespective of gender, etc. Issues regarding how "the best candidate" is defined and selected are almost never problematized in discourse, either publicly or behind the scenes.

There are legal issues regarding all women shortlists which require compliance and careful navigation so my practice is to operate within a general framework of encouraging diversity in the recruitment process as a way of expanding the talent pool. My own views are far more radical than most as I believe in quotas and legislation in favour of minorities. I hardly ever argue this case as it is inflammatory, very difficult to argue convincingly from other than a feminist perspective and has never resulted in anything other than heated and acrimonious debate, at least within the UK headhunting fraternity, on the grounds that it would almost certainly be extremely bad for business, at least in the short-term. The official line is that shortlisted candidates are selected on merit alone (not true) and that as an executive search firm we adopt and reflect the recruitment preferences of our clients, within the law, preferably.

Ian's company is a top-performer financially but generally underperforms in compliance and CSR. Two of the main board members are misogynist, one is misogynist and racist, and one is OK with women and ethnic minorities but is ageist (no-one under 40) and doesn't like facial hair regardless of gender. The chairman takes a long view and a light touch, is patrician and a long-time personal friend of three of the board including Geoff and is widely regarded as holding out for a knighthood. I first met him 20 years ago earlier in his career. The three non-executive directors are a mixed bag but generally highly supportive of Ian, who is regarded as a breath of fresh air. I know one of them well, and rate him highly. He's appalled at their diversity record and thinks Geoff is a dinosaur. I introduced JM thinking that it could be a win-win for her and IG, knowing that they worked at a strategy consultancy together 15 years back and liked each other. She's quite pushy: I told her to tone it down and keep a low profile but she wanted to make a splash and in my view, has pushed things too hard and fast. I am keen to ensure that the current situation is resolved

to the satisfaction of all, not least because I am in the middle of it and feel that I cannot refuse to act as unpaid mediator having started the process.

Six months previously …

I am sitting in the small boardroom which connects with Ian's office. I have arranged to meet Ian briefly to discuss problems with their search for an IT director, a position which reports to Geoff and has been vacant for over twelve months. It is a business critical appointment as the legacy IT systems are unfit for purpose and a recent integration has gone disastrously. Ian was overrunning on a call, so I was passing time texting. After 15 minutes, Geoff enters, not expecting to see me. Stops short.

Oh, god, not you.

I glance up, ignore him and continue texting.

He pours himself coffee and plonks himself down opposite me.

None of the IT candidates are any good – we're going to start again. It's all agreed with SS (a competing executive search firm) so I don't know why you're here.

I continue to ignore him.

Ian enters and comes straight to the point with no preliminaries.

IG: We've seen a dozen candidates and none of them have got past Geoff. We need to rethink this and have a fresh start. Who haven't we spoken to?

SW: I've no idea. This is not my search. But SS is an excellent firm. They will have spoken to everyone in the market. The problem is not the calibre of candidates. It's him, Geoff.

Geoff: I've been clear from the start that I want to bring back Cameron.

SW: Cameron, I seem to remember, was the cause of the problem and was put out to grass two years ago at your instigation.

Geoff: He's a damn sight better than anyone else I've seen and he'd do it as an interim just to get us through the switch over.

SW: Well, I'm not taking over a failed search and it'd be a huge, huge mistake to bring back Cameron.

Geoff: No-one asked you to take it over. And no it wouldn't.

After more bickering, we finally agreed at Ian's insistence that I would review all the candidates already interviewed and give him a fresh view. I would do it with Geoff.

Great.

SW: Ian, can we talk about the diversity programme now? There's a woman you should meet who I think's a possible for the [title] position. Bags of experience, a real live-wire, and you know her, already. Apparently you used to work together in the 90's at [strategy consultancy], name's Jayne Montague?

Geoff: This is where it all goes wrong, isn't it? "*Let's look at her because she's a woman and used to know Ian*". How well did she know you Ian? Bloody well, or just a bit? I'm opposing anyone who's not the best candidate for the job, don't care what sex they are. We had one with bumps anyway, lasted two board meetings and walked out.

SW: Yes I spoke to Harriet last week and actually she resigned in disgust at the conduct of the board. Some of the board, anyhow. Someone, I assume it was you, refused to engage with her at any level and kept staring at her breasts.

Geoff: Not true.

SW: Anyway, you won't be involved in the selection process.

Geoff: Don't get arsey, you know my views.

SW: And I'm choosing to ignore them. Do you still get your "secretary" to print off your emails?

Ian hands me back Jayne's CV.

I will meet her, she was excellent and she'd certainly be a breath of fresh air. I think she'd get on with the NEDs. She's certainly a do-er.

SW: OK, let's treat her as a benchmark and get you two together before we kick off a proper search. Now, I've got to run.

Geoff: Have you got time for lunch? I want to have a word.

SW: If it's quick.

[*Geoff's wife Mary had told him to speak to head-hunters about getting some NED positions for when he retired at the end of the following year and he wanted some introductions and to know if I would tell him how to go about it. I agreed to do so if he would just behave over the diversity programme. He said he would and that I was over-reacting as usual and why did I hate him– I told him that I didn't hate him, I just thought he was pathetic. We agreed to meet the following day to review the failed search*]

Today - lunch at Scott's

Jayne explained that all had been going extremely well and she felt that she had made a real impact. After meeting Ian and various others, the agreement had been that she would join the team immediately and her appointment to the board would be announced to coincide with the rotation of one of the longest standing directors in October, who was due to retire. Unfortunately, in the meantime, Jayne had managed to alienate the HR team by excluding them from high level decisions and had presented a board paper touching on sensitive HR issues without consulting the (non-board) HR Director. Jayne had discovered yesterday that three of the executive directors had indicated to Ian that they weren't sure exactly what her brief was going to be moving forward but were concerned about her willingness to play a team game. Was she board material? Geoff was openly critical of the decision to hire her in the first place and thought she was punching above her weight. Jayne revealed that she knew all this because she had "accidentally" seen a report on Ian's PA's desk yesterday lunchtime in which the HR Director had obtained confidential feedback from the board on her imminent appointment. The reason for this morning's explosion was an email from Ian to Jayne, received late last night saying that he wanted to take a step back and work through some issues before confirming the board appointment. He thought they needed to work on building the confidence of the rest of the board on her ability to deliver, ducking the real issue of some of them not liking her much.

What had prompted Ian's voicemail to me at 08.15 this morning had been her frantic call to his PA demanding to see him.

It was clear to me that Jayne had no appreciation of the extent to which her arrival and "high impact" behaviour had alienated some of the leadership team. From what I could see, there was no chance that her appointment would be confirmed and there was a real risk of an emotional meltdown with highly unpredictable results. Jayne and I agreed that we needed to think about it some more and that I would go round to hers for a drink that evening, meanwhile telling Ian that she had calmed down and wanted to reflect on his email.

SW voicemail to Ian: Just finished with Jayne, she somehow saw the report yesterday and then slightly over-reacted to your email. She thinks you're not supporting her. I'm seeing her tonight, you don't need to do anything.

Today - later at Jayne's house

If anything, Jayne is even more enraged after having a few drinks and clearly cut to the quick by the remarks made by the executive directors "behind her back". She is still ranting about Ian's betrayal, being let down, promises being broken, how she's not putting up with it, no-one treats her like this etc. etc.

After a long discussion, I decided to invite her to employ a variation on my iPhone method, which occurred to me as I was watching and listening to her, thinking "you're being completely hysterical, this is exactly the stereotype that people like Geoff have in mind when they think of 'the problem with women', and if you could only see yourself and how you're coming across you'd probably be horrified". I was in a dilemma about how to communicate this to her in a way which would not entrench her even further and make her more defensive: a large part of her rant was becoming how weak Ian was and how incompetent the board was and how this just shows that they need a good shake-up.

I felt slightly uncomfortable about using her as a case study rather than focussing entirely on her issues using conventional methods of "talking it out" but I had been talking to her in other contexts about how iPhone self-interview could be used in coaching situations, so it

was not entirely out of the blue. I was convinced it would be helpful. I decided on the following approach:

Jayne, why don't you go and sit quietly somewhere and rehearse in front of the mirror exactly what you want to say to Ian? Let it all hang out, open up, explain to him how you're seeing this and where you want to take this. It will be good preparation for when you see him tomorrow. You could even record it.

JM: OK, I will – then I'll run it past you and we can role play a bit. I'll go and do it in the study.

Jayne actually didn't use her iPhone, she used the web camera on her PC and recorded herself speaking, as in a Skype call. 20 minutes later …

JM: Come on up, I've done it.

I went upstairs to her study and stood behind her as she pressed PLAY.

It was truly awful.

After exactly 13 seconds, she hit PAUSE.

Her reaction was exactly as I hoped it would be and she instantly "got" how she would come across if she confronted Ian in the way she had spoken to camera.

"OMG, I'm really shocked, I just can't watch it – am I really like that?"

SW: No, of course not, not usually, you've just lost control of the impression you're creating in this situation. But you might want to do more of this. Like you might want to think about Geoff and another way of coming across that he'll feel more comfortable with.

(At this point, I felt completely hypocritical, casting my mind back to how I habitually ignore and humiliate Geoff as a defence and retaliation against his rampant sexism and resentment that I am listened to and respected by Ian. I decided to confess this to Jayne and together we decided to role-play conversations between her and Geoff, taking turns to be each of them.)

During the Geoff role-play, we discovered a powerful effect which was that when we put his imagined thoughts and feelings into words and spoke them ourselves, he sounded more reasonable than when we tried to describe him in the third-person:

In the third-person:

Geoff's view is that he has nothing against women per se it's just that he questions whether they have the stamina and emotional robustness to cope with the pressure, particularly when they have husband and children to look after.

Compared with:

I've got a reputation for being something of a sexist pig. The problem now is that if you express a different point of view from the feminist element, you get shouted down. I'm a virtual pariah. All I'm saying is that women have enough on their plate what with having babies, raising children, keeping their husbands happy and so on and with a few exceptions I honestly think most of them would be happier staying at home. And if you even look at them in the wrong way or in the wrong place, you're straight up for sexual harassment. They don't think rationally, it's all personal, tears and constant dramas.

Jayne and I had an evening of great hilarity, role-playing the entire board and many of our mutual social contacts, and in particular, role-playing each other which was both very funny and occasionally, quite painful "do I really do that??" Jayne immersed herself in it and I left her happily re-doing her video recording upstairs, one for Ian and one for each of the executive directors who had expressed concern, to prepare for tomorrow's conversations. Her feedback on this experience after the crisis was concluded was fascinating and informed our subsequent conversations regarding how to adapt the method as a self-help coaching tool. (She thought it should be turned into an online facility where remote coaches could review the output with the individual).

Today - midnight

JM voicemail to IG:

Ian, I'm obviously disappointed that there are some issues with the board but just wanted you to know that I'm in no rush and having thought it over and talked to Sue, I think we need

to regroup on this in a couple of weeks. I'll get something in your diary for when I get back

from holiday.

IG voicemail to SW: Jayne's left me a message we're talking when she gets back. Nice work.

A few months later

My advice to Jayne had been to consider very carefully how she can build bridges with the team and we agreed that a non-defensive, open approach along the lines of, "*I know you've got concerns about my role here and I'd really value your advice on where I can be more effective in building bridges. Can we have a coffee to discuss?*" I suggested that at the moment she was seen as a problem and frankly regarded as a pain in the neck by several colleagues. A softly, softly approach was required.

The conversations went well, and a month passed during which Jayne toned down her abrasive manner and stopped feeling that she had to justify her existence by getting quick wins. Ian mentioned to me at a drinks function that he was starting to get good feedback and one of the NEDs had said that he thought that her recent board presentation was really impressive. After another month, Jayne was starting to get restless again and wondering whether she should re-engage with the issue of her board appointment. Around that time, Ian asked me to meet with him, Geoff and the senior NED to work up plans to develop their second tier management team, in terms of succession planning, in a way that supported the diversity programme. I intended to point out that they didn't actually have a "diversity programme", what they had was a vague intention to do something over the next few years and a female board candidate (Jayne) waiting in the wings apparently with no idea what to do with her. However, on the day, I spotted an opportunity to resolve the Jayne situation:

SW (casually): How's Jayne working out?

IG: Very well now. I don't quite know how she got off to such a bad start. I must say I was a bit disappointed - some of the initial board feedback was very unhelpful.

SW: Probably something to learn there in terms of on-boarding – we should have provided a mentor.

Geoff: I thought you were mentoring her.

SW: Well yes, but I don't think any of us paid her enough attention. Although actually, Geoff, you came up with the perfect solution at the outset.

Geoff: Did I? I'll take the credit but I've no idea what you're talking about. I thought I was being obstructive and pathetic.

SW: Not entirely; you suggested interim as an ideal solution to de-risk the appointment.

Geoff: That was my idea for Cameron which you kicked into the long grass.

SW: I was wrong. I think we should consider making Jayne an interim offer, see how it goes.

Geoff: If we do the same with Cameron, I think I could support that.

I shrugged – "*well, it's certainly better than the outsourcing idea*" (in desperation, Geoff was now considering outsourcing IT, a solution which would dramatically increase costs and delays).

Spotting a victory in sight, Ian concluded the matter swiftly by calling in Jenny and asking her to add to the board papers notice of these two interim appointments. Jayne was duly appointed on an interim basis and after six months, announced as a permanent addition to the executive board. Cameron was still there a year later and Geoff and I declared a truce.

Ian offered me a place shortly afterwards on their advisory board which I declined but we continued to work together until he went to join a private equity firm working out of San Francisco/Shanghai.

My reflections

I need to deploy my own method more thoroughly to "get inside the head" of the other side in difficult client situations. It's more difficult to do this when I dislike the person. My antipathy for Geoff got in the way of relational practice.

I need to be less judgemental: I was shocked at how rude and dismissive I was towards Geoff looking at in writing, whereas at the time, my view was that it was his behaviour, not mine, which was unreasonable. I was also slightly uneasy with the way I manipulated him in the final exchange into an unholy alliance trading my candidate, Jayne, for Cameron. This kind of deal-making is entirely normal, however, providing a written account foregrounds

issues of perceived authenticity, professionalism and how highly emotional and subjectively driven the decision-making process is in real life.

I noted that I hadn't applied my own method to exploring my relationship with Geoff, other than on the evening with Jayne. I realised that I would like to develop a more transparent and planned method of introducing the iPhone method into the executive search process: at present, I use it tactically without setting it up with sufficient care.

I now find writing up client interactions using a combination of free-fall writing (just getting down what comes out without editing) and phenomenological methods of careful attention to what's actually going on in the room, including small and possibly irrelevant detail, is extremely powerful. In the standard executive search process, great importance is attached to writing up three key documents: *the proposal*, which serves to play back to the client the detailed consultancy brief to check understanding and set expectations; the individual *candidate reports* in which the individual is assessed against the brief; and the *short-list* in which the candidates, usually three, are assessed in relation to each other, including their compensation requirements, and a recommendation made regarding the preferred candidate. What is lacking is an account of the underlying issues, interpersonal dynamics and pressure points despite it being widely acknowledged anecdotally that these and not the objective factors, usually determine the outcome.

Postscript:

I decided that I would begin working with colleagues and clients to explore the contribution of the iPhone technique at various stages of the process. I prepared my first initiative, which is a video shortlist presentation [it cannot be reproduced her for reasons of confidentiality] which will certainly become part of my standard practice: the advantages are that unlike conference calls, not all participants need to be present simultaneously. In highly confidential situations, the video can be accessed remotely as "read only" and deleted after a short time so it can act as a way of communicating confidential information "off the record" in the same way as a face to face conversation. I see this as a bridge between the first person and potential second person application of the method which at the same time, raises ethical issues which at present are uncharted and will need to be addressed.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered three practice accounts to illustrate how my inquiry method of "being another" began to impact my practice.

The Directing Actors course was a turning point in my inquiry. It enabled me to examine in practice some of the principles which my iPhone method had revealed and to experience some of the underlying processes in practice with others. I found that it grounded my work within an established field and placed it in context. I felt fully appreciated and supported when talking about my doctoral inquiry to other participants, as though I belonged and was validated in a way which I neither expected nor hoped for.

The Community Cinema and Executive Search accounts involved me putting into practice what I learned on the course and in my developing inquiry into "being another" and helped me to breach the gap between theory and practice. In the following chapter, I present "interludes" which I came to understand were also valid practice accounts, arising with my domestic practice, in the home.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FIELD STUDIES – FROM MY JOURNAL

<u>Introduction</u>

Between my field studies on Folk Tales and developing my professional practices, described in the preceding chapter, there were times when I contemplated my inquiry in the course of my daily practice and considered the question, "*what difference is my inquiry making to me as I go about my life*". In this chapter, I present glimpses of how my inquiry has permeated my days and given me a voice and a reason to express what otherwise, I might not have paid attention to.

Without exception, each of these pieces formed a welcome interlude and marked a significant moment in my inquiry. These were times when I was inspired to write with a view to preserving and eventually sharing, ideas and emotions which seemed to be to be of great importance in telling my tale. I find, on each re-reading, that they ring very true.

Here are the five interludes:

- Interlude 1: Flints and Knots   (May / September 2013)
- Interlude 2: Chrysalis Shift   (September 2013)
- Interlude 3: Golden Grove Unleaving   (November 2013)
- Interlude 4: Tree with my daughter   (April 2014)
- Interlude 5: Finding the Lost Rolex   (June 2013)
-

> **Practice Note**
>
> I no longer regard these as interludes: they are the essence of my previously subjugated domestic practice. This realisation is at the heart of what I learned during my inquiry. They locate magical practice, based on emotion, intuition and imagination, within the domestic reality which in terms of power, gender and status, for many women sits below the higher status, remunerated, public, professional realm. In future inquiry, I hope to explore further how magical practice might be applied to the public, corporate, professional realms.

INTERLUDE 1: Flints and Knots

It is now Thursday, 8th August 2013 and I am revisiting a book which has surfaced during the cleaning out of my house prior to sale. The book is part of a series on the folklore of the British Isles, entitled "The Folklore of Hertfordshire" by Doris Jones-Baker.

"Flints with holes in them – quite rare – were used as charms against illness and kept carefully: I was told that a large holed flint edging the lawn in front of my house 'would not stop there long' … Holed flints were hung in barns or with brasses on harness as charms against disease in horses." (1977, p.95)

During my inquiry, I have found a number of holed flints – the last, and most beautiful, was found on the path in which we walked in silent single file at the beginning of the walk guided by JR during the July 11th – 13th 2013 ADOC workshop. In my imagination we walked in a silent funeral procession like elves treading lightly on the forest floor or sometimes slightly elevated above it – my photograph below shows our silent walking. I felt that we were burying something of our own in the midst of us – it felt like a communion, a ritual, a bringing home and a saying goodbye.

Fig 15: our silent progress

The stone was facing up and met my gaze and I carried it in my pocket for the remainder of the day, with my little finger hooked through it.

I have noticed and would like to record here a curious aspect of holed flints: when I get them home and place them where I choose, there is definitely a "right way up" and to place them otherwise feels wrong. I have chosen to place mine in a line along the top of a retaining wall outside my kitchen door above a trough planted with rosemary, thyme and mint. The largest of them was misplaced and it caused me a sense of vague discomfort despite the still-wonder of the flints displayed there, in the sunshine. I realised tonight though what was wrong and rotated the largest one so that it was placed horizontally with the smooth glossy plane of the exposed flint facing the sky. It felt better than when it was placed vertically and they look happier now, as I am because I feel that this is the right way up for it.

It was while writing this last sentence about the flint being the right way up, that I understood why I have struggled so much with my figure of 8 knot, and the meaning of it. I drew it the wrong way up. When I Googled an image of the knot, it was in the context of designing my rose garden and it was easier than drawing one. All the Google images were on the horizontal plane but when you use the knot in climbing, it is arranged vertically, connecting your climbing harness safely to the up-bound rope, so it is arranged on vertical plane, like this:

Fig 16: the right way up

Once seen like this, it is obvious that the motion it evokes is up / down, not left / right. The crossing point, the point of transition, the moment of directional change, is at the fulcrum of the inner and outer arc. I am reminded that the conscious / unconscious is usually represented in diagrams of being up and down respectively. The conscious is above, the unconscious is below. Why? Because it is assumed that the conscious is known and the unconscious is by definition unknown. But possibly this is incorrect. It might be the case that the conscious is capable of being articulated whereas the unconscious although un-articulated by definition, is still known. I think that this might be an important distinction in terms of the epistemological underpinnings of my inquiry into magical metaphor.

By flexing and distorting the knot, I can visually represent the *balance* between the inner and outer arcs of inquiry. So, when I started this inquiry, I was all outer arc (my being in the world as opposed to knowing myself). Then, with the folk tales, I was all inner arc (my private world in the chrysalis and not much interest in the wider world while I did my soul work). Now, with the "chrysalis shift", I am starting very tentatively to balance and to learn to hold both arcs with greater confidence and harmony. It feels exactly like that – a balancing act, like learning to cycle or learning to walk the tightrope or slack line (we watched some slack-liners practicing in Chamonix this summer). When you start out, you lurch all over the place, falling off constantly – it feels impossible. Then, gradually, you learn to make instinctive micro-movements as you build you intuitive core strength, so that you can perform and function in both spheres.

This is a kind of magical process of a very embodied kind.

Flints Again

Journal notes May 2013

I found an unusual holed flint with a stone captured within it …

I found it under the magic tree while looking with curiosity, searching for something, hoping to find a holed flint. And then, finding this, a curious thing, enfolded by bright green moss, a holed flint with a rounded stone (another flint, I think, but still a pebble, not yet split by time to reveal its shiny flinty surface) within the hole, trapped, so that it can be turned but not removed, even with quite some force. How did it get in there, how can it be got out? What is its relationship with the flint, are they one and same, or is little stone captured by the big flint, or is it in there to hide. I'm feeling their silence and the metaphorical potential of what I might write about it. How much this means that I am writing the story of the flint, which must also be the story of me. What would the flint say, what would the stone say? I know that stones speak but do they hear, do they see?

It's like the idea of the sound of trees growing over 100 years compressed to a single second – whoosh! Not silence when time is collapsed from 100 years into a second; more like a sonic boom as they shoot up to the sky.

The stones speak over millennia, light and star years.

How can they speak to a woman whose life is as grass?

22nd September 2013 – The Medicine Garden

A little while after writing the above piece on holed flints, our daughter and I visited The Medicine Garden, a restored walled garden in Cobham, on our way to my sister's house. The place is now a garden centre, a tea shop, a gift shop and a shop which sells old gardening implements and curiosities. After a general poke around and a brief conversation with the owner about a name inscribed on a pre-war daisy fork, my daughter who was itching to leave, said *Come on mummy let's get to Auntie's*. No, I said there's something here that I want. *What are you looking for?* asked the man. I don't know, I replied, I'll know it when I see it. But then, I felt guilty for boring my daughter so we walked out of the shop into the courtyard and there, right in front was this garland of holed flints:
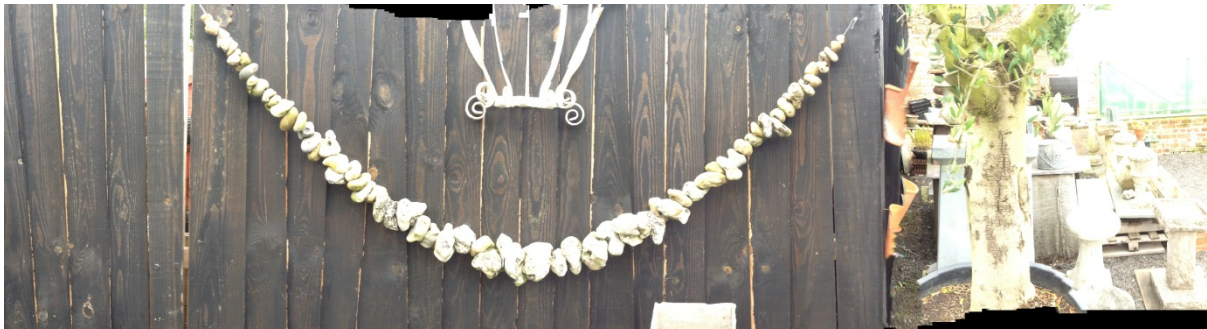

Fig 17: a garland of flints

I asked him where they came from and he replied that his mother collected them and when she died, he displayed them like this. When I explained that I had developed a recent fascination for holed flints and told him that I had collected a few recently and where we lived, they were regarded as having magical powers, he replied that his mother regarded herself as a white witch. He had taken one of the garlands to a country auction once and had offers of around £300 but he was reluctant to sell it. It reminded me of Jack and the Beanstalk and taking the white cow to market, but it wouldn't sell. What would happen if you sold it, I said. He replied, *I know I would regret it.*

INTERLUDE 2: Chrysalis Shift

"It is now September 2013 and since we last met I feel as though I have moved from one stage to another in my inquiry. The shift has been a gradual one and I did not realise it until walking in the forest yesterday. It does not surprise me that the recognition of this change occurred exactly at the moment when I experienced the familiar yearly shiver and thrill as the knowledge dawns that autumn has arrived. The beauty with which the morning mist gathers vaguely and the earth releases scents of mushrooms and dampness and as though by magic the trees are suddenly heavy with ripening fruit where previously, even yesterday, I did not see – this is always a welcome and tearful moment for me.

I paused to recover myself – more to enjoy the familiar sweet sorrow moment – and took these photos until my dog Cybele landed splat in the middle of a black muddy puddle and rolled in it. We laughed and then we ran until we got to the tree with the green man in it and then walked back, me breathless, to the Ashridge Monument café for a cup of tea."
(Journal notes September 2013)

The shift

I can best describe the shift using the chrysalis metaphor which I have spoken of before and which was first impressed upon me by CC's picture at a previous workshop. I have used it most recently describing the unfolding of the rope wrapped around Rapunzel as she self-descends from the tower. As the classical image of metamorphosis, it carries mysteries within it and hugely resonates with me.

"The year to date, really from November 2012 to now, September 2013 has been spent developing my "emerging process" of interviewing myself within the re-interpreted narrative of a trilogy of folk tales: Hansel & Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. These three pieces are presented in the form of iPhone video clips, photographs taken in the forest and transcripts and commentary which I produced as part of the process. I then revisited the trilogy to examine common themes and connectedness which I hoped would form a second cycle of inquiry and to some extent this was successful, although I find that at present, I lack the time and patience to do this justice. I have a strong sense that further composting is

required and that to succeed in this cycle, I need the participation of others. I planned to accomplish this by staging an exhibition of my work and involving others in the interpretation of and building upon the themes which were starting to emerge." (Journal notes September 2013)

The chrysalis shift: my folk tale trilogy was inner arc work in which I wrapped myself up in ancient folk-knowing in the forest where I felt I belonged. I was protected and cared for by wild spirits and prayers and imaginings and all surrounded by the essential beauty and harmony of the woods. In this place I was able to take risks and speak of things in a way which was free and natural and – most importantly – I see that I was able to improvise and play in a mind and soul space which was created by me and which was almost like a parallel universe. The qualities of time and space there were the same and yet different from my mundane life. I was able to be present in both places at the same time, or just one, or just the other. I could skip between the two. While I became aware that what happened in one world was present in the other, there was no need to define or to inquire into it, it was fine to let the worlds rest together. Although I am aware in writing about it now, that it could seem dislocating to the reader, my experience was the opposite – it felt deeply integrating. It felt as though I was protected within my chrysalis while a transformational process was occurring and that I could function in the mundane world as my soul was nourished and protected and provided with play time.

I think the chrysalis shift occurred when I realized that the chrysalis had faded or begun to crumble away and that I could feel the autumn mist and when I looked, I could see further than the confines of my chrysalis into a much wider landscape and also, that I had wings.

It came with the feeling that the time has come to bring my work into practice and yet to continue always with the inner arc work which has become precious to me and fully a part of my life. I would like to think that I can weave the two together in more explicit ways.

INTERLUDE 3: Golden Grove Unleaving

Fig 18: Golden Grove unleaving …

Gerard Manly Hopkins (1880) Spring and Fall

I have had the most unexpectedly wonderful day today and I have returned home knowing that I am about to crash out with the emotional intensity of it but wanting to write something before I spend the evening quietly with my daughter. I want to record what happened.

I started the day in a state of complete despair not knowing how I would get through it. I did the school run in a daze followed by visiting our old house with our cleaner Agatha to make it remotely presentable before completion and handing over keys tomorrow to the purchasers. This means cleaning up the far corners of what is basically an old farm house with spiders' webs and mice droppings and random dead things that fell down the chimney. The house has been unlived in for a year or more. Because I never thought it would come to this, I just left it and anyway, when I lived there, a few field mice were welcome in winter, more or less, and we came inside with our boots on and brought lambs in and the dogs slept on the sofas.

I wrote a card to the new people at our kitchen table at about 10 am this morning and that's when I started to see an image of my mother and father sitting next to each other, looking out at me as though they were in a photo frame. And laughing at me, which was strange, as though they were sharing a joke. But not in a horrid way – more in a sort of way that was fond and encouraging. More in the way that Harry Potter's parents are portrayed in the film as a kind of "happy memory" living hologram. So it was as though they were saying things like – look, she's doing well, she can do it. I felt definitely patronised, as though they were cheering me on in a race when I was about 10. I kept "saying" to them in my head – I can't do this, it's too hard, and they kept saying "go on love, you can do it", and laughing all the time. They looked as they did in early photos, my father as a young officer, my mother as a lovely young girl.

I had a very distinct feeling that I was on a high wire walking across a void and they were calling me from the other side. And the most important thing, looking back, is that they showed no anxiety whatsoever about whether I would fall, they absolutely knew I would make it over. They were laughing at my anxiety that I couldn't do it. This is how it must feel when you are small and your parents are in the water, laughing, knowing there is no danger because they will always catch you, and they are saying "come on, jump" but you're scared.

And I was scared about what if I couldn't bear the sadness of the day, but I got on with it and went to the house with Agatha, who can't speak English. And then it started again. As I was getting ready to go to the house, feeling a bit tearful, I could feel my mother saying, "Careful – better not let her see you cry – she has more to cry about than you."

I absolutely heard my mother say this and she wasn't being mean, just sort of seeing it all in another way, which I couldn't see and she could because she was so … far away.

And I heard my father saying, "Kick on, love – not like you to cry".

Kick on made me think hard. It's a hunting expression. The more scared you feel galloping up to a jump the more you must "kick on". By the time you feel the fear, the most dangerous option is to try and pull out – what you need to do, is to kick your horse on as hard as you can so it jumps high and clear. There's an expression – throw your heart over the jump first, and horse will follow.

Give me a horse that falters not

At ditch or five-barred gate;

And give me a man who sets his heart,

To ride his country straight.

To ride your country straight means to follow the hounds over whatever fences or obstacles are in your way and not mince around trying to find an easy way round. No point: your horse will follow the crowd anyway and trying to pull it up will probably tip you off. My husband always rides his country straight, it's one of his defining strengths.

So by the time Agatha and I got to the old house, I was fairly low and disorientated. It felt dismal, cold and damp and I told Agatha to get on in the house and I would sweep the cottage, outbuildings and garage, knowing they were full of droppings and horrible stuff and it would be colder and wetter out there.

I set up my cocktail bar with paper cups and bottle of wine in the old boiler room and filled a cup to the brim and took it to Agatha, who was enjoying a secret fag upstairs trying to blow it out of the window and throwing it out when she saw me. It's OK, I signalled thumbs up. Smoke away. Then I went back to the boiler room and got to work. Then the house clearance man arrived and we had the usual pointless conversation about, "I know I said £300 but I didn't know there was this much left to go." Well do what you can for £300, said I, and that's all we can hope for. Then I went back to the boiler room and started to sweep up rat droppings, sheep castration rings, nails, hoof clippings, old horse remedies, beer cans from step-sons and those little polystyrene balls that stick to everything.

I finished the boiler room and moved into the cottage, hoovering upstairs and dusting cobwebs from the window frames and that's when it happened. A most wonderful thing that changed the day into one of the best days I have ever had. And has made all the difference.

Suddenly, I heard hounds, a sound I have not heard for years but in the old days they would hunt across the village on Tuesdays and we would keep the gates open for a straight gallop from the village, over the pony club field, along the boundary path and through the woods.

I threw open the upstairs window and shouted to the men on the drive– is that the hunt? Yes, they're in the wood. Do you want rid of them, said the clearance man, Richard. No, I said, they are very, very welcome and skidded down the stairs and ran as fast as I could with Cybele behind me, down the drive and onto the road as they cleared the wood and cantered down the grass verge towards us.

My heart was full of joy and I was laughing at this magical thing that was happening: the hunt had come back again, on my very last day, at the very moment. I had the most tremendous feeling of love and excitement and happiness bubbling up and over. Cybele was excited, skipping like a puppy, running round in circles, tail wagging and jumping high up in the air. The hunt does that to you – Herne the Hunter, the wild wood, and friends and fire at the end of the day. And never a fox caught.

And the hunt clattering down the road towards us was a thrilling sight and the more so for being so unexpected. As David the huntsman passed with his hounds streaming all around and baying, he waved and we waved back and the field master leading the mounted field followed soon after, "good morning", "good morning "– it's always morning when you're hunting - and on and on in wave upon wave of riders with hunt staff in hunt livery and everyone splattered in mud and laughing, waving. So many friendly faces from all around, and then Matt, mounted for the first time I have ever seen – he usually follows on a quad bike - on a big bay hunter, pulling hard "have you sold the place yet?" he shouted as he skittered past, the horse sideways as it tried to take the bit and overtake the horse in front – Yes, I called, last day today. And then they had gone away into the set-aside field and into the copse, blowing horns and hounds singing.

I sat down and wept on a fallen tree trunk and hugged the dog and enjoyed a really good, happy cry.

Richard, the clearance man, came down the drive for his money and saw me crying but was good enough to ignore it. "I used to work for John Law (the old huntsman), I helped with the hunt balls" he said, and then "Will you miss this place, then?" I think so, I said. And we stood for a while looking after the hunt. "We've just about finished now, so we'll be off then". Thank you, thanks for everything. But we chatted some more, about hounds and hunt balls and Richard picked up a lost horse shoe and hung it on the gate and told me

about a horse he had once that couldn't keep shoes on so they had a collection of about a hundred at home, his wife wouldn't let them go, they're in a box in the attic.

Back in the house, Agatha had nearly finished as well, so I told her to go, I would finish off myself. And I did finish off very quickly and took a last walk around with Cybele. When a terrible noise of farm machinery shattered the silence and I thought, what the hell is that, and went down to the roadside to see a huge, smoking, industrial grade tractor cranking along the hedgerow; they usually slice about a yard off the top once the leaves fall. It stopped and there, sitting in the driving seat, was dear old Jim Slade, our neighbour for 12 years, from Dunston Farm who came here 60 years ago from Leicestershire and I hadn't seen for many years after he sold up his prize-winning herd and moved from the farm so his son could take over. He turned off the engine.

"Well, well, well, what are you doing here? I can't get down", he explained, "I'm 85 now, you'll have to hop up". So I did, and told him that we'd sold the house and sat next to him in the cab, warm with the heat of the engine, remembering the time we first met at Christmas when he walked over the deep snow fields to say hello and check us out and we drank whisky in the kitchen. In those days, old Mr Smith lived in a series of caravans two fields away which he filled successively with paper and things he had collected, because his house had fallen down. He was eccentric and used to walk around in his dressing gown and very little else, even in winter. He died there and the house was rebuilt into a beautiful place by a local couple. We would call each other during power cuts to check we were all right. The power doesn't go off so much now.

We also talked about Field Marshall Dunn, who lived here before us, and his daughter, whom Jim telephones every New Year's Eve. Field Marshall Dunn was a legend around here. He was captured and tortured in the war by the Japanese but he learned to speak Japanese, went back after the war and became a great scholar, and even now, we get mail addressed to him from universities all over the world. It is my belief that he planted the cherry trees in the woods here which still bring bright pink blossom in spring to remind him of Japan. His housekeeper and driver used to live in the cottage. The older taxi drivers in the town still remember waiting for him on the late train back from London, then being told to stand down, he would walk home, as a very old man.

I always wondered what route he took – up through the forest past Ashridge House and through the village, or the way I would go, along the Roman road and up through the common. Jim said he didn't know, but he met him many times walking the path to the farm with his dog, before dawn, even before the milking.

I remembered his herd and said the best thing when we moved in was the smell of them, warm and sweet and how huge they were and they would gather along the fence between his field and ours, and in the winter nights, their breath would rise like mist and we would hear them bumping against themselves and against the fence. We took them in after that year, Jim said, into the big barns and let them out in spring but it wasn't the old way. Worst day of my life when I gave them up, he said, and he shook his head and tears rolled down his cheeks and we sat in the cab, like very silly old things, having a quiet and companionable moment until he took out his hip flask and said here we go, shall we have a nip, my dear?

And Jim said, there, there. Steady up. So I did steady up and we spoke of his children, and how well Ed was doing and his daughter was set up with her own place now and Jim was keeping his hand in, helping out and what have you. So we drank up the flask and I said well got to be going, my girl to pick up from school. Take care my dear, give my love to the family. I took a photo of Jim and me in the cab. When I got back to the car, Agatha had written a heart shape on my car window.

Written 5.50pm, Thursday, 7th November 2013

Prelude and Pause

The above account, when I read it again the following day, illustrates something of what magic might mean to me in practice. I notice that there is a great coincidence in my remembering, in my father's words, the hunting expression "kick on" and then the unexpected and joyful arrival of the hunt just a couple of hours later. The feeling that this "was meant to be" greatly enhanced my feeling of reassurance and of things being alright and perhaps this quite common phenomenon of things happening "coincidentally" is what Jung referred to as synchronicity, "an acausal connecting principle". It is the same feeling as when you bump into someone you haven't seen for years, just days after finding a letter from them or hearing their name.

There is also the dawning realisation that Jim would never have been out hedging on a very unsuitable tractor, age 85, in his smart jacket and tie, on hunt day when hounds were running and horses scattered all over the road. He was dressed for the meet. The bush telegraph would have carried word up the line to the farmhouse that I was there with the dog and down the road he came.

INTERLUDE 4: My tree and three women

Fig 19: the tree I came to know

Journal notes April 2014

I want to write about me and my daughter sitting up the tree and the three women who passed below it with their dogs, one spring morning.

It was at the end of last term, before the Easter break, and my daughter was in bed for nearly two weeks with a virus, feeling ill, sleeping fitfully for most of the day. We made it our daily practice to go for a drive, she with a hot water bottle on her lap, music selected on her iPhone, playing her favourites over and over. Just to get out of the house, for a change of scenery and a breath of fresh air. We did this when she was a teething baby, drive around until the sound and motion of the car put her to sleep. As she got better, we started to drive to the forest and take the dog for short walks, getting longer each day until one day, we found ourselves walking towards the tree. You see that tree over there? It's my favourite tree. I know, she said, we've been here before. I couldn't remember when.

When we arrived, she clambered up onto the first branch and asked me if I was coming. I knew the way well, and we sat up in the tree, she searching for somewhere between the tangled, crossed over branches for a place where she could make herself comfortable. I sat in my usual spot; the dog, as usual, pottering around below.

We chatted about this and that. It felt to me as though the tree was holding us in the palm of its hand, the branches like fingers outspread – a place of safety and belonging. When I first approached the tree, on that very first time, I remember thinking how trees would have been a safe place to climb into, to hide away out of sight and out of reach of bad people and wild animals of the forest.

I remembered my mother once saying to my brother's wife that she raised her daughters like this, and then she gestured to illustrate the point she was making, outstretching her hand and holding it open, palm facing upwards, showing the very opposite of a restraining grip and the sense of our being able to fly away; but until we chose to, of our being supported, held up, contained, held by her. I thought of nurses' hands and of hands clasped in prayer, like children do, palms pressed together, thumbs crossed, fingers pointing up. And I thought of the gesture of despair, of head sinking into hands, face buried in grief.

I enjoyed the sense of the tree upholding us and we shared a sense of wicked delight at being able to see people below after approaching us from afar, and most of them not seeing us, not because we were hidden – in early April the tree was still bare of leaves – but because they did not look upwards. We rocked with silent laughter as a couple paused beneath the tree a few feet below and conversed, not knowing we were there, and then walked on, still unknowing.

Over the next half hour or so, three women walked by, and each stopped briefly:

"*You look like two tree nymphs*" (woman one, laughing at our happiness and hers)

"*It's my special tree*" (woman two, quieter than the first, I sensed that she came here from a place of loss and grief, of remembrance)

"*I come here a lot. I paint this tree. I was here last week, I painted it with a baby there underneath it*" (woman three told us but I knew that the baby was not a real baby, or at least not hers, it came from somewhere different, a different kind of birth)

"*Did you? That's interesting – I'd love to see the painting*", I replied, caught between wanting an inquiry conversation and wanting to be a tree nymph with my daughter.

"OK. I'll leave you my card, here at the tree, next time I pass" (*Not sure I want to share with you, woman up a tree, she was thinking. Not sure you're really interested, or if you are, why*).

I sensed a tingling thrill in knowing that my tree was not my tree, it belonged as well to others, who each embraced it for their own reasons. I sensed that they did so quietly and alone, in the way that I come here, mostly. They were all three surprised to find me there, up the tree, with my girl. Not displeased, but surprised just as I was surprised by them. I had a deep but fleeting sense of protectiveness and defensive possession followed by a far better feeling that this was not my tree, and yet it was my tree. I could possess it and not possess it: I could hold it in common. In terms of membership and belonging, there are a few of us, maybe many, who mark this tree and it holds something of each of us within it, and we carry its knowing with us. A connection which is magical in my terms in that it connects minds and hearts through symbol and emotions which do not need to be explicated – they are known by those who know us.

There was a tree who held the hearts of many women … it was an oak that as an acorn fell (continue the story from the tree's perspective)

I had a vision of a collage made by all the women who knew this tree, what would it look like. And then another one made by the tree itself of all these women, their joy, their dogs, their tears, triumphs, losses, failures, hope, coming here, walking away again – to where, to whom? And then, coming back, but differently, like Derrida's palintrope; always returning and the impossibility of stepping into the same river twice.

I really enjoyed that, mummy. I enjoyed it too, darling. We clasped hands over the gear stick, my other hand on the wheel.

Postscript

I decided in the car on the way home, that I would go back to the tree and draw it. I wanted to experience it more fully in the spirit of Lucian Freud's observation, quoted often in my previous writing, that he "paints someone to understand them" and the two-way quality of the painter's gaze.

I realise that I also want to explore more deeply the nature of my relationship with this very particular tree and to do so through different lens. I don't want to rush this – I will wait for the moment to come to me, although I am anxious that with the year advancing, if it does not come soon, the leaves will come first and the branches will be hidden whereas now, they are thrown exposed against the sky like a net or a web, easier to draw. Still, I will wait.

I also thought that I would like to approach the tree from the perspective of time, and see if I can illuminate my reflections on time within my inquiry. I first thought of spending a day at the tree, photographing it each hour but then, I immediately realised that the clock hours are irrelevant to the day of a tree or the day of a woman taking photographs of it. The true hours are those from dawn to dusk marked by the moments when something happens – the sun breaks through, the rains beats down, someone sits beneath it, a branch falls, a thought is prompted, a memory stirred, a voice speaks, an emotion is evoked. I am reminded of the following passage from Padraic Colum's beautiful preface to Grimm's Folk Tales concerning the different patterns and rhythms in the world before artificial light:

"In the place where the storyteller was the coming of night was marked as it was not in towns, nor in modern houses. It was so marked that it created in the mind a different rhythm. There had been a rhythm of the day and now there was a rhythm of the night ..." (2005, p.vii).

I realise also how peculiar is my relationship with time itself. It is as though time exists independently of my actions and choices, as though it is a determinant of what I do. I will explore further metaphors of time and the metaphors which I employ to describe my relationship with time and what the consequences might be for the way I live. I have a premonition (I note that the word is itself a reflection of my relationship with time – implying that time will bring what time will bring regardless, and I may be fortunate enough to have an advance knowledge of that which is determined, which time will inevitably and immutably bring). I find myself asking, what difference it might make if I "took time" and possessed it, rather than feeling that time eludes and evades me, or in turn possesses me: what would it feel like to make time my friend and ally instead of enemy and adversary.

John Banville (2006, p.144) in his book "The Sea", captures this sense of time and self:

> "Happiness was different in childhood. It was so much then a matter simply of accumulation, of taking things - new experiences, new emotions - and applying them like so many polished tiles to what would someday be the marvellously finished pavilion of the self."

Fig 20: the marvellously finished pavilion of the forest

I learned, in the course of my inquiry, to let go of the notion of the perfectly formed "finished self" and appreciated the irony in this quotation, reflected in my photo, which bathes the mundane in a glorious light.

INTERLUDE 5: WITCH'S STONE – Finding the Lost Rolex

Witch's Stone

Finding the Lost Rolex

A witch's stone is a holed stone – if you look through it, you see with a different perspective and sometimes, you can use it to find things.

At our recent supervision group meeting, I recalled an occasion the day before in which my husband, our daughter, my eldest step-son and myself were searching in the undergrowth for my husband's Rolex watch, which had flown from his wrist as we were navigating a "Go-Ape" tree top climbing adventure course and dropped 10 metres to the ground. My husband and stepson were scything down grass, brambles and oak saplings and casting around with a metal detector while my daughter insisted to no avail that the location they were searching in was several meters away from where she clearly recalled seeing the watch falling. Her view and my pleas for them to listen to her were ignored.

To pass time, I explained to her the concept of the witches stone but not having one to hand, I improvised by making a circular shape with the middle finger and thumb of my right hand, and looking through it as though I was looking through a hole. After a while, I found the watch, by visually piercing small areas defined by what I could see through the "hole". At the moment my eyes passed over the lost watch, the metal caught a ray of sun and shone very brightly, making it difficult to miss. I observed in the process of looking, that the intensity of my gaze was

far greater looking at a small circle of vision, than by sweeping a far larger area in the way I would normally have approached the task. Of course, for an evidence-based interpretation, I was also helped by paying attention to the impassioned conviction of the only witness, our daughter, who is renowned for having an exceptionally acute memory, almost "photographic" with particular acuity for time and place.

Practice Note

When I reflect on this incident, I see a clear embodiment of different ways of knowing. The first, to attack the problem, by removing what stands in the way of knowing (undergrowth), the second, to sit and allow the watch to reveal itself or alternatively, to allow the sun beams to illuminate it. I am intrigued by the craft elements: contrasting the scythes, the metal detectors with the imaginary witches' stone, imitated by the circling of fingers. I learned through this experience, not always to race towards knowing by a process of demolition but rather to wait in the moment, and to realise that knowing a thing does not necessarily involve destruction of what was already there. I refer to an appreciative stance towards theory and paradigmatic commensurability in particular. I noted that the watch fell into undergrowth and was perfectly capable of being found within it. I am struck also by the contrasting craft implements of time: sun beams marking the passing of the day and the watch, a symbol of precise engineering, to do this job better than the sundial, in the sense of more reliably, and independently of the sun.

Conclusion

I conclude from these field studies from my journal that one of the positive outcomes of my inquiry is that I am becoming increasingly aware of the significance of moments in which I feel connected with the natural world around me in terms of my relational self. I am paying more attention to the symbolic, the metaphorical and the magical and finding this both comforting and empowering.

Interludes or the main event?

Furthermore, until recently, I regarded the four interludes described in the preceding section as exactly that: *interludes*, pauses, in my "real work" of writing my thesis and preparing practice accounts in executive search and community enterprise. But I see now that these interludes are in fact *equally valid practice accounts*, representing the valuable work which I do in the family and home. I note also that in Chapter 1, in which I introduce myself, I do so in terms of my executive search and community cinema practise and although I reference the natural world, I make no reference at all to my domestic practice.

I continue this theme in the following chapter, *Politics and Gender: The Insurrection of Subjugated Knowledges.*

CHAPTER SIX: INTERPRETATION

Fig 21a, b, c: my fieldwork in images

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine my field studies from the following perspectives paying particular attention to my narrative inquiry process and how embodied, metaphorical and imaginative knowing illuminates my experience of telling tales.

Embodied storytelling: what did the process of telling tales this way contribute to my inquiry question and what difference did it make to my practice?

The significance of folk tales: how much of my work is to do with folk tales as a genre and what is the meaning of folk tales within my broader inquiry?

The significance of the teller: what is distinctive about the experience of telling tales and what are the implications of this particular role for my practice?

The significance of the forest: both the specific locality and the archetypal forest as the spatial and metaphorical homeland of my inquiry.

Metaphorical knowing: the significance of the said, the unsaid and the unsayable in narrative inquiry.

Time: reflections on the temporality of being and becoming as experienced in my field work.

Embodied storytelling: what did the process of telling tales this way contribute to my inquiry question and what difference did it make to my practice?

I found that the process of filming myself on iPhone unlocked a potential for generative dialogue between aspects of myself and between myself and others which has proved difficult to achieve through introspection or writing alone.

I illustrate this during my piece as Rapunzel on the walls of Berkhamsted castle. An entirely unexpected comment, made by me in character, concerned the fact that she chose to be there:

"I loved living here. When you live in a tower as tall as mine was, you have no sense of what's holding you up. You can't see the tower beneath you …"

On replay, I felt absolute resonance with the idea that my personal entrapment is far more complex than I imagined. When I am trapped by someone (maybe in a relationship, a job, a place) how much of my entrapment arises from my own choice, masquerading as coercion? How complicit am I? How much of my power have I chosen not to employ, have I hidden, how much have I used as an excuse the actions of others for my own lack of courage, my own "not-doing"? And I recognised in my own life, the possibility of moving on, when the time is right. And I saw as I spoke, how easy it would be, when the time is right, to leave things behind and to move on to an unknown future. I wept when I watched myself in replay, tears for me and for women everywhere. I resolved to attend more closely, much more closely, to my choices. I experienced a sense in enacting Rapunzel, that all the archetypal aspects of her character (victim, princess in a tall tower, feminine attributes of long blonde hair, complicit relationship with captor, possessing unknowingly the means of own escape) called out to me and revealed themselves to me as being part of my own

female cultural DNA. I learned that the characters were not separate but part of me, we were part of each other, our stories entwined, our narratives merged, overlapped.

This understanding, seeing, knowing, is revealed in the filming process. Is this at all like a magical process? It reveals things, connections that were not obvious before, with an element of surprise.   I speak things that are unexpected, about myself and about others. I see things during replay which I did not see in the moment (for example, Chanel Rouge Noir nail polish revealing my presence, the presence of the teller, in the photograph of rosehips; the image of coiled rope resembling hair, the means of Rapunzel's own escape; and the threshold in the tower room in Sleeping Beauty, being the threshold of being and becoming and the spell being broken simply by the passage of time).

It was a powerful recognition when working with my method that the characters do not seem to be separate from me: they inhabit me and I inhabit them in the telling of our stories. I do not have to imagine myself as them, it seems that I know as soon as I begin speaking how they feel and what their motivations were.   It feels as though I have already embraced and encompassed their situations.

The original Grimm's folk tales are written sparsely, with little character development or explanation given for actions – in many ways, they are stereotypical. Another way of putting this, and one which I think is more accurate, is that they are *representative* of relationships, choices and situations which are so deeply engrained and "known" to the listener that they need little elaboration. What I am doing is to looking beyond the bare bones of the story and fleshing it out and embellishing it with my own experience and in particular, my own intuitions, and bringing the characters alive in the sense of allowing them to express themselves within the context of my own life, and vice versa.

Sense-making

I draw the following conclusions about the nature of the iPhone self-interview process:

1. It is similar to talking into a mirror; the experience of seeing yourself speak is qualitatively different from introspection or imagining;

2. The real-time aspect resembles improvisation and encourages an unrehearsed response to questions and situations;

3. The quality of self-reflection is distinct from that of reviewing my own writing, more visceral, less intellectual;

4. Reactions to replay evolve considerably over time and continue to generate new insights;

5. There is a sense of strangeness in the process when I first experimented with the method but my initial reservations and self-consciousness were quickly overcome;

6. There is a tension while facilitating self-interview workshops between providing enough clarity of direction and allowing meaning and method to emerge for the individual in the course of the process;

7. I need to re-examine my stance towards interest in the process vs. interest in the content;

8. "How-to" tips are useful in guiding others particularly with regard to practicalities such as lighting and positioning of the iPhone;

9. There is an interplay between the experience being "fun" and "very deep" and often, these perceptions shift rapidly within the moment;

10. This is a contested, ethically complex and emotionally-charged method.

Practice Note

I interpret my method as a way of bringing into my conscious practice powerful and potentially transformational processes. Specifically, it presents me with choices in how I relate to clients, colleagues, family and friends.

I see that I have three choices in terms of how I relate to you:-

1. I can regard us as <u>separate beings</u> who exist independently of one another observing each other from different positions; or

2. I can regard us as <u>separate but connected</u> and pay greater attention to the quality and the strength of the bonds between us, in Bateson's terms, "the patterns that connect" not just the two of us, but everyone around us including the real and the imaginary (our past and future selves); or

3. I can regard us not so much as "separate and connected" but as essentially part of the same whole, and so <u>part of each other</u>. I relate this back to Ricouer's three levels of narrative identity, in ascending order of "spiritual density": *translation* (I acknowledge your presence in narrative terms), *hospitality* (I welcome and participate in your process of being yourself) and *forgiveness* (in each moment, I release you from entrapment in our past engagement and co-create the opportunity for us together to create new future ways of being together).

This way of perceiving my relational self, my narrative identity, is integral to my lived practice now as evidenced by my Practice Accounts, signposted below.

Signpost to website – My Practice

Integrative themes in the trilogy of folk tales

In the drawing below, I map some of the themes which emerged in the process of working with the three stories Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. Intuitively, I knew that there were connections and deeper insights contained within and between the tales but as has proved typical in my inquiry, it was impossible to force them or bring them forth to order; they came only in subsequent cycles of reflection, and in their own time.
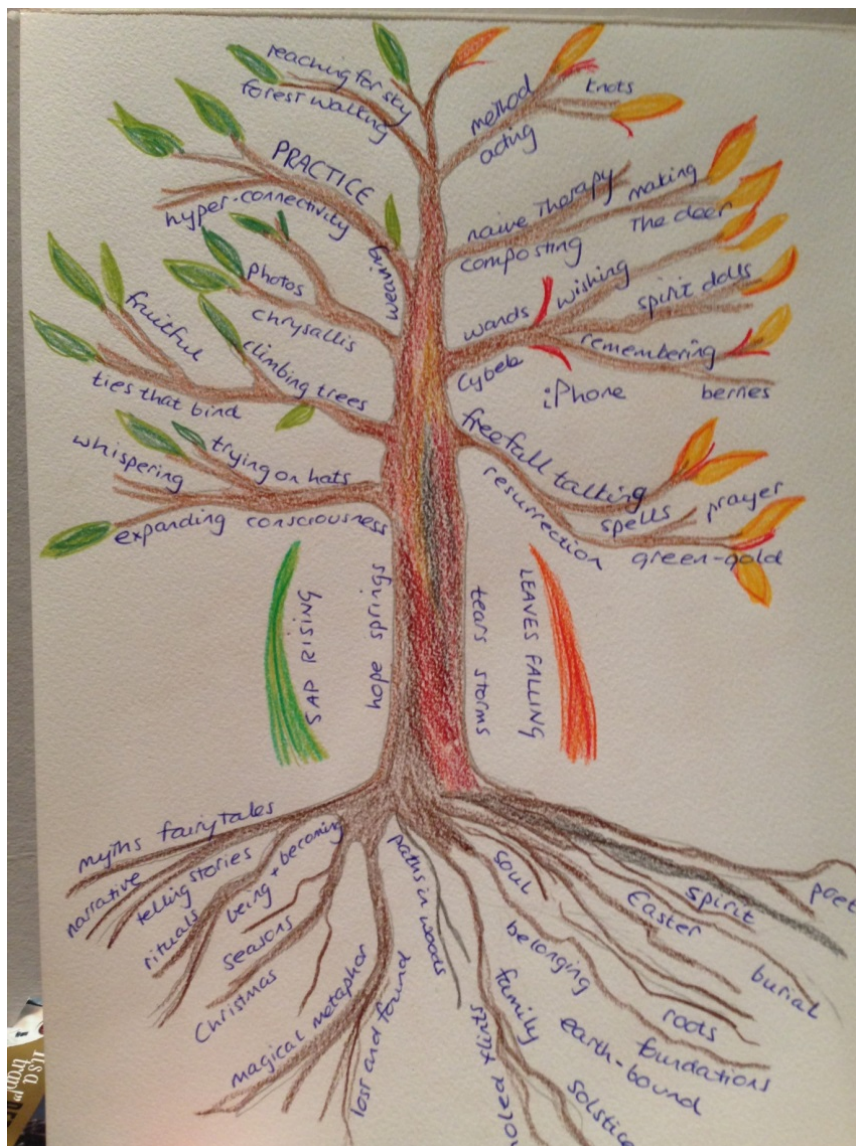
Fig 22: the tree of my inquiry

In the process of working with each of the three stories in turn, I found sometimes that themes arising from the others would become more insistent voices and I would return to them to re-read my notes and re-watch the video clips. When working on the first one, Hansel and Gretel, I experienced a strong sense of intrusion from another folk tale, Snow White, and although this tale is not included in the trilogy, the presence of this story continued to make itself known throughout all the pieces. One voice was particularly persistent:

Mirror, mirror on the wall

Who is fairest of them all?

At first I thought this was a life-stage consequence of me, middle-aged and greying, being in the presence of my daughter, adolescent, beautiful and blooming. Certainly, this theme dominates many analyses of the story. However, the note that rings most true to me is that this is, in fact, a question which I am asking myself:

Which of all your selves is your fairest self?

I referred in the preceding chapter to how PB identified Rapunzel as a tale of escape – this is not evident from the Grimm's version. She alluded to a progression of ideas through the trilogy of Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel and as a consequence, I attempted to draw together the learning themes and to frame this as a separate and concluding cycle of inquiry. I recognised that to a very great extent the tales have become intertwined as I work with them and themes from one tale informs work in the others.

Practice Note

The trilogy of Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel equates to cycles of Survival, Awakening, and Escape which I recognise both in personal and career terms. These themes are developed in Chapter 7, *Being Another Practice Accounts* and Chapter 9, *Power and Gender: the insurrection of subjugated knowledges*.

The significance of folk tales: how much of my work is to do with folk tales as a genre and what is the meaning of folk tales within my broader inquiry?

"Magic happens on the threshold of the forbidden."

Secrets beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives (Tatar, 2004 p.1)

Bettelheim's (1974) classic interpretation of the meaning and importance of folk tales focusses primarily on the psychological problems of growing up, "overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries; becoming able to relinquish childhood dependences; gaining a feeling of selfhood and of self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation" (p.6).

In contrast, I examine the potential <u>personal developmental </u>impact of telling folk tales <u>on the teller</u>, the person who tells the tale, rather than those who hear it.

The relational aspects of telling tales are emphasised by Professor Maria Tatar of Harvard University, speaking of the traditional domestic context in which folk tales were told:

> *"It's a communal situation … the fire reminds us of the 'ignition power' of folk tales, their ability to excite the imagination and to provide light in the dark. And with the light, you also have these shadows, where fearful things might lurk. The tales not only have this magical, glittery sparkle, but also a dark, horrific side that stages our deepest anxieties and fears."* (Tatar 1993, p. 238).

I support Tatar's proposal that classic psychosexual and normative interpretations should yield to:

"A creative folklore...reinvented by each new generation of storytellers and reinvested with a powerfully creative social energy."

When I reflect on the significance of folk tales to me, I am struck by the strength of my emotional attachment to them. I am unsurprised now, having engaged in this inquiry, how much my personal narrative is influenced by the magical, mythical and imaginal.

This is illustrated in my freefall writing during an early ADOC workshop:

Dr Gill Coleman – Freefall Writing Session (3 guided pieces)

A moment of great beauty that has entered my heart is a stream in a photo of my mother, myself, my two sisters and Raymond, Kenneth and Patricia, the three children of a farmer called William Stacey, whose farm in Cornwall we stayed at for holidays when we were children. The stream is dancing with light over rocks behind us, sitting as a group by the water's edge, in long grass freckled with buttercups, meadowsweet, red campion and cornflowers. We children are berry brown and hair sun-bleached, laughing. My mother's hair is tousled, sunglasses on her head also laughing – she looks about 20; she would have been about 35. The sky is stunning, bright, bright blue.

A moment of great darkness that has entered my heart I have "writer's block" nothing is coming. What has made me despair, what clouds me, what blocks out the sun? What is underneath, what frightens me with its bad blackness, black as night. "I have thought thee fair and called thee bright, that art black as hell and dark as night." A boundary, threshold spell of garlic around the door to keep dark spirits away. An old spell – also rowan, the mountain ash, planted at my boundaries of our land, and in hedges so that witches cannot run across the top, repelled.

At the core of my inquiry is that which has never left me which is the goodness and beauty and light like the moonbeam which came in through my bedroom window and the image I had and hold onto that my daughter's spirit came down on it, like a water baby whooshing down a waterfall and into my tummy and that she chose me, a place to land, and the idea that good things are sent and come from somewhere and not from within me but from another place, eternal and golden, silver, magic.

I grew up with folk tales and the forest, where the tales are located, has always been a place where I felt at home, particularly in and around trees. In the process of working in the forest, in trees and with the characters in the development of my methodology, I came to learn a great deal more than I already knew and to value this kind of knowing. While English forest magic is familiar to me, I do not believe there is anything universally potent about these particular tales. This is not an inquiry into folk tales per se. It is about being and becoming through the telling of tales. What gives these tales potency to me is the fact that they are deeply embedded within the mythical fabric of my "calf country" and therefore readily accessible, to me if not to others. For me, their power is tremendous and foundational: they provide a gateway into myth and magic which is instantaneous. "Once upon a time" transports me directly to a place of infinite possibilities. What I learn is not more about the tale, but more about me, the teller.

The significance of the teller: what is distinctive about the experience of telling tales and what are the implications of this particular role for my practice?

My method approaches the stories from the teller's and the characters' perspectives in a way which merges these two identities. I find this holds considerable creative potential and opens the possibility of interpretations which blend the experience of all those who are in the room at the time of a particular telling.

I recall when telling tales to my daughter how for the first five minutes she interrupted and asked questions but later, as she became comfortable and drowsy, she settled down and became lost in the story. I was always impressed with how she remembered every tiny detail and nuance, so that at the next telling they would pounce on me if I made a mistake. This is reminiscent also of how, sensing that she had drifted off and I could soon tiptoe out, if I speeded up the story or skipped passages, she would ping wide awake and say, "No, you've missed out the bit where …", and then, I would have to retrace my steps, pick up the lost stitch and knit the story over again from that point.

I also remember how my daughter would simply nudge me and I would know I had been discovered. This turned into a game, sometimes, when I would try and slip in details, or make subtle changes, to see if I could get away with it. In time, these extra details would become embedded in every subsequent telling and the tale would evolve in this way. I sensed strict limits to my artistic licence; small changes were allowed whereas departures from the main plot were not tolerated.

The significance of the forest: the specific locality and the archetypal forest as the spatial and metaphorical homeland of my inquiry

My inquiry took place in the forest and I learned through the medium of sensory knowing the deep meanings that emerged from my iPhone methodology. I found that the quality of sensory experience, of being in the world, forced me to experience rather than to analyse and as a result, I opened up to new ways of knowing.

There were many moments when I recognised a sense of belonging in the forest and experienced folk memories of the archetypal forest. As well as sensory knowing, I came to understand my relationship with metaphorical knowing as a powerful means of accessing deep and hidden meaningsI see the forest itself as a metaphor as well as a physical place of being.

Deleuze and Guattari (2013) distinguish "rhizomatic" and "arborescent" theory and research, the former allowing for multiple, non-hierarchical interpretation, the latter being associated with dualistic and binary choices. They suggest that while a rhizome involves planar and trans-species connections, a tree works with vertical and linear connections. This is a powerful metaphor which contrasts the supposedly linear chronological causality of the root-trunk-branch system with the distributed connections of rhizomal plant forms more representative of sociocultural phenomena.

They propose that "a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, intermezzo". In their terms, my inquiry would be deemed more rhizomal than arboreal although without wishing to labour the point, anyone who has enjoyed a personal association with trees will know that the rootedness of trees is also a form of connection not only with the earth but also with adjacent root systems. There is a language of trees, not just the symbolic Ogham alphabet of humans marking wood, but in the whispering of leaves, the creaking of branches and the sonic boom (if speeded up) of sap rising and shoots bursting from the earth and whooshing to meet the sky, and the crumbling composting of fallen boughs and felled trunks. I think it would be possible to argue that the secret life of trees is rhizomal.

Here, through these photos, I am able to "show not tell" what the forest means to me. The forest metaphors which helped me most are the ones of the tree of my inquiry, and the images in which I blend with the forest, in one sense hidden, in another sense, belonging.

If you live in the town, a child of pavements and tall buildings, or if you live in the desert, or the plains, or the mountains, then the English forest may mean nothing to you and it may be that these images leave you cold. You will have your own images. But whatever the landscape or seascape of our individual souls, we hold the sky in common. I learned from climbing my tree and being there as others passed below, unknowing, the importance of looking up, "drilling up", in Bateson's terms, to see the patterns that connect. I glance up more now particularly at night and I see patterns in the stars.

Metaphorical knowing: the significance of the said, the unsaid and the unsayable in my narrative inquiry

"Yes, metaphor. That's how this whole fabric of mental interconnections holds together. Metaphor is right at the bottom of being alive".

Gregory Bateson quoted in Capra (1988, pp. 76-77).

"I am in a dark place. I have experienced a sustained sense of being in a dark room, pitch black, feeling my way around, feeling walls and shapes, trying to work out what all these objects are, what is the layout of the room, how do the things in the room relate to each other, trying to understand what is going on in my inquiry space – it feels like a maze, a puzzle. I have a vague sense of hope that there is indeed a way through the maze, a resolution, a falling into place, recognition of where I am and finally, a sense of wonder at the reveal".

(Journal extract, January 2014)

"I am in a dark place". My recent work on metaphor has been somewhat disorientating as I realise that when I refer to a dark place, I do not mean this metaphorically as in an emotionally depressing place (*"depressing" is another metaphor, a physical pressing down to describe an emotional state*), but figuratively – in an attempt to describe the rational mental processes which I am engaged in, as I stumble around, trying to make sense of my inquiry and work out how all the themes might be woven together (*there, "woven", that's another metaphor*). Similarly, when I say that I have been "asking myself", I mean this literally, in the context of my iPhone process, not metaphorically. It is as though so much of what I say and think is working at different levels. The boundaries between what I mean literally and what creeps in metaphorically are shifting the ground I stand on. I find that different levels of meaning are interplaying in a way which is so far beyond my conscious control that it is almost, at times, intrusive. I constantly surprise myself as I listen to myself think and speak, with the unintended, unconscious meanings that emerge.

I am becoming aware of a level of meaning, a kind of knowing more deeply, that I was unaware of before. Maybe I will claim this as evidence of how my inquiry is transforming my practice; it is certainly transforming my daily experience. Or perhaps I will do more than that, and claim that both

my method and my process, like method acting, surface meanings and expand my consciousness in life as in practice.

Why am I interested in metaphor?

"I am really struggling with this issue – I feel as though I am tussling with an intractable problem, or as though I am trying to unravel a ball of jumbled up wool.

I sense that there is a very strong connection between "being another" (method acting, iPhone interviews), magical participation (inspiritedness, in terms of being what you are not) and metaphor (describing experience or things in terms of what is not).

Is it because metaphors have magical properties, or because magic is metaphorical in nature? I sense that acting is related to metaphor and that both are related to expanded consciousness. The heart of my inquiry seems to be the idea that "being what I am not illuminates what I am".

It dawned on me that if everything is contained in the universe and within myself in terms of potentialities then my conscious awareness is only a part of what I am or what I might become. What I am not conscious of does still exist and is capable of being experienced. One way of getting at this is through magic, imagination, boundary shifting between what I am and what I am not, at any point in time. Time shifts in my experience between what I am, what I was and what I am becoming and what is significant is how I choose to formulate my relationship with time in terms of fixedness and fluidity.

Is there a sense in which I am defined as much by <u>what I am not</u>, as <u>what I am</u>?

For example, may I choose not to accept that past is more fixed than future and that the present, far from being the most "real" is the least real, because it cannot ever really exist: already in the moment of experiencing it, it has disappeared and been replaced in the infinite regression of time, by a memory and a new "present". So what does it mean to live in the present or to be "in the moment."

I am thinking in gestalt terms of figure and ground. And yet, within a classic gestalt frame, everything is contained such that what is not positive is negative, what is not black is white, in a polarised universe. Whereas my experience is that there is a) that which I am, b) that which I am not, and c) that which is a potentiality or a possibility, hanging there, waiting to be discovered and ultimately, perhaps placed into one or other categories of being or not-being.

The world of potentiality is unknown by definition, upon becoming known it changes character, by entering into polarity, by being known.

I think this might be part of what I am talking about in the context of expanded consciousness – experiencing more than is currently experienced, and in the process, opening up new worlds. This raises all sorts of fascinating aspects of how I choose to live my life: to seek new experiences with the potential for fulfilment or disappointment or to settle for what I know, with the satisfactions and inadequacies this implies.

The meaning of metaphor

The essence of metaphor is experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999, p. 3) propose that there are three major findings of cognitive science: the mind is inherently embodied; thought is mostly unconscious; and abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. They claim that the consequence is a shift in our understanding of reason which is "of vast proportions" accompanied by a corresponding shift in our understanding of "what we are as human beings". (1999, p.5)

Metaphor and magic

Jose Oretegay Gasset, cited in Lawley and Tompkins (2000, p.3) claims that, "metaphor is perhaps one of man's most fruitful potentialities. Its efficacy verges on magic …"

I also sensed that metaphor and magic are intimately connected.

But in what way does metaphor's efficacy verge on magic? Ortony (1993, p. 622) suggests three remarkable properties of metaphors: inexpressibility, vividness and compactness. Lakoff (1999) identifies a fourth attribute: because a metaphor explains one experience in terms of another, it both specifies and constrains our ways of thinking about the original experience. They are thus both descriptive and prescriptive. "In this way, they can be a tool for creativity or a self-imposed prison". (Lakoff 1999, p.9)

Bandler and Grinder (1975) state that "most metaphors are so pervasive, so familiar and so embedded in thought and body that their metaphorical nature is usually overlooked" (p19). This is what I first observed about magic in everyday life: it is everywhere, unnoticed.

Entering the symbolic metaphorical domain is similar to my experience of entering the folktale. It involves stepping into another world, stepping over a threshold. A world which, like Alice through the looking glass, is more symbolically charged and elliptical, less literal, more metaphorical, more

intensely packed with meaning and yet one in which meaning shifts and shimmers, from apprehension to illusion.

Relating metaphor to "naïve therapy"

In "Metaphors in Mind – transformation through symbolic modelling", Lawley and Tompkins (2000) describe five stages of a therapeutic process through which symbolic landscapes are discovered and changed. The choice of metaphor is at the heart of this process:

"Some clients find it illuminating to research the additional meanings, functions, history and etymology of key words and symbols … For others, a way to identify their patterns is to research the characters, folk tales, myths, stories, books and films which have appeared in their [Metaphor] Landscape." (p. 230)

In therapeutic terms, they describe a process of "utilisation" which involves a process of connecting two (or more) aspects of experience by means of metaphoric equivalence: whatever behaviour is offered by the client, it is accepted on its own terms and used to develop alternative responsive behaviour. It is an essentially pragmatic method permitting contextual shifts from one experiential domain to another via bridges which are constructed of metaphor. It relies profoundly on the ability of metaphor to structure (and by implication, to restructure) reality and to do so at the pre-conceptual, pre-verbal and unconscious level. It involves the transposition of aspects of one kind of experience into another.

Relating metaphor to my iPhone interviews:

When I listen to my iPhone interviews, I hear a deep stream of metaphorical meaning running throughout, in which emotional expressions often seem to map onto a visual description of the forest.

Revisiting Bateson and metaphor

Bateson's comparison of two forms of syllogistic logic provides a means of distinguishing between the experiential effects of metaphor compared with the categorical thinking contained within simile and analogy.

Like my iPhone method of "becoming another", metaphors establish connections that do not require conscious mediation. The kinds of connections that metaphors create result from a mapping of structure onto structure. However, unlike simile and analogy, metaphor generates relations of

equivalence not comparison. In Bateson's terms, the fact that two things can be seen as equivalent (via metaphor) is more important than showing they belong to a shared category.

Bateson describes this process through his analysis of "syllogism in grass".

> *(A syllogism is logical formula, essentially a triplet of sentences: the first two are premises or antecedents, the third a conclusion or consequent. Aristotle produced a system of classical logic in which valid arguments could be constructed, an interesting and unnerving aspect of which is that the validity of the argument relies on its form rather than its content such that the outcome can be logical but untrue. Barbara is a mnemonic, denoting a particular form of syllogism, the three A's in Barbara referring, for example, to All birds are animals, All parrots are birds, All parrots are animals.)*

I found in my method, that the comparison between syllogisms in Barbara and syllogisms in grass illustrates the difference between Stanislavski's "as if" and the inspiritedness of "as is". In my method, there is no member / category distinction between me and the character. I am not "pretending to be", I am. Existentially, we are the same. Potentially, we become each other.

This is illustrated by comparing the following forms:

Example of syllogism in Barbara (Aristotle's classic deductive logic based on member and category distinctions)

All living things die. Men and grass are living things. Men and grass die.

Example of syllogism in Grass (Bateson's form which he argues more accurately represents living systems – because member and category distinctions apply in language but not in the natural world)

Grass dies. Men die. Men are grass.

Bateson proposes that the logic of syllogism in Barbara has scant relevance to the experiential world where metaphorical relations – the mapping of structure on structure – prevail. The statement that "men are grass" is *evocative* and better expresses the elemental nature of being human – poetry compared with prose.

"The whole of animal behaviour …. is within itself linked together by syllogisms in grass, whether the logicians like it or not. It's really very simple – in order to make syllogisms in Barbara, you must have identified classes, so that subjects and predicates can be differentiated. But, apart from language, there are no named classes and no subject-predicate relations. Therefore, syllogisms in grass must be the dominant mode of communicating interconnection of ideas in all preverbal realms." (Bateson, 1991, p.27).

I refer back to my observation about gestalt (in which all is contained within figure and ground) and the idea that there is another realm, which represents *potentialities* rather than experienced realities, which fit into neither the category of what exists or what does not exist, but into another category of what could possibly come to exist.

I find this useful because it moves away from rational vs. irrational to create another possibility – non-rationality, which is neither logical nor nonsensical but which has its own meaningful coherence. It is also consistent with my observations about the incommensurability of paradigms and the possibility of "sailing in several seas". It supports the possibility of holding two apparently contradictory propositions as truth simultaneously; truth becomes not relative but pragmatic.

Metaphorical forests, mazes and labyrinths

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

The Hound of Heaven, Francis Thompson (1859 – 1907)

What am I hiding from?

Extract from Journal (March 2014)

"I thought of this poem, learned as a child at my Catholic school, during our last DSG meeting at Kingsway in February 2014, when Robin described my work as "labyrinthine". (We spoke of the maze at Ashridge mown in the grass: I was reminded of Bateson's syllogisms in grass and the practice at Chartres Cathedral of pilgrims walking the labyrinth on the cathedral floor, as a meditative practice).

It occurs to me now after long reflection that getting lost in the forest is a way of hiding. There is both a fear and a relief in being lost; a loss and an escape. Loss of security and identity, escape from restraint, reality and other people (Sartre's "L'enfer, c'est les autres" – hell is other people). I remember well the childhood shock of getting lost in a supermarket – where is my mother, am I alone? The momentary experience of being lost would be bearable, if only I knew that there would be an end to it. The knowledge that I would be found as a certain outcome would wholly negate the dreadful terror of eternal lost-ness.

My interest in getting lost in forests and hiding in trees invites further inquiry. One of the first women to find her way back by unravelling a ball of thread behind her was Ariadne, in the Greek myth of the Minotaur. It was the leaving of breadcrumbs, and then in the light of experience after they were eaten by birds, the leaving of white pebbles that Hansel and Gretel sought to find their way home. What happens when the way back is prevented? In Sleeping Beauty, the princes died on thorns which closed behind them, and entrapped them to a piteous death."

Socrates compared the path of a logical argument to a labyrinth, such that no matter how convoluted the argument may be, it is always capable of being followed through to the end. Unfortunately (or so I used to think) the end in the labyrinthine sense is always where you started, back to the beginning. The most successful outcome possible, if dangers are avoided along the way, is to return to the point of departure. This does not mean that the journey is wasted or worthless: much may be learned along the way. However, the unavoidable fact is that the end point is the beginning point and the only crucial orienteering skills are a) knowing that when you have reached the middle you need to turn for home, and b) being able to execute a 180 degree turn and head back the way you came. In that case, I wondered why it was necessary for Ariadne to use a skein of thread to find her way back; it can only mean that the labyrinth was, in fact, a maze.

Labyrinth is generally synonymous with maze although I find that there is an important distinction between the two in terms of the metaphorical life-puzzles they present: a *maze* refers to a complex branching (multicursal) path punctuated by places and moments of choice of direction; while a *labyrinth* has only a single, non-branching (unicursal) path, which leads inevitably to the centre. A labyrinth is not designed to be difficult to navigate. The challenge posed by labyrinths and mazes is different: in a labyrinth, the challenge is to survive dangers encountered on the way whereas in a maze, the challenge is two-fold and there are two means of survival. The first is to make successful intuitive directional choices which will lead ultimately to escape (there is no presumption of dangerous encounters along the way). The second is to ensure, through reliance on metaphorical or actual skeins or white pebbles, that you can retrace your steps and escape by following them back.

There is an implication historically that labyrinths came first, before mazes, but I think this is a mistake and that mazes are more ancient, derived from forest paths made by walking. I became intrigued by mazes when researching knot gardens and noted the contrast between the formal structure of my planned rose garden and the rambling paths in the surrounding woodland. I wonder again about the significance of my choice of a knot garden, and using a climbing knot (rather than a classical design) as the central motif. Knots and mazes are puzzles, questions, inquiries which require answers, solutions, resolutions, escape. Climbing knots are a source of safety, security and support. I wonder whether this was an early, non-verbal, metaphorical and entirely unconscious reference to the subsequent course of my inquiry. It seems, in a way, as if I was speaking to myself obliquely, a whisper or a trickle which would insinuate or seep through and quietly build up force so that the whisper became a breeze and then a whirlwind, a storm. I am reminded that "I have desired to go / where no storms come" (Gerald Manley Hopkins 1864, Heaven Haven, lines 5-6).

I would like to examine the metaphorical implications of the labyrinth and maze in terms of my inquiry. While it is possible for a maze to be a labyrinth (capable of being escaped from regardless of the choices made, i.e. all choices can lead to escape), it is not structurally possible for a labyrinth to be a maze (because there are no choice points – the path is simply followed).

So when considering life questions, the first thing at the outset is to decide whether you are in a labyrinth or a maze as this will determine your strategy for survival and escape. I wonder how far I could take this idea in practice:

Problem A is a labyrinthine problem.

(Life problems which are labyrinthine are those which require endurance – marriage?)

Problem B is a mazean problem.

(Life problems which are mazean require either reliance on intuition or luck, or a strategy or method which if applied correctly, will get you out – for example, variations on always take the right fork, or touch the wall with one hand keep moving – careers?)

Choosing to hide

Some of my photos are of my face hiding in the wood (behind ferns, branches). What does this mean? What does it hide and what does it reveal? It began as an accident (the iPhone was pointing the wrong way) but now I wonder if that is true and I am intrigued by these images which have become an inquiry thread. When I see them now, I wonder if I have been hiding my light under a bushel. Have I chosen to be invisible? I think I might have disappeared myself.

Fig 23a, b, c: images of berries, leaves, branches and me

Disappearing and other tricks

An important skill in practicing magic is the ability to make things disappear. I realise with a sense of some discomfort that this is central to my practice. I was challenged early on by my DSG about the fact I was absent in my inquiry writing, "where is Sue?" I disappeared the dark side photos at viva.

I referred in this context to my sister's comment about my role in the family when problems come: "you always make things go away".

I recall conversations from my executive search practice:

SL to clients: "Don't worry, I can make this go away" (with reference to problems they were confronting with their team – the solution usually involved "managing people out" and replacing them with someone they would like better).

Clients to SL: "Just get rid of this for me" (with reference to a board member who was behaving inappropriately or incompetently).

This elicited the following questions from the Quartet – how do you make [the problems] go away? *I deflect it, like a shield*. Do you take the problems on yourself? *No, definitely not, I send them somewhere else*. Where? *I don't know – maybe the metaphorical drawer with all the unanswered questions in it. I just get rid of it.*

What kinds of disappearing are there? There but <u>not seen</u>, or not there as in <u>gone</u>, <u>no longer existing</u>. In terms of magic tricks, the first is illusion, the second is would be changing matter.

The Dark Side

Extract from my post-viva paper (2nd May 2014)

"I reflected on the dark side referred to by my examiner during my viva in relation to the photos which I left out, discarded on the side.

Here are the photos. Next to them, are my notes. I am already aware of the unsaid, the unseen, what I choose to say and not to say, and what I am unaware of choosing not to say. I will write later about my reflections on this process, but here and now, I want to embark on a second cycle of "going deeper" into these photos which are beautiful in my eyes and which I already feel are invested with the first round of my story-telling. The date is 2nd May, 2014 and it is 13.39 – just after lunch on a dull, mild day but the light is intense with no shadows and a light breeze blows. An empty afternoon set aside for this task – I approach it with little enthusiasm, it feels like a chore but one which needs to be done. I am dreading it."

Fig 24 a – i: The dark side photos

Princes on thorns

- I grew these thorns as I slept, to keep you out and they did, you asshole
- I was pretty princess sleeping so leave me alone
- I'm growing things, I need peace and quiet
- I'm sorry about the "piteous death" but you should have turned back, you look like an idiot
- Why did you come, just go back
- See now it's too late, can't save you, don't want to
- Don't look at me like that

Chanel Rouge Noir

- Never saw my nails until the photo was printed, only saw berries
- I <u>became</u> them; more red than they are
- My hands look old, how beautiful
- Saw them again when Chris said *"how terrible if you were just making it all up, if it was all at trick"*
- Why are the colours the same, did I choose them
- I don't see blood, I see hearts, holding in my hand
- It's all true

Procession

- This is a lament, a silent walk
- I watched behind, a funeral march
- A Christian not a Pagan burial
- Carrying a coffin with us, one of us, all of us
- I felt death like a whisper, all our deaths
- And a handful of earth each, scattered
- It felt between the worlds we live in, silently

White bones

- I saw white bones, bones without number
- And many hearts with coal are charred yet few remember (Wilfred Owen)
- I lifted this skull up from the ground and put it there where it can see and be seen
- I like to think of it there
- Do you see how it could be the princes on thorns?
- But this one not piteous but proud and seeing
- Led a wild life

Holly Dolly

- Funny thing, strange
- How do they do that, come alive then you can't lose them?
- Carries all my dark side in her, simply
- I made her but why?
- And now she's binned but still there, like the other ones, the ones I made, I can't forget

Walking

- Hard to see this, alone at last
- No possessions, no road
- Young girl walking
- Don't know what this means
- Presented as "dark side" but walking towards the lightening mist
- Grey and soft

Love this photo

- This is me composting on the forest floor
- Flesh dissolving, eyes still bright
- Looking up at me and all of you
- Do you like me now?
- Do you like me now?
- Do you like me now .....

(The Libertine, epilogue)

Ghost in willow

- Took this shot of the willow, soft and white, on my table by the window
- Then, it's me there in the reflection
- Is that what ghosts are, reflections of us
- Looks like I'm outside but I'm inside
- I love the whiteness, the pureness, my concentration, lost in space

Time's fool: reflections on the temporality of being and becoming

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Shakespeare (Sonnet 116, lines 9-12)

One of the reasons I am drawn to metaphor is its relation to my perception of myself over time – what is immutable, which is changeable. This first dawned on me when my folk tale characters were speaking about how they had been written up by the Grimm brothers. They saw how they were written as a partial account and were keen to reinterpret. This led me to consider how within their control was the re-writing of their pasts and their writing of their futures. In my viva paper (December 2013), I ended with some quotations on time, which I reproduce here to frame the following section, which looks at metaphors concerning time.

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."

William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun

"It is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream."

Edgar Allan Poe

"The future came and went in the mildly discouraging way that futures do."

Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch

Metaphors relating to time

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe the metaphor system for time in the English language. The most basic metaphor for time has an observer at the present, facing toward the future, with the past behind them – this is the Time Orientation metaphor.

The Time Orientation metaphor:

The location of the Observer   The Present

The Space in Front of the Observer   The Future

The Space behind the observer   The Past

Linguistic expressions of this metaphorical mapping include:

"That's all behind us now. Let's put that in back of us. We're looking ahead to the future. He has a great future in front of him." (p.140).

They note that that this particular time metaphor has a spatial source domain but says nothing about motion: there are two additional metaphors for time that both involve motion. In one, the observer is stationary and time is moving; in the other, the observer is moving and time is stationary.

The Moving Time metaphor

This has a very specific spatial characteristic:

"There is a lone, stationary observer facing in a fixed direction. There is an indefinitely long sequence of objects moving past the observer from front to back. The moving objects are conceptualized as having fronts in their direction of motion" (p.141).

"I can see the face of things to come. I can't face the future. Let's meet the future head on". (p.143).

In this metaphor, the present time is the time that is in the same location as the stationary observer.

The Moving Observer metaphor (or Time's Landscape)

> In this metaphor, the observer, instead of being fixed in one location, is moving. Every location of the observer is a time and the observer's location is the present. The motion of the observer is the passage of time. The distance moved by the observer is the amount of time passed. Time is a path on the ground the observer moves over, hence an amount of time can be short or long.

> "There's going to be trouble down the road. We're getting close to Christmas. We passed the deadline. We're half-way through September. We've reached December already." (p. 146).

They then make a significant interpretative point regarding the relationship between what is (being) and what might be (becoming) which directly informs my point about gestalt and potentiality:

> "As we shall see, it is common for metaphors to come in pairs that are figure-ground reversals of each other. We will refer to such metaphor pairs as duals and the phenomenon as duality. Object-location duality occurs for a simple reason: many metaphorical mappings take motion in space as a source domain. With motion in space, there is the possibility of reversing figure and ground." (p. 149)

This holds great significance for my inquiry into being and becoming. It opens possibilities of agency: how much "happens to me" and how much do I "make happen"?

This latter metaphor suggests that I can regard myself (or as I prefer, <u>my being</u> because it places emphasis on my lived experience right now rather than an abstraction of something – the self – which is an unnecessarily complicated idea overlaid on the phenomenology of what I feel now in my present moment) as constant while time moves around me, and alternatively or simultaneously (there is no sense in which both cannot apply) that time is constant while I move around within it.

Later in my December 2013 viva paper (p. 98), I referred to Derrida's distinction between palindromes and palintropes:

"If we had world enough and time, I would go on to examine Derrida's evocation of the palintrope with its quality of "going back" and "always returning" and the distinction between this generative progression and its unfortunate cousin, the repetitive, locked in, palindrome….

"A <u>palindrome</u> starts and ends the same way. But a <u>palintrope</u> has a slightly different rhetorical flourish, it starts differently, with a start, it startles itself as it starts again. It startles itself, and as Derrida says, loses the logos".

Sean Gaston, *Starting with Derrida* (London: Continuum, 2007), vii.

I am less puzzled by this distinction now, as I see that when I "go back" or "return", I always find that something is different from last time, <u>because I have changed</u>. A consequence of "being is becoming" is nothing stays still. So, when I go back, I am surprised, startled, by what I find, and when I go back again, I am surprised again. There is no return to a fixed point of identity, of being. In the moment of experience, I am changed by it.

I became aware of these existential aspects of time in the process of my inquiry.

I think of time as a line, a continuum which I move along. I guess most of us think of ourselves moving from left to right, as with writing. So the question is always (logically) to the left of the answer, and above it, as with writing on a page.

I acknowledge my own sense that the past and the future are related existentially in ways more like clairvoyance, where the future is imagined from present clues more easily and readily than intuiting a person's past from their present.

So observing myself, my superficial "knowing" of my past (just because it is my own past and I lived it and somehow own it) gets in the way rather than assists my "knowing" myself existentially now because, for one reason alone, it bounds my imagination. My past forms me, constrains me and defines me – but – it does so in a way which is deeply unsatisfactory in terms of my soul narrative and what I know myself to be.

Time and knowing

I refer back to my examiner's observations on my post-viva paper about protection and self-disclosure: but another way to view this work is that it <u>enables</u> self-disclosure, to self and others. It is constructed of necessity as a puzzle or an enigma (because it takes form in ways that are unintentional and which are the opposite of conventional ways of making a film or telling a story – in that it takes its own shape and direction) but the point seems <u>not to be to illuminate causes</u> (what it is in my past that caused me to do or to say or think this?) but rather to discern the future (what is it that will come from this?) I have noticed that a recurring theme in my iPhone interviews is a sense of regret or recognition of consequences and how these moments are hopeful in terms of imagining alternative futures.

Perhaps this is a process / method for imagining the future, or rather imagining possible futures. Or re-writing or re-scripting along the lines of "what did I decide to do then and what could I decide to do now, that would make a difference?" In a sense, the process is a time-warp where voices from the past, present and future merge together. I had an abiding sense that when I am speaking in character, the time-lines are fluid and largely inconsequential.

<u>Conclusion</u>

I found that *embodied story-telling* involves boundary shifts between the teller and the person whose story is being told. There is a merging of stories, themes and identities. The process seems to be partly projection of my own story as teller onto the story of the protagonist and partly their archetypal elements eliciting recognition and response from me. It is qualitatively different from my experience of reading the tale and responding to it as textual analysis: it seems to bring the unexpected to the surface. It is much more personal. There is a curious effect of not being aware of what I am saying in real time, or rather, being aware of what I am saying as the character and feeling wholly present in the moment of being them, but not being aware of what I am saying which resonates with my own tale or issues that are present in my own life until during the subsequent reflexive process.

Folk tales as a genre are highly significant to me because I was raised with them and they feel deeply familiar. Their cultural archetypes are part of me. Their quality of sparseness, narrative economy and low levels of character development are useful in my process, providing bare branches to hang things on. The strength of the archetype is strong in relation to the weakness of the specific character and this contributes to their narrative utility in providing a shorthand version of sociocultural themes which indeed, they largely created (e.g. stepmother).

The *significance of the teller* is huge and probably the most significant to me personally in developing my practice. It is all about power. The teller assumes power by taking the role but it is an oblique form of power, difficult to challenge, controlling.

The *significance of the forest* – the importance is largely metaphorical and my comments above about folk tales as a genre apply, however, the forest as well as being intimately related to folk tales is a hugely powerful metaphor in its own right. Other place metaphors such as the sea, the mountains and the desert are potentially equally powerful but not to me, so the significance of place is, I think, to do with belonging and affinity. For me, this is deeply connected with the natural world: I have not considered urban ecology at all.

Metaphorical knowing: I discover that metaphorical knowing is at the heart of magical consciousness and that it is pervasive and capable of revealing that which is hidden. I find the forest metaphor and folk tales enable through my iPhone process, meanings to emerge through metaphor which were present but unknown before. This kind of meaning cannot be summoned through intellectual endeavour and neither can it be hidden by it. Being open to experiential knowing allows meaning to emerge in its own time and to enable a relationship with time which is reciprocal and transformational.

Time's fool: One of the more tentative conclusions which I drew from my experiential learning within this inquiry is that I give my "life" time (as opposed to "moon" time or "tree" time) more power than is necessary and that regret and longing as emotional markers are choices that can reside only in the present, and they belong only to me. I found that I can change time, just as time changes me.

In the next chapter, I present three practice accounts. I do so to "show not tell" how my inquiry has informed my practice and how the two have become conflated so that I am living my inquiry, in the way imagined by Judi Marshall (2001). It also illuminates aspects of my process in relation to method acting and the "magic if".

CHAPTER NINE: POLITICS AND GENDER: THE INSURRECTION OF SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGES

Introduction

Foucault (1976) identified a key epistemological consequence of the postmodern turn, namely the emancipatory opportunities presented by the wholesale and unapologetic rejection of metanarratives, observing that as dominant knowledge structures crumbled and were cast aside,

> *"alongside this crumbling and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local critiques, the facts were also revealing something [else] …*
> *the insurrection of subjugated knowledges." (p.81)*

In this chapter, I describe how my inquiry permitted an insurrection of the "subjugated knowledges" of domestic practice within a frame of feminist epistemology. I present two practice accounts, "Women in Leadership" and "Keeper of the Keys".

Practice Note:

This chapter was written in its entirety after submission of my original thesis.

It represents another, on-going cycle of inquiry prompted by my being challenged to consider the implications of politics and gender in my research.

Much of what follows was implicit in my original thesis but was unvoiced, partly because I regarded it as peripheral and partly because I had not realised the significance of what, and how much, was subjugated. Domesticity is the site of magical power in the folk tales and I see this now as a chapter of reclaiming, of consciousness-raising and of including within my relational self the fact that I am a woman who spends much of my time in domestic practice and who has colluded in its diminishment.

The "Keeper of the Keys" illustrates my instinctive and habitual use of diminutives to describe a local, personal and relevant inquiry which by my own criteria is valid.

Reflections on the gendered and political aspects of my practice

The importance of unimportant people

This is the title of the third chapter of Miller's (1976) *Towards a New Psychology of Women*, in which she describes how society values some aspects of the total range of human potentials far more than others, and how the valued aspects are appropriated by the dominant group, in this case, men. Subordinates (women) are traditionally assigned generally less-valued "menial" tasks, frequently those which involve providing bodily needs and comforts: feeding, cleaning, healing. However, Miller goes on to assert

> *"a most interesting and exciting proposition: in the course of projecting into women's domain some of the most troublesome and problematic exigencies, male-led society may also have simultaneously, and unwittingly, delegated to women not humanity's 'lowest needs' but its 'highest necessities' – that is, the intense, emotionally connected cooperation and creativity necessary for human life and growth". (p.26)*

Re-imagining my domestic practice as the "highest necessity"

As part of the process of finding my voice through this inquiry, I realised many sites of knowledge which I had subjugated intentionally or allowed to be subjugated. These included tacit knowledge of the forest, a sensitivity to pagan ways of knowing, the practice of magic in my daily life, artful knowing through the making of images; and intuition as a guiding force in relational practice. The insurrection of the knowledge contained within my domestic practice came rather late, indeed only a few days before my final viva in February 2015, after I had written my thesis. The moment of epiphany occurred during the making of the iPhone video which I prepared as the introduction to my viva. The following is my subsequent interpretation and processing of this video material, which gave rise to this new chapter. If you have not already viewed the video, then I invite you to do so now.

🌱 *Signpost to [My Practice – click here](http://suelloydresearch.com/my-practice/) or type http://suelloydresearch.com/my-practice/*

My interpretation

I was surprised by the content of this video, which I improvised in answer to the question, "what is my practice?" Several themes emerge which speak to power and gender.

I begin by expressing my new confidence that I could claim as my practice all my work, including that which forms

> "… the fabric and structure and content of my daily life …. I do not any longer need to support the idea that my practice is "out there" and of a higher order than the work which I choose to do in the home".

I then refer to a pagan epistemology, sited in the natural cosmos and the movement of the sun through the sky, from the east to the west, from dawn to dusk and nightfall:

> "… my days – and yours, I imagine – begin with the sun rising and it moves through the sky and then there is the dark night in the home and then dawn comes again".

I locate my practice:

> "in the home and the community where I live with the people I love and care for, and in that place I am a homemaker and a grower of seeds and maker of food and a cleaner and breadwinner and a hunter, a gatherer, a maker of gingerbread and a weaver and a spinner of tales".

Most startlingly, as I would not in other contexts have described myself in these terms, was my description of myself as:

> *"the holder of keys, part of the ancient and powerful line of women who hold the keys to the house and to the household".*

Later in the video, I then contrast my domestic practice with the secretive, covert, often brutal, "eat what you kill" profession of executive search consultant, *"all about fixing and solving and getting people and delivering them to order"*.

When describing the *"overarching or underlying aspects of my practice, which is the telling of tales",* I state with confidence that I now define my practice holistically in terms of *what I actually do*, asserting that my domestic practice – my work in the home – overarches and underpins everything else in defining what my true practice is and the importance of it.

The home as a site of subjugation, subversion and emancipation

The Grimm's folk tales, when originally published in 1812, were titled *Children's and Household Tales.* They are inherently domestic and in the process of working with them, they "brought me home" so that lately I have rediscovered and returned my attention to the value of female knowing as practiced in the family and home. Indeed, my iPhone method itself was conceived in the making of the Gingerbread House in the Hansel and Gretel project. It is remarkable that it took so long to recognise the subjugation of my domestic practice, as it seems so obvious now as I re-examine the folk tales and the contexts in which the stories unfold: my living in the country, keeping the family together, the loss of my home.

I reflect that home is where we start from and where we return, *"the place where, when you have to go there, they have to let you in"* (Robert Frost, 1914). But home, as well as being *"where the heart is"* (trad.) is also a place where hearts are broken. For many women and children, it is a place of danger and violence, somewhere to escape from. For the dispossessed and the homeless, home is a dream, a memory and a hope.

Before medicalization, the home was where babies were born and people died, and in England, until recently, just within my living memory, the dead remained there until burial, at rest alongside the living. All this was "women's work", the birthing and the laying out of the dead, and much of the knowledge of it has been lost to my generation and my daughter's:

When my mother died in the still of the night, my sisters and I decided to wait with her for quite some time before calling the nurses. I recall the sense of loss and desolation when finally we left her room leaving undertakers to shroud her body in a bag, place her on a stretcher like baggage and carry her to the waiting vehicle and drive off with her into the darkness while we stood watching. (Personal reflection, New Year's Day, 2015).

Later this year, the Right Rev. Libby Lane in her Easter sermon as the Church of England's first consecrated bishop, spoke of the women who entered Christ's empty tomb on Easter morning:

"In their terror, today's women could recognise the trials of their own lives. We know what it is to be kept awake by grief, by pain, anxiety, guilt, by anger, disappointment, by fear. We know what it is to be kept awake by love: being up all night nursing a sick child; sitting by the bedside of a loved one, holding their hand as death approaches; worrying through the dark hours about having let someone down, about what could have been done differently, about 'if onlys'". (York Minster, Easter 2015)

In urging women to "embody that love in action", Libby boldly reclaimed and re-anointed their subjugated knowledge within an institution which has repressed and denied women for centuries. I sense subversive intent here, urging women to act and to bring forth their domestic struggles and to act on them in the world.

Women's ways of knowing

Building upon Miller's (1976) vision of women's work being of "the highest necessity", Joyce Fletcher (1999) describes how normative, masculinised, psychological development theories emphasise the achievement and maintenance of *difference* through authority, autonomy, domination and repression and suppression by the dominant masculine discourse (manifest in homophobia, racism, sexism). An alternative narrative emerges when women's ways of knowing are admitted. Fletcher contrasts this dominant account of human development with one which is centred on "growth-fostering interactions" involving mutual empathy and empowerment, acceptance of each other's vulnerability, openness to the expression of

emotion and the desire to ensure mutual of growth rather than one which is competitive and leads to zero-sum outcomes.

"Relational practice is a way of working that reflects a relational logic of effectiveness and requires a number of relational skills such as empathy, mutuality, reciprocity, and a sensitivity to emotional contexts" (Fletcher 1999, p.84).

In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al (1986) describe how dominant theories of cognitive development have excluded women's voices, both as authors and as the subjects of empirical research. Their women-centred research revealed five knowledge perspectives through which women view themselves and their relationship to knowledge.

> *Silence* describes the first epistemological position, in which women felt disconnected from knowledge, the sources of knowledge and their own relationship to knowledge.

> *Received knowledge* is an epistemological perspective in which women perceived knowledge as a set of absolute truths received from infallible authorities.

> *Subjective knowledge* is characterized by an awareness of themselves as authorities capable of producing knowledge on which they can reply - the "infallible gut".

> *Procedural knowledge* reflects the recognition that there are multiple sources of knowledge and these sources need to be critically examined and evaluated. *Procedural knowers* focus on methods and techniques for verifying external truth and the relative worth of various sources of authority.

> *Constructed knowledge* involves recognition of the interrelatedness of knowledge, knowing and the knower. These women accepted that all knowledge was constructed as opposed to given and appreciated its mutability, temporality and dependence on experience and context. They saw knowledge as "a constant process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction" (Love and Guthrie 1999) and typically arrived at this view after intense self-reflection.

Belenky et al reported that holding a perspective of *constructed knowledge* often involves a highly developed capacity for "empathetic potential".

It was suggested to me during the early stages of my inquiry fieldwork with the folk tale characters that it seemed to require a strongly empathetic orientation and to demand an ability to see the world from another's perspective. The colleague who first made the observation remarked on another occasion that she found when experimenting herself with the iPhone method that she found it a quick way of "getting inside someone's head" and that speaking in their character revealed depths of emotion that she had not realised.

While I distinguish the practice of "being another" from empathy per se, I have been encouraged to believe that my process is supportive of women's ways of knowing and in particular, to Fletcher's (1999) observations about the importance of empathy in relational practice. I intend to develop this in future inquiry, specifically, relating Belenky's five knowledge perspectives to the "coming into being" of the folk-tale archetypal women through the retellings of others. It is self-evident to me now that my "being another" – how I tell the story of another – reflects my own present "state of being" and state of knowing with regard to their, and our, story. The movement within Belenky's framing is towards my deepening appreciation that the characters are neither authorially nor authoritatively "given" and are not separate from me, but intimately related and co-constructed.

Folk tales as a subversive genre

In terms of the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, folk tales are a strongly subversive genre in that they give voice within the home and the domestic realm to themes such as murder, rape, child abuse, evil, escape, entrapment, violence and revenge in a way that is rendered "just a story" and "not real". The more deeply I inquired into individual folk tales, the more I detected a kind of coded knowledge bound by the themes that ran across them. The underlying story was often far more contested and splintered that the deceptively brief plot and narrative structure suggested. This is one of the most surprising elements that surfaced when I spoke the tales. The subjugation of the female voice is apparent in many traditional and contemporary interpretations of the tales I examined: Hansel & Gretel, Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel. I refer the reader to Jack Zipes (2006) *Why Fairy Tales Stick*, and Marina Warner (1994) *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* for contemporary interpretations of the genre.

I think this subjugation of voice is what the characters railed against in my iPhone retellings. It is a feature of postmodern reinterpretation that these female roles have been extensively and recently rewritten in multiple book and film adaptations accompanied by a new genre of "anti-fairy tales" in which the original plot is subverted, generally along gendered and feminist lines. (An examination of this literature is regrettably beyond the scope of this thesis, however, please see Angelina Jolie's film *Malificient* (2014) and Sara Maitland's "*Gossip from the Forest*" (2012) as exemplars).

Cycles of emancipation

As to my own inquiry, when interpreting my folk tale field studies, I refer to a cycle of Survival, Awakening and Escape.

I see this cycle as fundamental to my own experience, reflected in my retellings. I observe that in all three of my folk tales, the home (gingerbread house, castle, tower) is the place in which the feminine protagonist discovers and uses her own power, the key which unlocks her destiny: Gretel shoves the witch into the oven; Sleeping Beauty steps over the threshold to the tower room; and Rapunzel descends using her hair as rope. Claiming domestic work as a valid and legitimate practice of "the highest necessity" requires recognition of the socio-political context in which I am first entrapped (a woman's place is in the home); then I awaken (consciousness-raising); and then I escape (from an equally oppressive judgement that my value is higher in the "workplace" (outside the home) than the "workplace" (in the home).

In my own retellings, I find the following emancipatory themes which I identified when considering my field studies in the light of Foucault's insurrection of subjugated knowledges.

Hansel and Gretel

> *When Gretel discusses her alleged murder of the witch / stepmother / mother, she talks about her pride in how she has been immortalised down the years as the strong one, stronger than her brother. She at no time adopted the interior role of victim or prisoner and she deceived the witch by compliance with the traditional role of domestic servant and non-threatening subservient member of the household. However, escape was never far from her mind and she deployed cunning to bid her time and indeed buy time by deceiving the witch into thinking that her brother,*

Hansel, was still too thin to make a good meal.   Deceit is a weapon in the female arsenal against her oppressor. I am reminded of the victims of domestic abuse imprisoned by their fathers, raped and forced to bear their children until opportunity presents itself to run.   When they run, they don't look back.

Sleeping Beauty

The key scene takes place at the threshold of female knowing, the door to the attic room, where the crone (older, wise woman) awaits with the spinning wheel (an implement of women's work and financial independence, prohibited by the King). This is a forbidden place, a place of danger, into which Sleeping Beauty longs to go. She is driven there by anger and frustration and the need for women's knowing beyond what she has been allowed for fifteen years. Here she is pushing the boundaries set by her parents in pursuit of a broader feminine epistemology: she no longer wants to be protected; she wants to break out of the pink baby bubble in which she is suffocating. She wants to be a woman, to make her choices, to choose her own mistakes. She did, and she paid for them by a long period of dormancy, but then she survived their consequences, and lived long.

Rapunzel

The moment of leaving was when she was ready. She was complicit in her entrapment: it serves her well in ways that she comes to understand. Once she understands, she works her way towards knowing her own needs and how to address them. She made plans and incubated them. When she is ready, and only then, she leaves, gracefully, in her own time, bearing her child to a future of her choosing. And she lands lightly, leaving behind her long blonde hair.
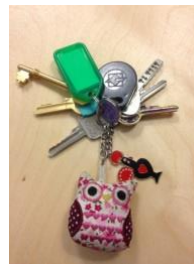

Practice Note:

My "being another" allowed me to find myself and unlock the keys to my own cycles of Survival/Awakening/Escape, through engaging with the archetypal women, the essential women, of the folk tales. When I speak, I speak not of them but of us, of me.

"BEING" AT HOME vs "BEING" AT WORK

Women in Leadership

Drawing home

Keeper of the Keys

An ancient line of women

In this section, I present two practice accounts: the first describes an incident at a Women in Leadership conference which I attended in relation to my work on gender diversity in the boardroom; and the second is an inquiry which I conducted via email regarding the meaning of keys to the women closest to me, in pursuit of my curiosity around what I mean when I spoke of the ancient line of women, the keeper of keys to the household.

To contextualise these accounts, I first discuss briefly two contrasting sites of women's work: *home* in which "housework" takes place and *work* in which remunerated activity occurs. As sites of subjugation and emancipation, these are heavily contested domains.

Being another as an existential imperative

> *It occurs to me that "being another" is what women often have to be in the performance of "proper work" (leaving their domestic practices at the door with their other self) and that another interpretation of my inquiry is that it concerns the imperative and existential consequences of "being another" if one makes certain choices, like being financially independent; or perceive certain choices to have been thrust upon you, like being the main breadwinner, or being "just a housewife", or make certain choices, like remaining in a marriage "for the sake of the children" or through fear of being alone, or of losing financial support.*

Regarding home and work as *oppositional sites* holds great significance for the women in my two practice accounts. For many, it involves holding two identities: in my own experience, the "juggling" which is frequently referred to as the challenge of working motherhood, is not so much one of task management, but of identity management. I experience in my executive search practice that the hostility of the boardroom to women frequently requires active management of identity as a survival strategy.

Pateman (1983) observes that, "The dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and political struggle; it is, ultimately, what the feminist movement is about" (p.119). However, she adds, "it must be remembered that this division is a fiction." It is self-evident, surely, that the public and private are inextricably connected? As Hanisch (1969) famously observed, "The personal is the political".

Indeed, Weintraub and Kumar (1997, p.31) pointed out that "overcoming the gendered and invidious separation between the 'private' sphere of family and the rest of social life is a key practical task for women's emancipation" citing three core feminist arguments for challenging this divide:

> *"One is that [social and political theory] have ignored the domestic sphere or treated it as trivial. The second is that the public/private distinction itself is often deeply gendered, and in almost uniformly invidious ways …..The third is that, by classifying institutions like the family 'private' … the public/private distinctions often serve to shield abuse and domination within these relationships from political scrutiny or legal redress".*

Feminist analysis has traditionally rejected the liberal notion that the public sphere should not impinge on the private on the grounds that the private sphere idealised by notions of hearth and home denigrated and endangered women by placing them beyond community scrutiny. On the other hand, bel hooks (1990) describes how "the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension…. One's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanisation, where one could resist".

The folk tales are situated in the domestic sphere, the home, the place where traditionally, women work. In my executive search practice, I observe how difficult it is for women to assert the feminine or the domestic as priorities without denigration; to infuse, as Carol Gilligan urges, private sphere values such as the "ethic of care" as a means of instilling the feminine voice into the predominantly masculine public sphere.

My first practice account, "Women in Leadership" illustrates this.

The second, "Keeper of the Keys", affirms it.

Women in Leadership Conference: London 2012

Keynote speaker: Mary Portas - Queen of Shops

200 women waiting for the conference to begin: running slightly late.

Facilitator: While we're waiting, we're going to hand around paper and pens, please draw a picture, all your own work, no conferring please, then fold it and hand it down to the centre aisle.

Five minutes later: Let's see what we've got here … OK, this one's a house. And another house. And here's a smiley face. And a cat. Oh, and another house. And another one.

Another five minutes later: So I'm guessing about 100 pictures here and what, 80 houses? What's that telling us? And now we're ready to start, enjoy the conference, and welcome to our keynote speaker: Mary Portas, Queen of Shops!

Mary spent the first few minutes telling us about her new range of knickers and how "they don't get stuck up your bum". Then about how upset she was seeing negative press reports that morning about her new project. She then gave a brilliant and inspiring session about women not being dictated to in terms of how they "did leadership" and the importance of dumping negative influences and not taking no for an answer.

In the coffee break, the conversation in my circle was mostly about the house drawings and how everyone was constantly worried about what was going on at home while they were at work, mainly what they were "not doing" with the children and Mary said that was what she was most dreading if she and her girlfriend succeeded in having a baby – would just she feel the guilt or would they both? The women who didn't draw houses or stick people said they felt really guilty now, especially the one who drew a Mulberry handbag, label and all. No-one else saw anything wrong with that. Several admitted they used the paper to make a shopping list or to do list. I thought afterwards that this is what women talk about in business when there are no men around, before they get down to business. If men are around, it feels unprofessional. Food for thought … why is that?

Mary Portas's Kinky Knickers

Turning the light back on for Great British Manufacturing

The next practice account "Keeper of the Keys" picks up where this first one ends for "working" women, at the end of the day, finishing work, and arriving at the front door, the magical threshold beyond which is the home.

Keeper of the keys

I wake up at dawn, and as I turn over, I hear the gentle thumping of the dog's tail on the floor under the bed where she sleeps when my husband is in residence. When he's away, she sleeps on the bed. I reach my hand down and stroke her ear. We pad downstairs together into the kitchen and I put on the kettle, mug, teabag, milk from fridge. Unlock the back door, let her out. Unload the dishwasher. Switch on Radio 4. Think. Think. What's going on today? Dog food in bowl, put it on the floor. Go outside to sit on the step, a moment of calm. Watch the cobwebs glittering with dew. Check my iPhone for messages in the night. (Personal reflection, June 2015)

Remembered! Lots going on today: I need to decide whether to take on an assignment which will take me away from home for chunks of each week. I don't want to but I feel that I should. I'm worried about taking it and not taking it. I'm meeting a friend later, her daughter is having major problems at school. And there's no food in the house, or rather nothing tempting, I should plan better, think ahead. I need to arrange to see the family, and I have a pile of bills to pay and banking to do and buy three birthday presents. I have to phone my sister, the funeral's next week. I need to arrange dental appointments, get the grass cut, speak to the school, think about summer holidays, remind my husband to sort his son out, and have a big tidy up after the weekend.

This isn't working. It's a "to do" list, it feels like I'm trivialising domestic practice, which is so much more than doing things, getting things done. It's about the emotion work, about holding things together, creating a safe space, a welcoming home, being there, making home comforts, belonging, keeping stories going, staying connected, remembering things, providing security, things that don't change, a million tiny things over a long, long time, all done imperfectly, boring, tedious tasks that create warmth and lasting love. *I've just read the first sentence in this paragraph again, "this isn't working".* I meant that this practice account isn't working but I've just read it in the sense that I often feel about my domestic practice:

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It isn't working.

It's not a real job.
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I'm distressed. What did I mean in my video about being holder of keys and being part of an ancient line of women? What is it about keys?

I emailed my two sisters, my niece and later, several women friends:

```
From:        Sue Wiper
To:          Sheila Lloyd (slloyd007@btinternet.com);  Sally-Anne Lloyd (sally-annelloyd@talktalk.net);  Emily Attridge
Cc:
Subject:     Little favour

I am doing a little research study and I am interested in the question of keys to the household.

Would you mind photographing your keys on your iPhone or whatever (your day to day bunch of keys) and emailing me the image and in so doing, provide me with permission to use the image if required in my research.

Thanks as ever x

Sue Wiper
+44 7932 040363
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I note how I diminished the importance of this request

"little favour", "little research study"
```

But a flurry of replies comes in quickly, I hear the familiar pings on my iPhone: they are treating my request as important, taking it seriously. They are writing about their keys as well as sending an image. I didn't ask them to, but they are. I'm excited, this is important, I'm glad I did it. It struck a chord.

Ping. *I can't find my sodding keys!!!!!*

Ping. *OK will do later.*

Ping. *Smiley face.*

Ping. *What for?*

Ping. *There u go. Still OK for lunch?*

Ping missing. *[Lara, probably forgotten to take her phone]*

Here's what they emailed me:

My keys represent comfort and sanctuary. That moment, after a difficult day, when the key goes in the lock; a slight turn to the right; the door being pushed open; the familiar smell of my own home; the little sigh as I step over the threshold. To this day (and I've lived in my home for over 20 years) I still sometimes, as I step inside and toss the keys to the floor, say out loud, "Hello little house." And I can actually feel myself relaxing. I know then that I am home safe and sound and when I close the door behind me, I am closing the door on work life and can look forward to home life.

Here you go - permission granted! The owl is for Grandma (me and mum have one each). The ugly gold keys and green plastic thing are keys for my office. Grey plastic thing is the fob to my flat building. The chicken is the Nando's logo, which I got as a freebie when I went to their grad scheme interviews. The purple circle is one of those tokens that fits in the trolley at Sainsbury's.

God knows if the explanation was needed, if not I'm sure I've bored you to tears!

Love you, hope to see you soon

The keys to my life – car key, fob for office door, set for boys' flat on far right, middle set is for the new house (must give you a set, there's a spare set under brick near bins), on the left there's one of those fake coins for Sainsbury trolley and a diamond ring which Kay left behind so I don't lose it, and the heart says I love you mummy. Is this too much information – I'm thinking I carry too many keys around with me. I panic when I can't find them.

Looking at my keys, I see an ordinary object that gives me an extraordinary sense of belonging, safety and joy. An object I sometimes neglect and pay no attention to and yet I enjoy every time I pull it out of my bag and insert into the key hole. In that very moment, my keys are my treasure; opening the door of my home brings some excitement and anticipation - will my dog jump on me once again? Will my husband notice I am back? Will my daughter run to me and welcome me back or will I get ignored? I like the feel of my keys, sharp, cold and smooth at the same time.

This just reminded me of a moment when I needed to hand over my copy of our house keys to our tenants whilst we were heading to live in Europe. It was such a difficult moment - giving up your keys of a place I love and handing over to someone else; it felt like handing over your life to someone else to have and stepping into a total unknown.

I am attached to my keys and take care of them - like them to be with me and like the feel of them in my pocket or my bag. How beautiful and how ordinary at the same time this object is....

The two keys at the top with the horrible red plastic tag are for the flat. The other 3 are for the house. I keep the car keys separate. The silver charm was a gift for my 40th. The Prada star was also a birthday present. Xx

My house keys and car key below to my mini and [husband's] car. My mini key fob from my first mini is a Park Lane fob - very posh! My long red leather key ring is a new addition a birthday present from a friend it helps me find my keys at the bottom of my bag and is also a handy dog lead if I am stuck without! My second bunch is my work keys to my classroom, office and pantry also the red smiley face is the key to my stationary cupboard. The pin drive carries all my work so vital and the key ring is a memento from a trip to Legoland in 2006 of [husband] and the boys the lady in the picture is not me but my students often think it is me!

You have my permission to use if of any use to you Sue
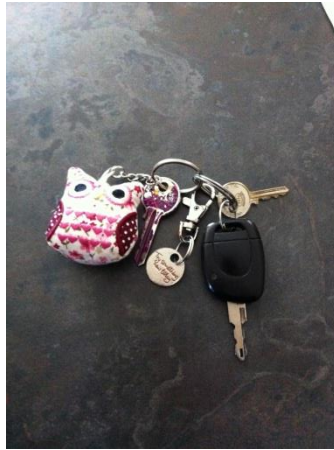
Must catch up soon, lots of love xxxxxx

Photo attached. I recently pruned my excessive bunch. Now left with Owlie (gift from Emz); trolley token; car key; house key; unidentified little key which I'm scared to chuck out in case I remember whatever vital thing it unlocks.

Freedom and independence
Living the way I want to
Gentrification, 4 locks, 4 keys inherited from the previous owners but we only use two
The lovely mottled marble of the fireplace in our study room
My Boris key and my bike key too
Some B'stard stole my bike last week
Feels like having my legs cut off
Hard fought for / Love / Laughter / Friends/Eating and drinking/A garden/Trees/Home

Hope it's useful, Big hugs,

Front door - usual two keys - I love the colour if my front door - aubergine/purple   People says our house is out there standing forward of the rest - a very luminous natural white with purple doors

Garage key - door also purple - only recently got this key - used to be the garage was for boys bikes and decorating kit - now the muddy dog route into the house.

Lucky charm: this was [husband's] - he's had it since he was a boy - long time - 'keep me and never go broke' with four leaf clover I think   Now all worn out. I've adopted it - doesn't matter who keeps it - we're part of one whole

Don't really often use them - usually the last one home - no domestic goddess or stay at home mum

Eldest has gone away - starting to think it won't be long until the big white house with purple door won't be needed any more....

What will the keys look like then - hanging next to the lucky charm, I hope

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This is what the keys showed me about what I meant by being the keeper of the household, the ancient line of women:

All the women, my sisters, nieces, friends held their keys close to them and they shared them with me freely.

Their keys were invested with their relationships.

They held secrets, mysteries – as well as the ordinary, the mundane, the unlocking of front doors, they were keys to the unknown, the emblem of what would happen in future when children left or what happened in the past (grandma, memories).

They were frequently held together with tokens (supermarket trolleys) and amulets (owls, photos, charms, jewels) that held other meanings.

They were significant.

Gifts were prominent and there was a clear sense of their aesthetic qualities.

This is a transcript of a recording of me answering my own question (the light was too poor for iPhone).

Q: What did you mean when you spoke of the ancient line of women who were the holder of the keys to the household?

I've reflected on it a lot since. It's to do with power, overt and also secret power, and unlocking ways to keep us safe, to keep away danger. Folklore describes planting rowan, the mountain ash, on the boundaries to keep out evil. Garlic around the door repels vampires. Charms, like holed flints, likewise. The threshold to a home contains ancient magic such that anyone crossing unasked, loses their power and can cause no harm. I think these are folk memories, like "keeping the wolf from the door" meaning financial survival, keeping the lights on, putting food on the table. Bailiffs and bandits were cast in folk tales in images of wild animals. I have a strong sense of my domestic practice being about protecting my daughter from harm. When wolves came to my old house in the night, I threatened to shoot them with my husband's gun.

Keys are part of that narrative.

I love keys: I like the feel of them. I enjoy their mystery. I find them evocative rather than purely instrumental like those electronic fobs which open cars, which I hate. When you use proper keys, there's real dramatic tension. First, finding the keys, always a relief – that's why we hide them in secret places (under the mat usually or under a stone near the door) and give spare sets to friends just in case, a safety net against being locked out. I've wedged my daughter many times through half-open windows when she was small and told her to run round and unlock the door. Then, there's the fiddling with them if the lock's a bit broken, getting it just right, the frustration of not being able to force it, just jiggling it around until it works.

There's a metaphorical aspect to keys as well. I think that's what I meant. As holder of the keys, I control not only who comes in and out of the house, but I hold the key to the past, I'm custodian of our memories telling and reinventing our family.

I'm thinking of the family photos, the letters kept and the documents destroyed. The computer files deleted, the ones saved to memory stick. The stories and anecdotes

told and the ones forgotten or left to fade. In the sense that we co-create each other,
I write about this in my thesis, we are keys to each other's understanding of
ourselves: we can unlock each other's self-puzzlement.

Talking about domestic practice

All this is hard to write about. It's hard for me to get over feeling "it's not worthy" or "it's boring" yet it also feels immensely potent. It seems mundane yet transcendent, dull yet luminous, all at the same time. I'm actually enjoying writing this the most, of all my other chapters.

In "Qualitative Research", Anderson et al (2011) note that some things are beyond the realms of inquiry, including the ineffable … I am finding that in order to provide a satisfactory and honest domestic practice account, it is necessary to speak of my family and the issues we confront in our home in a way which might breach our privacy. It is also impossible to fictionalise. And yet, I do not wish my domestic practice to remain hidden. It's important to talk about these issues in the *public domain* as well as at home, in the family, between friends.

Practice Note: When the time is right

While I have chosen not to disclose or to report certain videos within this thesis, for the protection of myself and others, I have destroyed none of the material, believing that I will return to it when the time is right: I equate this to the practice of saving certain letters, and photographs, and books and postcards from the past in recognition that they will have significance later and that to destroy them will lead to future regrets like the unopened letter ripped up in rage and burned before reading. I have used my keys to lock them away, where only I know.

"The practices of keeping and saving personal artefacts fall to women: the photographs, the birth and death and marriage certificates, the dates of birthdays and anniversaries, the first baby teeth, the first lock of hair, the orders of service of weddings and funerals, the children's school reports and handprints, the in utero scans, the family trees. This is the work of women as curators and caretakers in the domestic sphere: custodian of the family's scandals and accomplishments, the writers and re-writers through photo albums and now Facebook, of the collective stories which form the socio-political context of our personal lives. This, I believe, is what I was channelling when I spoke of "the ancient line of women" being "keeper of the keys". I see now that the keeper of keys is also the "time-keeper". (Personal Reflections, June 2015).

Conclusion

The ineffable is where I end this chapter, reflecting that the mundane, the domestic practice, is the most profound and the one that matters most. It is of the "highest necessity" and some of it is beyond the realm of inquiry.

In honouring the ineffable, I concur with Nicola Jane Pollard (2007) from Middlesex University, who concludes her unpublished thesis *"Folding and withholding: writing with and by choreographers"* with the observation that her aim is "to expand perspectives rather than to narrow them" and "to avoid that sort of conclusion that refocuses, narrows, self-interrogates, re-iterates, and proceeds then to practice closure".

This is the spirit in which I would like us to go forth.

EPILOGUE

> *"It is difficult to know where to start the telling: the king's injunction to Alice to*
> *"Begin at the beginning … and go on until you come to the end: then stop" no longer*
> *seems possible. But as the teller of the tale, start I must …."* (Prologue)

It's even more difficult to know where to stop: there are no beginnings or endings.

> *"What survives when we are gone seems to me to define us more than anything else,*
> *but is something that might never be known by us, only to others". (SL May 2011)*

I discovered the truth of this, and also that there is something better than being a teller and that is to be a listener. If I could write my thesis again, it would be from the other side. I learned also that my story is not mine alone to tell – it belongs to me but it also belongs to others.

An invitation

Imagine sitting contentedly in an armchair in a warm and comfortable room. It's a small study, with books around the walls. It's a December evening, around evensong. It's chilly outside. We're on our second bottle of red wine; I'm here with the Quartet. You're here, and so is Robin. We've been together for four years now, conversation is easy. As the distant church bells ring the hour, I put another log on the fire and slip out of the door. It's hard to leave. I hear the voices of the Quartet fading as I walk down the hall, unlatch the door and leave them to end this chapter, as I step into my new one, into the wind and oak leaves blowing.

APPENDIX 1: FIELD STUDY TRANSCRIPTS

In this Appendix, I present a selection of transcripts from my iPhone interviews.

These are a primary source material from my field work on the folk tale trilogy. These were made early in my process: I subsequently decided not to continue with transcription from video to text as a matter of course.

Hansel and Gretel

Woodcutter (father):

I know this makes me look like a complete cunt. But it all worked out for the kids and for me. I had no choice. She would have killed them anyway or they would have starved. You don't know what it's like. My first wife destroyed me. My second wife gave me back my life. They changed the story when they wrote it down: they made my first wife a stepmother: it's not how it was. But it's got confused now, who was step and who was real mother. It's a long time ago. OK, my first wife would never have sent the children away – she would have seen me starve first, probably preferred me to. In a way, I did starve: after they were born, she basically killed me off – no longer required. They lived in our bed. But my second wife put me first – And I knew what was going on that day, I had a plan. I'm not stupid. I was going to go after them, to make them safe. It wasn't the birds that took the bread crumbs; it was me, so she couldn't follow them. I was going to take them to my mother's house. They would have been safe there. But it all worked out in the end. They adore me, I adore them. He's a professor now, she's a CEO. My son looks at me weird sometimes but my daughter worships her father, as daughters do. Thank God.

Mother (stepmother):

(sitting on a sofa in old people's home)

Well, I'm the bitch then. I tried to love them but they only wanted their "real" mother. Except I was their "real" mother – the other one disappeared to build a beautiful home in the forest where they could come and live one day. Except, they didn't want to. Did I say "send them out to the forest to die"? No, not exactly. But what I did say was send them off then to the beautiful house in the forest to die (of f*** boredom probably but at least they would be out of our way and we could finally have our own life). Have you spoken to her already? I'm not saying I'm proud of what happened. But you haven't actually seen children die of starvation or felt the utter desperation of no possible prospect of food or fuel. That's because you live in 2012 in big houses in the country. Anyway, I'm out of it now. I starved a long time back in the Great Famine. Enjoy your life.

Hansel:

(Professor in university office)

It all seems a bit crazy now, when I look back on it. Times were really hard then and my father never intended us to fall into the hands of the "witch in the wood". It's okay between us now. When he took us back, it felt like we were coming home. We never spoke about it really. Our stepmother died in the famine. It's OK, god rest her soul. Gretel looks after father now, he's very old, she pays his nursing home. I remember reading our story when I did my doctorate at the University of Vienna in my fourth incarnation. I've stayed in Austria always down the years, so has Gretel and both our families. The interpretation of our story being about Belsen and the death camps was hard. The worst thing though is that I have photos of her but not of my real mother. Freud said they were the same mother: when she said she was fattening me up for my own good, I believed her. Only Gretel said it was not.

Gretel:

Armani suit. Crisp.

What can I tell you? Did I push a wicked witch into the oven and murder her – no, I did not. My mother was complicated. She'd totally messed up and went off to build this Nirvana in the forest where Hansel and I could come and live with her one day. Meanwhile, leaving us with this bitch who only wanted to make my father happy (who, by the way, is the Hero in this and not the passive derelict he's made out to be, thanks to the imbecilic Brothers Grimm). My mother was mental. We had no money and no-one to care for us. My mother was into building houses. Beautiful ones: in the country. Then the wicked stepmother turned up and made daddy happy. I think he got her number from a telephone kiosk equivalent in 1350 or whenever they first wrote. I hated her, obviously, but she died thinner than in her wildest dreams, so there you go, in the Great Famine. So, no, I didn't push my own mother into the flames – why would I? We had a fight. Shit happened. She wanted Hansel to grow big and strong and shoved all the food his way while I scrubbed the floors. Fuck that. I was CEO here at 31 years old: yes, I took my chances. And I quite like my write-up as the strong female character. I'm time-warping this, because it's part of who I am now, mummy dearest.

Witch:

I'm guessing you saved me 'til last.

It's all so long ago, I barely remember. My husband then was a fucking idiot who couldn't even place a loaf on the table to feed four. Why? He was out hugging trees and planting saplings. I left in the end. We lived in a shack. My daughter was a princess, my son was a prince. We had no running water and the sight of them getting thinner and thinner was killing me. I went to build them a beautiful home, which I did, and which they came to, eventually.

It boils my blood to hear you read our story aloud. She tells my useless worthless husband to kick them out to be killed by wild animals so she can eat yet more food? She doesn't need more food. She's size 16. And I'm wicked? Did I kill children? I might have done, but not to eat them. I'm not a cannibal despite what's been said. I wanted company. Yes, I encouraged children to visit, with their parents, before the famine. Then, after the famine started, alone but bringing their sweets. I needed them for the house. When I say, I might have done, I didn't actually kill them, but I definitely on more than one occasion gave them a heavy slap for ripping great chunks off my gingerbread roof TO EAT. How would you feel, if someone came and took a chunk out of your home and ate it, right there on the lawn. It's not about food – I could live on air. Not like the rest of my family.

Plus, I never locked Hansel in a stable, I placed him in the guest suite over the stable and fed him the very best food imaginable, to build his strength. I'm not a Jewish mother (and possibly that's why the appalling "oven scene equals Belsen death camps" idea took a hold) but I did not want my son to become the weak, sappy, useless piece of shit that my former husband became. And if you want a villain, go and talk to him. "Send the children into the forest to die" she said? So he did. Christ Almighty. My daughter knew it was me from the first time she saw me. My son didn't recognise me: I was lovely when I was younger. He knew me though, in the end.

Director's notes:

I was struck by how the original Grimm story didn't develop character at all – it's written as stereotypes. The Grimm brothers were more concerned with linguistic heritage than psychological / metaphorical meanings. I was struck by how the characters might have told their own stories and thought that one way to develop this in practice is through psychodrama.

I interviewed myself in character as a "stream of consciousness" similar to an oral version of freefall writing. As I kept talking, I was surprised how I came to empathise with each one and in talking their stories, a few themes emerged in common:

1. Resentment at the Grimm Brothers for setting their character in stone, forever, with no prospect of personal revision or excuse

2. Anger at the woman who told the tale to the Grimm Brothers – a neighbour with a grudge who told a partisan tale "she would say that, wouldn't she"

3. Self-justification and a feeling of not being understood, of not being perfect but of behaviour not being seen in context

4. A sense that this happened a long time ago and that it no longer matters much what really happened because it has been overtaken by how the tale was written but that the consequences have continued to be felt down the years and have shaped and determined character development and self-perception

Place was important – I went to places where each character might be, or have been, to record the interviews. The father on a bench in the garden of his nursing home, Hansel in a university, Gretel in a corporate office, witch outside Witchcraft Cottage, step/mother on death bed.

Hats were important – I adapted hats from my own collection and personalised them for the story. The witch's hat was from a Halloween dressing up box, the step/mother's hat is one

of my winter hats from the 1980s, Gretel's hat is from the 1970s, the pheasant's feather is missing now, and the woodcutter's hat is from Oxfam.

The white stones are a dangling thread – I think they are related to the white bird in the story, who leads them to the house, and the other white bird who carries them across the river home. But I'm not sure what they mean yet. I said who not which (witch?) I think they're good people.

I watched the new Bond film Skyfall last night – towards the end, when they are tracking the villain through the London underground system, there is a reference to "following the bread crumbs". The story is still widely referenced – a film about to be released is entitled Hansel & Gretel – Witch Hunters.

Opening shot: I'm up an oak tree on Halloween researching my viva extension piece. It's not going well. First, I've lost my dog. Second, my wand has got stuck. Third, I can't remember. I'm scared, there's someone creeping around, listening. It's like the bloody Blair witch project.

RAPUNZEL

I didn't cut her hair (transcript of my iPhone video as Gothel, the Enchantress)

"I didn't cut off her hair – that's what happens with folk tales, it's not true. She was totally stuck in her tower, up there out of the world, singing, painting, dancing, being a princess. I'm not a witch. I'm an Enchantress. I'm also not a mother - I thought I could be a mother. I thought I could be an adoptive mother given that the real one was a sorry drug addicted sack.

I grew it to sell it, I admit that, but recreationally, not in the druggie crazed way she consumed it using her husband to sneak over the wall and steal it – not to save money but to conceal her habit.   So "Rapunzel" – that name came after, I called her by her real name, her birth name - came to live with me on terms that you maybe don't understand in 2013. Children were not so precious then.

Anyway, she would never cut her hair, and she never let me cut her hair, she always used her hair as the way into where she was and it grew and grew and this being a magic tale, the longer the hair grew, the higher the tower had to be. So, in the end, I was there in the tower and when the prince came the last time, I threw him out. I'm not sure what happened. I left in the end, I think in the tale I killed him. I never cut off her hair or sent her to a desert, I just left. What happened after, I don't know. I think she climbed down, and cut off her own hair in what I have to acknowledge was a poetic act. So when I watch her in my mind's eye, descending, in a graceful, controlled, balletic descent, I thought good for you my beautiful not-daughter, go and be queen. Will you remember me – if you do, what will you say?"

Life in the tower (transcript of my iPhone video as Rapunzel)

"I'm here at the tower again where I lived for years until I escaped. You can see the tower behind me if I move the iPhone around, or what's left of it. It was a tower without doors or stairs and I was conjured up there by Gothel when I was about 12. Hundreds of years later, King Richard the Lionheart built it into a proper settlement and now in the summer of 2013 it's just a ruin at the centre of Berkhamsted, by the station. I'm going to climb up the ruined tower as far as I can go then tell my story there into my iPhone.

I'm perched on a ledge now, hanging on to the flint wall. I loved living here. When you live in a tower as tall as mine was, you have no sense of what's holding you up. You can't see the tower beneath you – it's like being in the sky, weightless and unsupported. The clouds come and go and the sunrise and sunsets are huge. The storms are overwhelmingly loud and the electricity crackles all around. When birds fly past, mostly you look down on them.

I used to sing and my voice was sweet and pure – I heard voices singing back to me on many days, from underneath the forest canopy. It was like an echo – I would sing and they would sing back. I could hear the bells from churches all around sounding the hours.

Whenever Mother Gothel came, I let down my hair and she would climb up. Then, when my husband-to-be heard me, I let my hair down for him also. We planned an escape in the Grimm story where he would bring pieces of silk every time which I would weave into a rope. That obviously wasn't what happened – he would have just brought a rope, tied it to the end of my hair, and I would have pulled it up.

The truth is I was happy where I was and I had no desire to leave.

Even when my husband was driven away by Gothel, blinded by thorns, I stayed there: the blindness was metaphorical, so was her casting me into the desert. She wrote a note from me to him, and he believed it.   When she found out that I was pregnant and I told her that the tower was mine and I was not imprisoned, I could leave any time, and I would, when I wanted to, well, what happened was she just stopped coming to see me. I never saw her again.

I stayed a while longer until my bump got bigger and I saw that the way down would not be safe for much longer. But even then, I still stayed on a while. Until one day, when I just thought "I'm ready" and then it was very easy to leave"

Abseiling down (transcript of my iPhone video as Rapunzel)

"When it was time to go, I remember that I stood and looked for the last time at everything I was about to leave behind. My bed, my desk, my books. My pencils. My paints. My poems. The letters I wrote but could not post. My photo frame with a picture torn from a magazine of how I imagined my birth mother would look. The hair I saved from my hairbrush, a great ball of golden strands. My toothbrush. I felt my heart beating hard and fast as I walked to the edge of the balcony and climbed onto the parapet. Vertigo gripped me and I felt the rush of adrenalin pricking the backs of my hands.

I began to sing, the usual song, Mr Tambourine man, the same that in my future lives would calm my nerves as my horse galloped towards the jump "take me on a trip upon your magic swirling ship". I reached up for the hook with my left hand and gripped it "my hands can't feel to grip, my toes too numb to step, waiting only for my boot heels to go wandering" and with my right hand I reached down for the end of my plait, which I had bound tight. I twisted it around the hook and tied a figure of eight knot; the knot becomes stronger, the greater the load. Then I wound my plait, 20 ells long and heavy, around me, up and down, like a chrysalis, from my armpits to my ankles. It exhausted me and afterwards I could barely breathe and by now my anxiety was so high about the descent and my child within that my breath was shallow and my heart beating hard and fast.

I knew not to jump so I placed both hands around the rope above my head and raised my feet and hung there testing the weight of my body on the rope of my hair. And then I let go and spun slowly to the ground. It felt like dancing and I sang louder as the ground approached and I let myself go faster. "Though you might hear laughing, spinning swinging madly across the sun / It's not aimed at anyone / It's just escaping on the run, and but for the sky there are no fences facing".

But I jerked to a stop when I was a few ells from the forest floor and realised that with the knot around the hook, my hair wasn't long enough to reach the ground. I paused, felt for my

knife sharpened like a razor on the parapet stone and cut through the rope in one clean cut. I dropped lightly onto the grass"

Commentary

The two pieces below are transcripts from iPhone videos which I made in the characters of Gothel (the Enchantress, second interview) and the Wife (Rapunzel's birth mother). I have presented them together to illustrate the extent to which I have embellished and overlaid my own interpretation onto the sparse original text which reveals little about their character, background or motivation. What is of interest in terms of my process is that I did not have any conscious interpretation in mind or any particular sympathy or empathy with either character.

As I was speaking into the iPhone video camera, my words came spontaneously.

It was only when I replayed the videos again and again that I noticed parallels between these conversations and those with the stepmother/mother and witch/mother in Hansel and Gretel. In both cases, there is a merging of identities and a blurring of boundaries and I notice that the issue of motherhood and step-motherhood comes to the fore. I see a connection as well with my own experience of motherhood, step-motherhood and my relationship with my step-wife. The second transcript below is the clearest example of how my folk tale character iPhone interviews reflect events occurring in my current practice, with reference to the self-portrait website which I discussed in my previous chapter *"Theory and Practice"* in the context of Tate Liverpool's exhibition of women's archetypes.

<u>Gothel's Tale</u>

"Her mother was obsessed with the rampion in my garden – it has no addictive or therapeutic use and she certainly wasn't physically addicted to it. It was more psychological. I did supply her with other drugs: I am an expert in herbal remedies and I also supply recreational drugs to my community. She certainly had an addictive personality. She had no interest in her pregnancy or the baby at all. She was a prostitute. I took Rapunzel into my home and cared for her in a way that she could never have done. I've cared for other children as well. I like to take them as babies. It's true I was known as an Enchantress.

More of a fixer really but I studied spells and magic and my illusions were mostly successful to the extent that my reputation travelled far from here. It was me whom the prince came to see on his first visit to the tower, he didn't even know Rapunzel was there. He was troubled about succession – his father was king of a kingdom beset on all sides by trouble, and he wanted me to surround it with a protective ring of fire. I couldn't help, it was beyond my powers. However, once he saw Rapunzel, he kept coming back and what hurt me was the secrecy and the deceit. I trusted Rapunzel and I trusted him: there was no need for secrecy but I needed to protect her.   I would never have left them alone, for obvious reasons. At her age, courtship was appropriate: sex was not. When I found out what was going on, I forbade him from the tower and I conjured a letter from Rapunzel telling him to go. He didn't see her after that (not because he was blinded by thorns, just that he didn't come back again).

When she found out what I had done, she refused to let her hair down again. It's an old and very powerful spell, the threshold spell which I cast to keep unwelcome visitors out, so unless she asked me in, I couldn't cross. It was clear she wasn't going to. So I left her to it. I fostered four other children after her and when I went back to the tower, about a year later, she had gone, but the hair was hanging there"

Wife's tale

"We prayed for a baby but by the time I became pregnant, I was heavily addicted. I had bad cravings and in those days there was no help. I thought the baby was damaged and I couldn't have coped with a handicapped child. Gothel next door said she would have the baby and take care of her. She supplied drugs but she never took them, she never even drank. The Enchantress was her nick-name and she would make bad things go away, and good things happen. It wasn't unusual in those days for children to live with others. For the first 12 years, I saw my daughter almost every day, either from my window, playing in Gothel's garden or she would come around to our house. I honestly have to say that I never felt maternal. I would have been a bad mother even without the drugs. When my daughter was 12, they moved house. I don't know where they went. I never tried to find my daughter and she never came back. A few years after that, I moved here, to this community, and I paint sometimes. I painted this - I'm part of a self-portrait group where you put your

photograph out there on the internet and other members paint you, who don't even know

who you are. So my painting is of someone I don't know. I hope they like it"

APPENDIX 2: iPHONE WORKSHOP – PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Notes following Making Workshop Nov 14 – 15, 2013

I went into the workshop acutely aware that it was the final one in our ADOC programme. It was not one which I was expecting to be involved with, other than as a participant. It was designed around the theme of "making" and I was asked to join the "Making Crew" (as we named ourselves) on the final afternoon of the previous workshop. I was unsure why.

I used my session to explore some important practical aspects of extending my iPhone / video clip method to a workshop environment.

I was pleased with the workshop: I found it a rich learning experience and was happy with the feedback, reproduced below, because it demonstrated a high level of engagement and gave me confidence that my method and process might prove a valuable practice tool for others.

Comments posted on my meta-board included:

"You never meet yourself".

"Through this experience I realised that your practice takes <u>practice</u>. *You make it look so easy but it may be hard / tough for others both as a process and a practice. You may need to consider how you walk alongside them in the experience to bring them through it".*

"Didn't expect to enjoy being videoed, but we had a blast. We worked in a pair and the technology was a "by the way" and didn't get in the way of our conversations. The process was hilarious because it very alien too. Great exercise".

"Good fun. Recorded our conversation and discovered we were rather clumsy with technology. No restrictions. Had great conversation about –ologies, paradigms etc".

"I enjoyed the process and the time and space to pay "attention" to process / aesthetics / ontology and "being in the moment". And being able to capture it all! Thanks".

"This opened a door to a whole new level of meaning-making, free fall talking and directing. I really like the way you facilitated it – relaxed and clear and inviting".

"I liked the invitation of being asked to make a film. I think that as a pair it might be a different exercise. The 3 sets up a different dynamic … I felt my contribution was a bit rambling which I thing was the effect of the film – it really felt a lot like 'free fall speaking'. So you say a lot of 'blah, blah, blah' to get the odd nugget".

"I liked how you were open about the experimental nature of this. I felt as though we were working a bit on the edge. To be able to talk not just about what we were talking about but about how we were saying it and the dynamics was challenging and intriguing. Doing it to camera added a new dimension of reality which I [need to] process".

"I really get this – it's brilliant, I found it powerful".

"It opened our discussion up and took it to places we hadn't been".

"Difficult to do at first, needs time to adjust".

I record below comments made earlier in my inquiry when I invited close friends and associates to "give it go" and report back on how it felt to interview themselves on iPhone:

"It was a very weird experience. I enjoyed it. I can't stop replaying the clips, it was fascinating to do"

"What's this all about really? Really??? I feel as though you're not telling me everything. I'm interested in how you found it and what you're really looking for"

"You should patent this and sell it"

"This made me cry, I don't know why. I just started to cry when I watched it back again. I wanted to delete it but I can't"

"Is this a social media idea?"
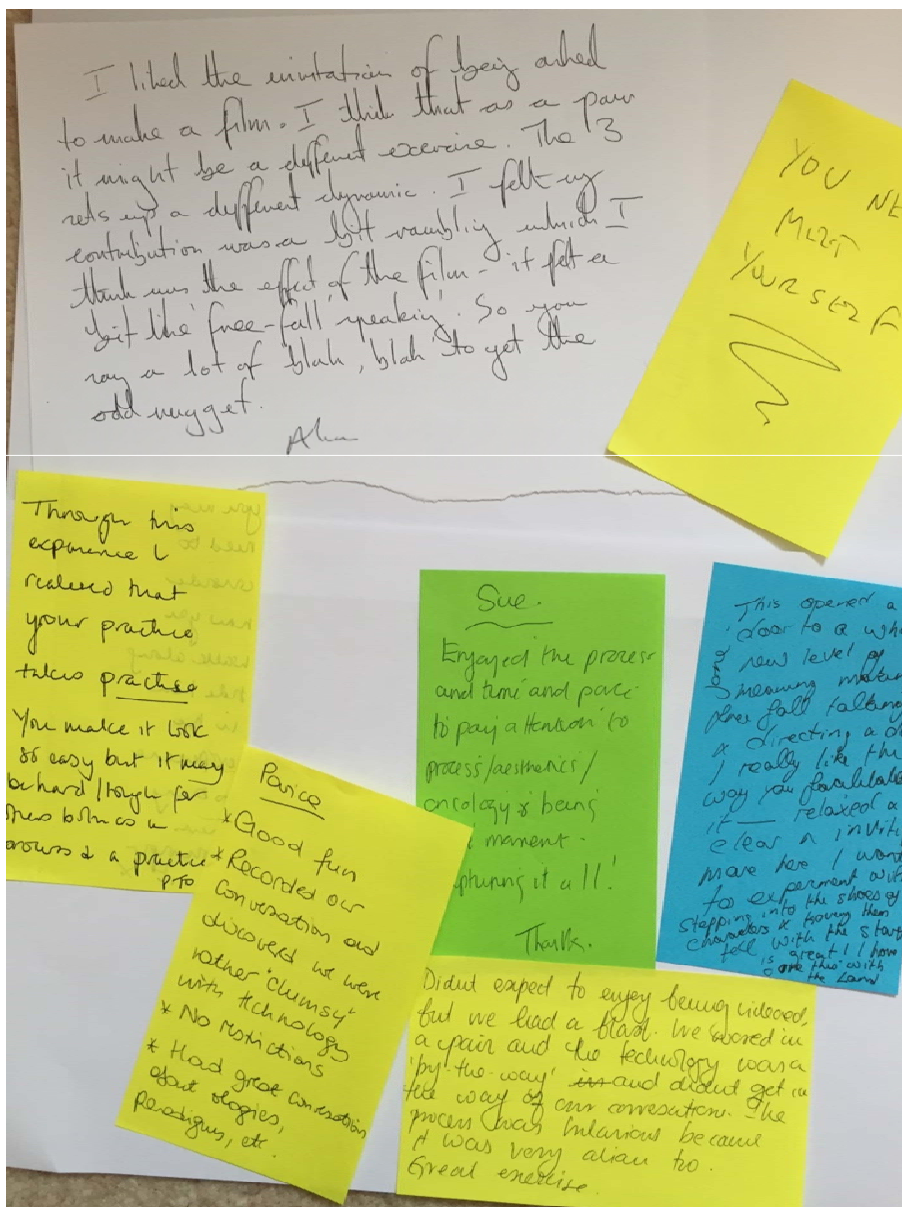
Examples of workshop comments on working with the iPhone method (November 2013)

CHAPTER TEN: GOING FORTH – REFLECTIONS AT THE YEAR'S END

Introduction

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"

Wittgenstein (1955)

"The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao."

Lao Tzu

I am struck by the irony of the fact that in an inquiry which concerns the telling of tales, so much of what I have learned seems impossible to express in words. I find that images, such as the ones above, taken in the forest, tell my story far better than my words could ever do.

This is the final chapter of my thesis, in which I attempt to draw together what I have learned during my inquiry; not so much to "practice closure", more an appraisal of where I have been and what I have discovered by way of contribution to the academy. I have a sense of letting go and moving onto another chapter, stepping over a threshold into a place which is not part of this thesis. I feel relief but also regret. I find that I cannot, and do not wish to, find words to describe the most profound aspects of my first-person inquiry. I am consoled by Wittgenstein and by the Tao, the Book of Ways, in which it is also written that despite "that which can be named" not being the eternal truth, "the Named is the mother of myriad things". That's how I feel now: named, and the mother of myriad things. My inquiry turned out to be labyrinthine and discursive, possibly even "rambling", and in walking the winding, meandering forest path and balancing fearfully on the dialectal arête, I saw and experienced myriad wondrous things.

Now I must step out from the shadows onto the stage and speak of what I know.

Making sense of my inquiry

When I read again my original framing and the two experimental framings of my inquiry question described in my introductory chapter, I see so clearly now, looking back, the origins of what my inquiry became. I recognise the sense back then of being in a darkened room, feeling my way around the objects within, mapping my territory in fear and trepidation. In the course of the last four years, I have realised and embraced my inner landscape and come to trust the paths I walk. I found myself in lost-ness. I realise that that my inquiry was and is essentially an existential one. I learned that my identity is fundamentally relational and that our stories, yours and mine and all of ours, are deeply and forever entwined. I discovered what we hold in common by a deep exploration of the archetypal characters in the folk tales of my field work, who spoke to me and unlocked my tacit, intuitive knowledge of who I am and who I am becoming. I am becoming less of me and more of us.

Five contributions

I claim contributions in five fields of practice:

1. Existential: an exploration of the bounds of identity and self not "bound by skin"

2. Theoretical: engaging with theory through active participation

3. Therapeutic: illuminating my identity through being another

4. Methodological: self-interview using iPhone in a reflexive process

5. Ethical: an inclusive approach to narrative inquiry holding open space for self and other

I said in the prologue that "as the teller of my own inquiry … I have a responsibility to you, the reader, and to myself to deliver an account which is good enough". When we set out, I had no idea where we would end up. I had a sense that while I was telling the tale of my inquiry, it was writing itself, like a "tale on first telling". I have had a sense in the last few days, as the hoar frost comes to forest ferns and ice begins in form on my several seas, we are approaching the point where this tale is told. Will it be good enough?

1. Existential first person inquiry

I asked, who am I and how do I know?

As a means of inquiring into my own identity in relation to others, I created a way to have a conversation between various aspects of myself in which the subject / object relations of asking / answering merged and morphed so that I became myself, found myself, in others. Challenges to my personal authenticity "where is Sue" and my own sense of plural subjectivity were to some extent resolved by my recognising that I am more connected than I imagined, both in space and time, with myself and others. I find that the question "where is Sue" is not entirely mine to answer. I do not wish it to be: I find myself in and through others.

I conclude that the notion of personal identity in the sense of my "self" is an unhelpful construct. I suggest with increasing confidence that over-reliance on the notion of the "self" is a perpetuation of Cartesian dualism, setting me apart from you and others.

My "self" within this world-view is an entity which to the very extent that I can regard it and examine it, lies outside my being in the moment. If I am capable of looking at myself, then it seems to follow that me and myself are not the same thing. The notion of "self" ceases to be integrative and becomes an abstraction of who I am. This theme runs throughout my inquiry and is clearly illustrated in my fieldwork conversations with folk tale characters. I found that a more convincing account of personal identity is expressed in terms of my phenomenological "being" which is based on my experience in the moment without requiring a mediating construct (my "self"). Notions of self-hood (attributions by myself about myself) get in the way of a clear and present account of how I am experiencing the moment.

The following dialogue illustrates the point (it is a conversation between myself and my director at the "Directing Actors" workshop during a script reading).

DR: Stop. What are you feeling now?

SL: Pain, real pain and anger and loss.

DR: Why?

SL: Because I'm the kind of person who needs security – it's the heart of who I am.

DR: Again why?

SL: I'm a jealous person I hate her and the fact he wants her more than me.

DR: Again why?

SL: I want him back, she's taken him, I hate her, I hate him. [sobs]

The dialogue in the middle section is where I express and try to explain my feelings in the moment in terms of my "self" – self-attributions based on a set of beliefs about who I am and what I am like, abstractions rather than direct phenomenological accounts of what is happening in the moment. Go from the first line directly to the last and you find an account of my "being" which does not rely upon attributions to an abstracted "self":

DR: Stop. What are you feeling now?

SL: I want him back, she's taken him. I hate her. I hate him.

My first response (which is why DR pressed me again) is in terms of emotions divorced from the present moment in the script.   "Pain, real pain and anger and loss" are emotions which could apply to many situations. My final response "I want him back, she's taken him. I hate her. I hate him" relates to the specific situation: my reaction is an account of how I feel *in relation to the others present in that moment*. I am expressing finally my response to them relationally rather than expressing my feelings as abstracted emotions unrelated to the perpetrators of my emotion.

What does this mean for my practice? It has had the effect of focussing my attention on my experience – my "being in the moment" – and of what is occurring in the present rather than taking a prescribed approach based on my pre-existing notions of self-hood in relation to others. I am increasingly framing my practice inquiries in terms of what the situation

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means to us, rather than to me and (as separate considerations) to you and to them. If "acting is reacting" then I am now more inclined to offer an intuitive response in the moment than to present a rehearsed position. I am finding as a result that my client interventions are more powerful and my own learning more intense.

2. Theoretical

2.1 A participative relationship with theory

I developed a participative relationship with theory and extended Stanislavski's notion of method acting "as if" to encompass the "as is" of inspirited shamanic practice and magical consciousness.

In the course of my inquiry, I reframed the relationship between theory and myself as participant inquirer in a way which is more nuanced than my providing an intellectual critique, or proposing a purely intellectual extension of it.   I asked, what does it feel like to live a theory?

> *"I wanted to see what would happen if certain theories were true. So, for example, Bateson speaks of ….. I wondered what I would experience differently if that were indeed the case and decided to find out by testing it on myself"*

Some ideas are easy to test; those which offer explanations which are unobservable are more difficult. Much of Bateson's later work on Level III learning falls into this category. Rather than take this down the epistemological route ("how do I know whether this theory has explanatory power?"), I asked "what do I use theories for – what is their personal utility to me?" I found that the theories which I want to work with in practice are those that excite me in terms of their creative and experiential potential rather than their explanatory power. I'm not very interested in having things explained and contained in a box of "understood", more interesting is having things exploded out of the box into the world of "what would change if that were true?"

I found this utilitarian and improvisational stance of "whatever works" in the moment enabled me to respond to whatever challenges I was facing at the time rather than having to adopt an overarching paradigm or a fixed epistemological position. I cannot

overemphasise how liberating this feels. I am finally able to live my practice as I live my life – sailing in several seas. The incommensurability of paradigms (Kuhn, Popper) within my practice presents opportunities not problems which need resolving or threats to my integrity. Existentially, I have found a way to be both one and another simultaneously and to hold them both in the present moment. I can wear all my hats.

2.2 Contribution to the theory of "being another"

In addition to framing a participative relationship with theory, I am now confident that my theoretical contribution lies in extending Stanislavski's "as if" method acting practice to encompass "as is" and "being another" in the sense of shamanic practice or participatory "magical consciousness".

> *"It is in this transitional space – between acting "as if" and inspiriting "as is" – that my theoretical contribution might be found."*

This is difficult to express in words but I found it possible to imagine and to experience a way of relating to others, as actors in each other's narratives, in a way which dissolves and disappears boundaries of being.

I described in an earlier chapter, *Relational Ontology and the Narrative Self*, three ways that we might relate to each other in Ricouer's sense of increasing spiritual density:

1. we are separate;
2. we are separate and connected;
3. we are part of each other.

I found that my method enabled me to understand how these might be experienced, being at one with another, in the same moment at the same time. It allows me to recognise in practice that what we hold in common is more than the differences between us.

I have developed a relational practice, based on the actor/director dynamic and the distinction between "as if" and "as is" in which "being another" enables the participant to be other person. It is based on the actor/director dynamic and encourages a phenomenological examination of what actually happens in the room rather than focussing on self-attributions about who I am or who you are. It is proving effective and engaging in

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my current work developing teams in the community cinema with the long-term unemployed and involves "being" the person you would like to be. Here I am speaking to a trainee bartender.

SL: So just be yourself, pour the drink like you would normally do it.

SL: Now imagine being the best bartender in the world – say like Tom Cruise in that cocktail film – do it like him.

SL: Now be Tom for the whole evening, never stop being Tom.

I have also moved towards a more challenging stance generally in which I encourage us to "go beyond" the boundaries of our existing problem situation by using imagination and intuition. One of the most powerful aspects it that it requires collapsing power hierarchies in the service of achieving better performance. Anyone can challenge anyone else in a way which elevates performance. It requires an appreciative and supportive orientation which requires and demands applause as the outcome. The goal is a standing ovation from fellow participants in a performance which includes but is greater than ourselves. This is an embryonic practice development but one which I am keen to expand, building on ideas which emerged during the mid-point of my inquiry. It involves relaxing personal ego boundaries and engaging with multiple relational perspectives:

Extract from my journal (date)

"I wanted to explore the actor / director relationship within the context of my iPhone filming of myself. I was curious about this initially, because it seemed to contradict a belief which I held with conviction from the start of the process that this is not about acting. And yet, my imagined relationship between directors and actors seemed very close to a fundamental aspect of my process.

An observation by one of my ADOC colleagues provided an insight. During an ADOC workshop in July 2013, we walked in the woods while I demonstrated my process to him. We climbed a tree and he shared his reflections, one of which was that in assuming two roles simultaneously (myself as the person who asks the question and myself as the person who answers the question) what I am doing is setting up a second person inquiry albeit both

persons are me. In response, I pointed out that in fact there is a third person also present –
myself as observer of the process, the person who is initiating the process of asking and
answering.

I believe on further reflection that this is similar to the actor / director relationship. In a way
which I cannot yet explain, the third person is in a director-relationship with the asker and
the answerer. I have never so far been aware of the presence of the third person although
as I write, I am beginning to recognise that this is me as I walk in the woods before and after
filming, observing, taking photos, reflecting and allowing the story to ferment or compost
until something – an idea or an emotion – inspires me to speak in character into the iPhone.

Again, as I write, I see that the director role is also assumed by my DSG in their role as peer
supervisors, and by my supervisor, during our sessions when they question me and make
observations about what is going on in my work and challenge me, example, in areas of
disclosure and authenticity. This begins, as I write these words, to make sense. When
challenged, I feel a range of emotions: defensiveness, frustration, appreciation, inspiration,
insight, support. I imagine that this is akin to the emotions experienced by actors working
with directors who challenge, criticise, reward and reinforce their performance. The issues of
co-dependency are similar – the goal is shared (achieving a fine performance) – as are
interpersonal issues such as boundaries. There is a sense within the group of wishing to push
each other to the very edge of what we can be in performance terms and yet wishing always
to exercise a duty of care and to respect the point beyond which we may not wish to travel".

I acknowledge that one reason why the actor / director relationship is an attractive one for
me to work with is that it permits an edgier more personal engagement. I see myself
potentially as being both actor and director in this imagined scenario. This provides within
my iPhone process the possibility of stepping beyond the constraints of my conventional
practice into a more experimental, inherently riskier landscape, one which if it works out,
brings greater rewards. Risk is our friend in what, in practice, is essentially a theatrical
performance.

3. Therapeutic

Weiner (1997), in a process comparison between the actor-director and patient-therapist relationship, observes that:

"The relationship between the actor and director, like that between the patient and psychotherapist, relies on intense emotional involvement. Both demand sensitivity, reciprocity, and a deep understanding of human behaviour. Because dramatic action is created through continuous conflict between characters, actors must explore not only their actions, but also the reactions of those with whom they are in relationship. The process of therapy is equally interdependent. Through the relationship, therapists provide a context in which their patients can work through their conflicts. As in the rehearsal process, actions are explored in a supportive environment". (p. 77).

Weiner proposes that both the actor-director and patient-therapist relationships are art forms that rely on the skill of a trusted facilitator. Some of the techniques held in common are: empathic attunement, emotional recall, transference, overcoming performance obstacles, improvisation, risk-taking, the pleasure principle, and creating a sense of family through new object relations. He concludes that like therapists*, "directors never forget that their work cannot be performed alone; it depends on interaction with the most delicate of phenomena: the human soul."* (p. 85).

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This brings me to my third contribution in the field of therapy, in which the therapist and patient (or coach and coachee) are conflated and therapeutic conversation is intrapersonal (me talking with myself).

My supervisor first noted certain similarities between my iPhone method and the "empty chair" method of Gestalt therapy: my work was described as a form of "naïve therapy". While I resisted at first being drawn into this space, I see how the iPhone method might prove of interest to practitioners working with clients to explore aspects of identity through expansion and imaginative development of their personal narratives. I wondered about the therapy aspects and I reproduce below a fictionalised discussion with a consultant psychiatrist, the spouse of a friend, who specialises in identity disorders:

SL: So that's what I've been doing.

PC: OK well that's quite extraordinary in terms of where you've put yourself. What have you found?

SL: It got me up trees: I found a way of kind of talking to myself about myself.

PC: Did you find it distressing?

SL: Yes, very.

PC: Did you have enough support with what you were doing?

SL: Yes, absolutely. It wasn't distressing in a bad way; it was like a happy release. Good tears, like April rain. It wasn't a therapeutic environment; I was working on my inquiry.

PC: Can I see the tapes?

SL: No. Not yet.

PC: How do you think it would work with someone who already was really confused about who they are and what they feel about themselves?

SL: I don't know. That would describe me and I was OK with it.

PC: But you weren't in a clinical situation and I have deep interest in this but I couldn't possibly engage with a method which is so untested and ethically unexplored.

SL: I'm not asking you to.

PC: I'd like to think about how to use this with [patient group]. They spend all their time taking selfies and I know they'd get it but the problem is, I'm not sure I would. Are you interested in post-doctoral research?

SL: Yes.

In the reflexive cycle which immediately preceding writing up my thesis, I examined carefully the extent to which I found my process therapeutic. I have concluded that it was therapeutic to the extent that:

a) it provided me with an "inner shed" (Grayson Perry, 2013)

b) engaging with folk tales enabled me to access those cultural archetypes which were part of my identity and through association with their stories, I found a way of telling my own

c) the embodied aspect of speaking in character was disinhibiting – I was speaking their words and it seemed to free me to speak my own in a way which I describe as "freefall talking"

d) getting into the forest and climbing trees put me into direct contact with the wild wood and reconnected me with the natural world in a way which I experienced as magical and enchanting

e) the craft aspects of taking photos, collecting artefacts, making videos, creating spirit dolls was valuable to my first person inquiry and freed me from the constraints of an unduly literary and intellectual pursuit

f) I found the self-reflexive potential of iPhone recordings more impactful than journaling or freefall writing: it was like encountering myself in the flesh, meeting myself.

I concluded also that my process is different from a therapeutic encounter in that it is not directed towards any particular issue or outcome. It is difficult to be specific about what the therapeutic outcome might or would have been: more that it encouraged and enabled me to speak spontaneously and to allow connections to emerge and resonate in a way which

resembles artistic creation rather than analysis. I see it more as a way of surfacing and releasing latent emotions and ideas and of accessing my Muse.

4. Methodological

4.1 Reflexive self-interview

I have described how my initial experiments with the iPhone method were spontaneous and improvisational and arose from my curiosity about what it would be like to interview myself. The process which I developed had far-reaching consequences and came to direct the course of my inquiry. I believe that aspects of the method have potential for developing my executive search practice as well as in the fields of relational and therapeutic practice.

In recent years, selection interviews are increasingly conducted via Skype or video conferencing facilities located at clients' global locations. Candidates are increasingly made visible to clients through video clips produced by themselves, usually in the context of a corporate presentation or public speaking engagement or through social media. I have experienced huge resistance from candidates to the idea of filming our interviews, mainly on the grounds of their performance anxiety. Certainly, my limited experience with iPhone self-interview in second person inquiry is that the process of being filmed is complex and contested. However, I believe there is scope to develop the practice of candidates providing very short sound-bites or elevator pitches, no more than an extension of the photograph which I encourage them to include on their CVs. This is an area which I will undoubtedly pursue: I have been invited to write a thought-leadership piece on audio-visual methods in board selection and recently worked with a group of post-graduate students to explore their emotional response to being asked to present themselves in this way (it was regarded as potentially enabling them to tell their own stories, unmediated by the interviewer, but they identified significant concerns about disclosing aspects of themselves which might be discriminated against – mainly physical attractiveness, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, accented speech and perceived socioeconomic status).

There is a tension, which I would like to inquire into further, between the fears expressed above and the desire to tell one's own story rather than be misrepresented, the dominant

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concern which I expressed through my folk tale characters. I believe it is to do with being or not being physically present at the point of apperception. Spatial and temporal distance seem to militate against the sense of effective self-advocacy. I believe that my method of "being another" collapses time and space in this sense. Wherever you are, I am.

In terms of my own practice, my primary interest in the organisational application of self-interview is the reflexive opportunities it presents, rather than as a management selection method per se.   However, I have been invited to develop the self-interview method by a client who is intrigued by opportunity of allowing candidates to set their own interview agenda and to direct their own process of self-disclosure rather than have it imposed upon them. She believes it would provide unique insights. I too find this intriguing in terms of narrative inquiry: in an unmediated, unscripted interview, how would you choose to tell your story, unfettered by an interviewer? How would you choose what to include and what to leave out? How would you feel about talking into the void?

4.2 Research methodology and practice conflated

A defining characteristic of my inquiry is the way that practice and research methodology are conflated and informed each other. I did not research my practice: my methodology became my practice and my practice became to inquire using this method. This was an unintended outcome which I believe gives my work epistemological power. I find what I know in doing it. I make no research claims in this regard: it just happened that way. But now that I recognise what happened and the impact it had on my narrative and experiential inquiry, I offer it as a contribution to the endeavour of "living life as inquiry" (Marshall, 2001).

5. Ethical

I encountered significant ethical challenges in the course of my inquiry. The practice of "being another" is uncharted territory. Conventional "do no harm" and "informed consent" approaches did not seem fully to address the conflation of self and other.

The bespoke ethical stance which I developed was generated in the process of developing my practice: it grew from practice and was informed by it. I asked myself, not metaphorically but literally, speaking to my iPhone, "what do you feel about this process?" and "what are the issues with doing this?" and "is this okay?" and I asked it not just of myself but of the characters I was being. The following iPhone clips illustrate how this process emerged and how my ethical framework developed alongside it.

"It feels very safe. I'm in control of the camera, I can press delete. I like it. I get to say things that surprise me. I'm talking to myself so I can pretty much say what I like. You know but the funny thing is that once it's out there, I really don't mind who sees it. It's not as though I've said anything bad. But going into it, I like the fact it's private. Then when I see it, I think, that's so true. I sort of want to share it." (Journal notes June 2013)

"It's good to be able to say something at last about what happened. Every time someone tells that story I want to scream – it's not like that! I was painted that way and the paint dried and I'm stuck there on the canvas. I moved on but the story didn't. It's like that poem you wrote about, Larkin, The Arundel Tomb. I see how it's not really about me anymore it's about the fictional character I became, locked in stone, a stone fidelity, but I was real once not just part of a folk tale and that's not what happened." (Stepmother/witch, Hansel & Gretel, iPhone interview, November 2012)

"I'm in two minds. It's good to be famous – everyone knows Rapunzel. If my tale hadn't been told, I'd be no-one, just dead by now, my life wasn't a big deal. But then I wish they hadn't got so much of it wrong. It would have been nice if they'd got the bit about me right, how I escaped, how I grew my way out of there." (Rapunzel, iPhone interview, May 2013)

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In the field of narrative inquiry, I have suggested an ethical stance which requires me to tell my own tale in a way which does not preclude or prevent you from telling yours. This came from my experience of being another and telling my tale through the words of others and allowing them to tell their tales through me. I believe that as an ethical stance it is of the highest order and requires an ability to stand back and to respect the narrative authority of participants when telling their tales. It means allowing space and time for the tales of others to emerge rather than taking the centre stage, as the teller. It requires me as the teller to recognise that the tale being told is not mine alone and that my voice has the potential both to give voice to others and to quench their words and spirit.

I believe this is an important contribution in the field of narrative inquiry. It requires deeper inquiry in how I can achieve this ethical standard. For now, I am approaching this challenge by considering carefully how the way I might tell my story impacts on others. I have experienced deep pain by being excluded in the telling of tales in which I hoped I was a central character, only to find that I had been overlooked. How easy it is to "write people out" who had thought they belonged. I am thinking not only of the wicked fairy in Sleeping Beauty who was not invited to the christening but to instances in my own life, and even in the writing of this thesis, I am aware that one day, someone reading it might wonder why they were not mentioned, when others were. Why for example, do I exclude reference to certain significant others, spouse, siblings: will it cause them pain?

In researching local witchcraft in the Ashridge forest in the course of this inquiry, I learned much about one aspect of evil, which is inherently domestic in origin; the hurt and betrayal of family, friends and neighbours giving rise to poisoned chickens, trees being felled, haystacks burning, bad seeds sown on another's land, curses cast, gates left open, malicious gossip. Narrative inquiry and the telling of tales is ancient and strong magic and if it is to produce good ends, I believe it requires an ethical stance which is grounded in love.

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Conclusion

Journal notes October 20th 2014

"While speaking with myself in the character of my mother (she died in September 2014 as I was writing this thesis), I spoke of the sense of loss which Pirsig (2001) refers to in the preface to the 25th anniversary edition of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance on the murder of his son: what he misses most is the pattern of their relationship and the hole his son's absence leaves in the life of those who remain. On first reading this in Ibiza 2012, I imagined a rip in a spider's web which untethers it from one of its anchor points and blows around until the spider repairs it. I noticed as I was walking in the forest early this morning, the huge numbers of spiders' webs, stretched across leaves, twigs, branches, miraculously strong, quivering, and holding perfect silver tear drops. I had a sense that my mother had absolutely gone and would never exist again as a separate being and would fade away. I saw for the first time how we begin life within the body of the one who bears us and we end it in the minds of others as memories. We are held by them, the ones we know and the ones we forget. And it is only when we are forgotten, that we die".

I will ask myself now: what was your contribution?

"When I look at what I have written here, and all my photos and iPhone videos, what I see is how I found myself in others. I did something in my inquiry that surprised and delighted me. It's original and beautiful. I'm proud of what I did. I went into the forest and I was brave and strong in the most difficult of times. I asked who am I, and how do I know and I found out through the telling of tales. I'm happy with that."

Sue Wiper, 17 December 2014

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INDEX OF IMAGES AND AUDIO-VISUAL

PART I: IMAGES IN THE TEXT

This a photographic index of the images presented in the text, with brief annotation.

Fig 1a: from a distance

Fig 1b: getting closer

Fig 1c: framing

The above trilogy of photos is intended to illustrate the process of getting to know me in the introduction, first from afar, then in close-up, and then in the act of creating the (self) image.

Fig 2: And into a new world

This plays with my feeling of jumping off a cliff as I enter the ADOC programme. The hole in the tree can be seen as on the horizontally plane as though you were moving through it, but also on the vertical plane, as though you are jumping down into it. It references Alice's rabbit hole which takes you into a completely new world, where nothing is normal.

Fig 3: Heartbeating

As the silence of the forest descends, the sounds of my body take over, my pulse, my heartbeat, my breathing. Heartbeating / heartbreaking in its beauty.

Fig 4: Ouroborous

Theodorous Pelecanos (1478). Still the most evocative image of the serpent as a symbol of reflexive self-renewal. Look at the self-awareness in the gaze.

Fig 5: And it catches falls.

This was the image that defined my early inquiry puzzles, resolved later when I realised that I had it the wrong way up (should be vertical, as a climbing harness knot).

Fig 6: Sue Sleeping Take 2

I became enchanted in this makeover of my original image: a Midsummer Night's Dream.

Fig 7: the landscape of my inquiry

A defining moment as I came alive in making this pagan / Catholic image.

Fig 8: river road to Ashridge:

An evocative image of flux and change flowing through my inquiry but with a clear sense of direction. I see the river road as flowing towards me, not away from me.

Fig 9a, b and c: Hansel and Gretel images from my fieldwork

Fig 9b
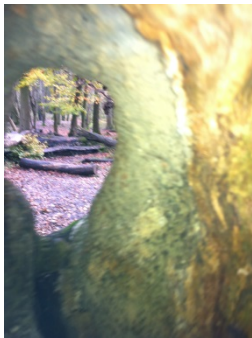
Fig 9c

Fig 10a, b and c: Sleeping Beauty images from my fieldwork

Fig 10b

Fig 10c

Fig 11a, b and c: Rapunzel images from my fieldwork

Fig 11b
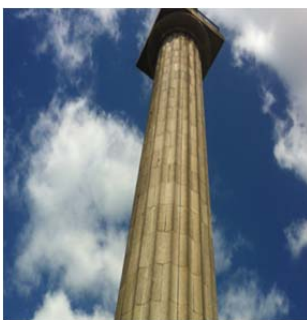
Fig 11c

Fig 12: trees to look through

I took many photos of trees with holes. The symbolism is of birth, entry into new worlds, rites of passage. They have a powerful framing effect, like holed flints. Folk rituals involve passing items and body parts through them to effect healing and to bring luck.

Fig 13: Ogham alphabet

I first encountered Ogham when travellers I had given shelter to marked our gate with goodwill symbols for those who followed. I suspect it works like Morse code.

Fig 14a, b and c: Holly, Willow and Rowan, the Ogham spirit dolls

Fig 14b

Fig 14c

Fig 15: a silent progress

I refer to this in the dark side photos.

Fig 16: the right way up

This is how the figure of 8 knot works.

Fig 17: a garland of flints

"What would happen if you sold it?" *I would regret it*.

Fig 18: golden grove unleaving

I play with the idea of leaving and unleaving in the sense of nothing is ever lost, and the autumn gold and the loss of leaves essential to the growth of new, green ones. Inspired by a Gerard Manly Hopkins poem.

Fig 19: the tree I came to know

The far reaching young oak which became the touchstone for my forest fieldwork.

Fig 20: the marvellously polished pavilion of the forest

An image which reflects the unselfconsciousness of the beauty of the forest.
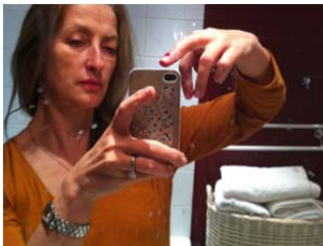

Fig 21a, b and c: my fieldwork in images

Images of me working the iPhone method. All were taken unintentionally (pressed the wrong button) and I believe that this is what gives them their power. It's like taking a candid shot of myself, something usually impossible. A felicitous consequence of technical incompetence.
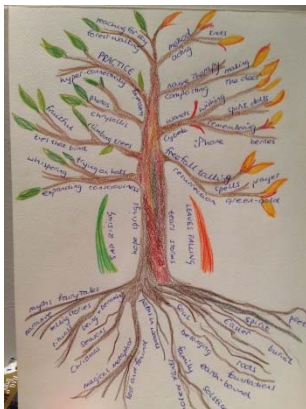
Fig 21b

Fig 21c

Fig 22: the tree of my inquiry

This was my first attempt at drawing my inquiry. Theory plays no part in it.

Fig 23a, b and c: Images of berries, leaves, branches (and me). 23a and 23b were again taken unintentionally, by having the focus button switched the wrong way. 23c was taken without knowing the effect of tree shadow.
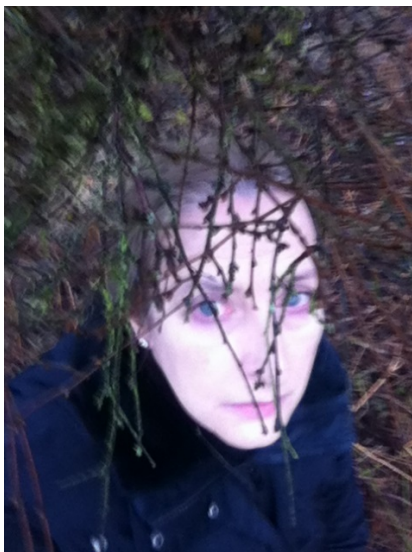

Fig 23b

Fig 23c

Fig 24a – i: the dark side photos

(commentary provided in the text)

Fig 24b

Fig 24c

Fig 24d

Fig 24e

Fig 24f

Fig 24g

Fig 24h

Fig 24i